A NEW YORK NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT

The Story of Murad Mohammed and the Wicked Abdul

STANBOROUGH had always been of the opinion that the shoddy exterior of lower Madison street concealed delightful and romantic facts. In the first place he could stand there at dusk and from the dreary mass of huddled tenements behold the solid, gleaming tower of steel and stone that housed the manifold municipal activities of New York. A turn of the head and he was gazing in a window where were spilled the tobaccos and garish ornaments of Byzantium.

This particular evening, as he entered the Kaphphenelon, or Greek coffee house, of the Dwellers in the Gulf of Patras he did not sit still while the Lacedemonian Georgios prepared the cup of Turkish coffee and the bubbling water pipe with its lump of charcoal topping the knot of tobacco. The brightly colored portrait of Lord Byron, in Greek skirt and jacket, swearing an oath upon the tomb of the hero Marco Bozzaris he had already seen. What attracted his attention was a view on the opposite wall showing the army manoeuvres at Thermopylae in 1896. The picture was more a piece of delineation than a work of art, but this rather suited Stanborough, who felt that he could pick out the exact spot where Leonidas and the Three Hundred blocked the Persian host. The monument in their honor showed conspicuously.

At the back of the room was a picture nearer home—the burning of San Francisco. Stanborough was struck by the fact that all the flames were in the quarter of the city called the Presidio, the only part of San Francisco which was not consumed in 1906. He did not believe in portents, evidently, or he would not have let the disillusioning discovery as to the worth of Georgios's picture gallery pass with a hearty laugh and a jest at Georgios's expense.

"If you do not know Constantinople you will not fully appreciate the story."

The water pipe smoked excellently, and Stanborough had no more than settled down to the enjoyment of it when another customer entered, and finding the place crowded sat down at Stanborough's table. Georgios, with an air of great respect, brought the newcomer coffee and Turkish sweets. The stranger was so handsome, with his olive skin, burning eyes and sharply cut features, that Stanborough spoke first.

"American," he said, pointing to himself. "Are you?"

"Monsieur will pardon me if I sit at his table?" was the reply in French, with a flashing smile. "Moi, je suis—how to say? Constantinopolitain!" He smiled again, and went on:

"That is as good as saying cosmopolitan, and more specific, is it not so, Monsieur? But it is a long word. It requires a Greek tongue or one as versed as mine to say it easily."

"I have not been in Constantinople," returned Stanborough with interest. "Tell me about it."

His acquaintance toyed with a coffee cup and smiled once or twice before replying.

"Monsieur will have a drink of the Greek brandy—mastic—with me, perhaps?" he asked. "Yes? Well, that will serve as an aperitif to a long story."

He beckoned to Georgios, who hastened to take the order. After a polite exchange of bows the two men lifted the small glasses and drank.

"If you do not know Constantinople," began the handsome Constantinopolitan, holding a light for Stanborough's cigarette, "you will not, it may be fully appreciate the story I am going to tell.

"In a certain street which I need not identify there lived a man who was the rightful heir to the Turkish throne. He was a son of the Sultan Abdul Hamid and his name was Murad Mohammed, but this was known only to three persons—the Sultan, the Grand Vizier and an old man in whose house the heir dwelt. The young man himself did not know who he was until a certain day not many years ago when this old man told him.

"The old man was an Albanian kavass, or bodyguard. For this work of bodyguard Albanians are very generally chosen because of their fearlessness and devotion. Others can be bought, but not they; as a kavass such a man answers with his life for the safety of his master.

"This kavass has been the bodyguard of the beautiful young Syrian woman who had borne Abdul Hamid a son and then taken her life in despair because she, a Christian, had been the enforced bride of a Mohammedan. After her death the child was sent to live with the Albanian in a mean dwelling in a poor street of the city and the few people beside the kavass who knew the circumstances of the child's birth were put to death—well, I won't say that, but they vanished very completely. The kavass could be relied upon, for he had been assigned to guard the child's mother by the Sultan and was in the Sultan's pay. How was it, then, you will ask, that he betrayed to the young man the secret of his birth?

"This kavass, though not a Christian, was a very humane man. He had always felt that the Sultan was responsible for the act of the boy's mother in taking her life. He had determined in the years the boy was growing to manhood that it was his duty to inform the youth of the truth. Further than that he did not feel called upon to go. Let events take their course afterward, said this old kavass to himself.

"Its truth was attested by a ring which bore the Sultan's Seal."

"Waking, he heard the kavass's son talking in his sleep."

"Murad Mohammed was stunned by the story his old servitor told him. He did not believe it at first, but its truth was attested by a ring which bore the Sultan's seal, and which was engraved with the name of the boy's mother. Yet even though he knew the facts of his history there was nothing that Murad Mohammed could do. He was filled with hatred of his father, the Sultan, but any redress for the wrong done his mother and himself was out of the question unless he had powerful aid.

"By the strangest fortune this aid came a few months after Murad Mohammed had heard from the lips of the Albanian the tale of his origin. The Grand Vizier had fallen in disfavor and the despotism of Abdul Hamid had caused the formation of a band of young patriots who called themselves the Committee of Union and Progress."

"I've read of that!" exclaimed Stanborough.

"Yes, that committee is a historical fact," the narrator answered. He continued:

"Of this Committee of Union and Progress the Grand Vizier was the head. He had tried so persistently to get the Sultan to govern less harshly that Abdul had grown to dislike him. But had the Sultan suspected that the Vizier was the head of a league of men planning his overthrow the Vizier would have been in something worse than disfavor. He would have been swiftly sent to the Paradise of the Prophet.

"The Vizier knew the secret of Murad Mohammed's birth and suggested to his fellow conspirators that when they carried out the coup which they were planning they put Murad Mohammed on the Turkish throne. This plan met with the approval of all. The Vizier therefore went personally to see the young heir, who listened with a great stirring of his heart to the proposals made to him. As the price of the assistance of the Committee of Union and Progress he was to grant to the people of the empire a constitution and convoke a popular assembly. The reforms proposed would not seem like much in a European country, but for the Sublime Porte they were enormous.

"To all these proposals Murad Mohammed gave his consent, the old kavass nodding his approval. The blow was to be struck immediately. Abdul was to be made prisoner in the Yildiz Kiosk by his own servants. The army would be against him—it had not been paid for months. Every detail had been looked after.

"The day came when the Sultan went, as usual, to St. Sophia to pray. On his return he was to be seized and imprisoned. But a spy had ruined the plot.

"This spy was an Albanian, the son of the old kavass, and one of two men who guarded the Sultan as he slept. It was not until a long time afterward that the enemies of Abdul were able to figure out the betrayal.

"The Sultan slept in a different place in the palace each night. A few nights before the day set for the revolution the old kavass's son and the man with him both dozed as they guarded their master in a certain room of the palace. Abdul was the lightest of sleepers. Waking, he heard the kavass's son talking in his sleep. Enough was said to give away the chief points of the plot.

"After he had heard this Abdul lifted the pistol by his pillow and shot dead both his guards. The next day it was understood that the Sultan had kicked off his coverings in his sleep and that the watchers had started to replace them. The Sultan, feeling a man's hand, had raised himself and fired his pistol before he realized that the disturbers were his guards. That was the story at the time.

"Forewarned in this way, it was an easy matter for the Sultan to make his counterplot. So on this day, instead of returning to the palace from St. Sophia, he was driven in mad haste to the water front, put aboard his steam yacht, and carried out to the Mediterranean before his enemies fairly realized their failure.

"Only one thing did Abdul Hamid look out for besides his personal safety. He despatched two men to the mean house where Murad Mohammed dwelt and these two men killed the old kavass, overpowered another man before he could give an alarm and kidnapped the heir, putting him on board the imperial yacht a few moments before the white faced Sultan himself was helped aboard.

"Imprisoned in a low room below the deck Murad Mohammed bribed the man outside the door and slipping out quietly hid until the yacht passed close to the shore. Then he rushed on deck and jumped overboard. Some shots were fired at him, but the yacht did not stop there under the guns of the Dardanelles, no indeed. And Murad Mohammed was picked up by a little fishermen's boat. Before he could recover from the illness brought on by the chill he suffered another man had been placed on the throne."

The story teller stopped to take a sip of the mastic brandy. Stanborough, who had listened with growing fascination, said slowly:

"There would seem to be only one man who could tell the tale as you have told it."

The eyes of the stranger glistened.

"Perhaps so," he replied. "But I beg of you do not ask me anything more about Murad Mohammed. I know of no one of that name, for Kismet has finished with Murad Mohammed. But allow me to introduce myself. My name is M. M. Basileios. Let us say the initials are a coincidence; it is also amusing, is it not, that my last name is the Greek word for 'royal'? Before I go, let me thank you for your courteous attention to a strange story poorly told."

It was M. M. Basileios just come on duty.

The sky east of Madison street was flushed with pink as Stanborough left the Coffeehouse of the Dwellers in the Gulf of Patras. Plainly, a Turkish bath was the only place to spend the remaining hours before his train left the great terminal uptown. So Stanborough wandered over to the establishment of a skyscraper near by.

As he left the steam room and gave himself over to the hands of the rubber he heard the voice of the rubber in the next compartment addressing his victim:

"Well, it's a dog's age since I've seen you. * * * Want the usual your head, too?"

The voice was familiar and as Stanborough moved toward the door he glanced into the compartment and recognized the handsome features of M. M. Basileios, just come on duty.

WHY GRAND OPERA SUPERS SUPE

THE next time you attend the opera keep a sharp eye on the supers. You may be pleasantly or otherwise thrilled by recognizing some of them.

For instance, the courtly lady fanning the queenly mezzo-soprano may be your last summer's hired girl, or she may be the breezy young thing with the $500 lap pup who lives 'round the corner. And the poor, lean slave over there—the one with the red and gouty knees, who is holding the poison for the kingly basso profundo to drink—may be your missing husband, or mayhap the obliging waiter who helped to disentangle the ball of twine from your spaghetti on your last slumming expedition.

Yes, they're all suping at 25 cents a rehearsal and 50 cents a performance, and the pay is the same if they live on Fifth avenue or Piano Box alley. Let R. H. Judels, S. S. S. (Superintendent of Supes, Sir—and don't forget the "Sir") call the roll at the Metropolitan Opera House, and you'll find them all there—Mr. College Rahrahboy, Mrs. Second Childhood, Mr. Nearly Downandout, Miss Wealthy Ishouldfret, Mr. Busy Businessman and the omnipresent Miss Goingtobe N. Operasinger.

Don't be vexed. All opera supers can be juggled into two classes—those who have to supe and those who like to think they have to. In the have to class there is Mr. Nearly Downandout. His salary stands between him and the municipal lodging house. In the like to think they have to class you can place all the others; for, be it known, they like to think they have to supe to save grand opera from the demnition bowwows. Pray, don't take them lightly. They may be rendering a valuable service.

It may seem surprising, but there are men and women in New York who season after season are subscribers to the opera but seldom, if ever, occupy their seats. They prefer to hear their opera from the stage by toting a rusty musket or holding a spear in skin colored flannels. And why not? The stage to them is the shrine for the never ceasing worship of the great stars in the operatic constellation. And how they do worship them!

A word of encouragement from Farrar, a smile from Caruso, a handshake with Amato, a flower, no matter how faded or crushed, from Destinn, Gadski, Kurt, Bori, and ah! wonder of wonders! an autograph from any of them, and the super kicks the props of the workaday world from under him and soars to heights of ecstasy. Talk about hero worship! The ancient Greeks are out-Greeked by opera stars!

There is one old time super at the Metropolitan who occupies the most valuable plot of operatic real estate, so to speak, in the world. He stands next to Caruso in several operas. Though $500 might keep him out of the poorhouse he wouldn't sell his stage position for twice that amount. There is a certain responsibility resting upon him too. In one opera at least he assists his tenor majesty from carriage to stage. What do you suppose would happen if he let Caruso fall? Ask Caruso's countrymen.

Women supers there are who spend small fortunes on costumes and jewelry to match them. Indeed, some of them wear jewelry that the stars themselves can't afford. One girl who supes in "Aida" adorns herself with Egyptian antiques worth $10,000. Occasionally Mr. Busy Businessman can't get a good fit in an armor plate suit and thinks nothing of buying one for himself. Armor plate suits are expensive.

But antique jewelry and all the property paraphernalia obtainable don't of themselves make good supers.

"They've got to have something up here," says Mr. Judels, touching his salt and pepper hair. "For instance, the late Mme. Nordica was singing in 'Aida' in Philadelphia several years ago when a number of University of Pennsylvania students, whom I had employed as supers, came together at a prearranged signal at the end of the Nile scene—by the way, the most impressive scene in the opera—and gave Mme. Nordica their college yell. The only thing I remember is that the curtain dropped and prevented a riot. When I reached New York the following morning I was ten years older. I was also mad.

"The first thing I did was to hire twelve Mills Hotel men—men absolutely dependable because suping is a matter of a living with them. I have them yet. They range all the way from 16 to 75 years, and know every step and movement in the operas. When a wealthy young fellow wants to supe he has to follow in the footsteps of these dependables whether he wants to or not.

"Of course I have special supers for special operas. I have a list of forty business men who regularly supe in the German operas, which are, oddly enough, the most popular operas with supers. Other operas which they like are 'Walkuere,' 'Boris,' 'Tosca,' 'Boheme,' the two 'Manons,' 'Carmen' and 'Lohengrin.' The first act of 'Boris' calls for 144 supers, which is the largest number I have under my wing at one time.

"Formerly supers were allowed to climb up in the flies or stand in the wings and listen to the singers. One night a fire ordinance violator among them dropped a lighted cigarette which narrowly missed one of the big singers, with the result that supers are now forbidden the run of the stage. Of course they circulate among the singers for that most priceless treasure of a super's life—the autograph. Some autographs are so valuable from the super's viewpoint that they are locked in safety deposit vaults.

"But the good old days of suping—the days of Mme. Melba and the De Reszkes—are past, but still cherished, you may be assured, in the hearts of those who fell under their charm. There were two box offices in those days—one in front of the theatre and the other on the stage. The prices paid at the front box office for the choicest reserved seats were as nothing compared to the prices paid at the stage office for the privilege of suping. To bask in the sunshine of the old stars required an ample pocketbook.

"Why, I frequently meet people who delight to recall that they 'appeared with Melba and the De Raszkes.' It is well to doubt their word, for they will show you 'priceless autographs.' However, they haven't anything on our present day supers, the lowliest of whom have cards stating that they are connected with the Metropolitan Opera House, if you please!"

Miss Marie Kinne, the most experienced woman super at the Metropolitan.

Miss Mabel E. Bishop, who prefers to hear opera from the stage.

LOOK OUT FOR THESE SUNDAY LAWS

BECAUSE he mended his own shoes in his own shop on a recent Sunday Michael Morano, an Astoria cobbler, was adjudged a law breaker and fined $10 by City Magistrate Conway. The case caused comment among lawyers and laymen. You probably laughed when you read the news item or it may be you protested that such a fine couldn't stand the test of appeal.

The fact is, however, that Morano's conviction and the fine were good law and fair penalty, as a reference to the laws of the State will make plain. And what is more, New Yorkers by thousands and tens of thousands are breaking laws every Sunday. Residents of all the five boroughs are verily moving about in the crater of the penalty volcano every Sabbath of their lives. They may not realize they are out and out law breakers, but you know the old admonition that ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Some time ago one of the best known members of the New York bar, John R. Dos Passos, told his fellow guests at a public dinner that there were between thirteen and fourteen hundred kinds of violations of law in New York every year. The statement was made as an outcome of an investigation of records at the instance of Mr. Dos Passos, who was preparing data to indicate the necessity for reform in the law's superfluities. Many of these thirteen or fourteen hundred varieties were Sunday violations.

"There are less than a million different kinds of law breaking," said Mr. Dos Passos with droll gravness, "but not so many less when you come to check up. I had memoranda of several hundred classifications and species, illustrating the need of a little tabloiding of code."

Now a man might suppose as a free born Manhattanese that he had a right to fish on Sunday. Well, he hasn't. Not even on his own property. "What's that?" you say. "If I own a few lots up around Spuyten Duyvil way or abutting on the purling Bronx can't I sit on the bank with my veteran rod and reel and pull in fish—if they'll bite?" No, sir, you cannot lawfully do this on Sunday. Even were you to place your goldfish aquarium on the porch of your Brooklyn house and try to catch the fish with a bent pin and bread crumb bait you would be doing that which might lead to a fine.

That Sunday fishing is a violation of the Penal Code was settled and defined in a decision that has become more or less famous. The case was that of the People against Moses, decided back in 1892. Robert H. Moses of the town of Warwick, Orange county, fished one Sunday in a pond owned by a friend. He was brought before a justice of the peace and fined $5 as a violator of the State law covering Sabbath observance. The General Sessions affirmed the conviction. Moses appealed and likewise lost on appeal. Judge Cullen wrote the opinion, saying in part:

"That the defendant was fishing on Sunday is conceded; that the lake in which he fished was private property and that he had the privilege of fishing in it was also conceded. It is not shown that he created any commotion or disorder, or that his acts attracted or were witnessed by any person other than the complainant, or disturbed the peace. On these facts the plaintiff contends he was guilty of no offence. Section 265 of the Penal Code prohibits 'all shooting, hunting, fishing, playing, horse racing, gambling or other public sports, exercises or shows upon the first day of the week, and all noise disturbing the peace of the community.' It might be very difficult to draw any distinction between a 'public' fishing or hunting and 'private' fishing or hunting. The validity of such legislation cannot be questioned in this State."

A short time ago Thomas Cully of this city was found guilty of a violation of law in killing a pig on Sunday, Justices Kernochan, Herriman and Salmon declaring that "killing pigs interfered with the repose and religious liberty of the community." This conviction was predicated on section 2146 of the 1915 Annotated Code of Penal Law, which says:

"All trades, manufactures, agricultural and mechanical employments upon the first day of the week are prohibited except that when the same are works of necessity they may be performed on that day in the usual and orderly manner, so as not to interfere with the repose and religious feeling of the community."

It seems that Cully could not make out a case of necessity for the killing of the pig. But even had he shown it to be a necessity he might still have been arrested and fined if he had killed the pig on the east side of town. How's that? Why, don't you know that according to a New York city ordinance you can kill a pig only on the west side of town?

If you decide you're going to kill a steer or a sheep or a calf you have more leeway in Manhattan. You can kill any of the latter food furnishers on the West Side within the area bounded by Eleventh avenue and Thirty-eighth to Forty-first street to the North River, and on the East Side within the area bounded by First avenue between Forty-second and Forty-seventh streets and the East River. But remember, this is only for steers, calves and sheep—you cannot kill a pig lawfully on the East Side of Manhattan.

Suppose you wish to learn the latest dance steps and the only day you have at your disposal is Sunday. Can you contract with a teacher to give you dancing lessons on Sunday? You certainly cannot do so lawfully, and the bill for such tuition can be repudiated if presented. There are thousands learning to dance in New York on the Sabbath nevertheless.

Uncooked meat cannot lawfully be sold in New York on Sunday after 10 A. M., but cooked meat can. Still, a large quantity of uncooked meat is sold all day long. Nobody sees the harm in it, and nobody seems to complain about the many cases of law violation.

You may be fined for hoeing your own garden in your own Bronx or Staten Island back yard on Sunday. Unless of course you can show that it wasn't exactly hoeing, but gathering a few vegetables actually needed for your Sunday dinner. If you have a conservatory and plan to change the position of a dozen or two pots of flowers on Sunday, take care that nobody is peeping through the glass at you while you are doing it. It is against the code, for it is laboring on the Sabbath.

All barber shops are supposed to be closed at 1 P. M. on Sunday in New York. Strictly speaking, all work in the barber shop is supposed to be completed at the hour named and on the stroke. But nobody is likely to step out on the street half lathered or with only one side tonsored. It would be hard to find a place where this law is not sidestepped by the men plying razors and shears.

After you come home from church on Sunday morning, can you start in to embroider that centrepiece for Cousin Julia? You cannot lawfully do so, for aside from what the church folk might think about it, the Penal Code says that it is unnecessary labor on the first day of the week. There is a deal of Sunday sewing done in New York, it is said, even sewing machine sewing. Sister Sue might not [illegible] the law by declaring the [illegible] building was a war necessity.

If you have a truck farm on the skirts of Kings county you may [illegible] in your watermelons for market on Sunday provided you can show they are dead ripe and would spoil if held back until Monday. [illegible] lawsuit to get this interpretation of the code.

If a grouch wanted [illegible] enough he could have your [illegible] driver arrested for driving through the park on Sunday on the ground that it was unnecessary. This, of course, would not hold water with him, if you insisted that you did not one of pleasure, but [illegible] pose of going to the residence of [illegible] to talk over a business matter [illegible] could not be postponed until Monday.

Can you lawfully do the family washing on Sunday or have it done? [illegible] fine point of Sunday law for the New Yorker to consider. Suppose you get up early Sunday morning, do the washing by 10 o'clock and have hanging the pieces out on the line as the church folk went by to service. Do you know that you could be arrested and fined? Yes, indeed, you could. Necessity? Well, perhaps you might show or convince the Judge that you had had a peep at the neighbors and have decided they were going in for a wash—the quicker the better. Otherwise a fine for Sunday law breaking for yours.

If a New Yorker's teeth ache on Sunday he may lawfully have them treated or pulled. If it doesn't ache that's another phase. Can he have bridge work done on Sunday? A dentist would be able to cause an arrest in such a case if he could show that the bridge work could have been done on Monday just as well.

Up at Van Cortlandt park [illegible] Sunday all sorts of games are played. According to the Penal Code [illegible] contrary to law except perhaps [illegible] ball, concerning which there are a number of decisions that [illegible] crossed into a new state of [illegible] ment.

Can New Yorkers engage in [illegible] on Sunday? Well, a great deal depends upon how near [illegible] spooning is done.

The New Yorker can shovel the snow—and must shovel the snow from his front sidewalk on Sunday but not the paths in his back yard. The latter can go until Monday unless they lead to the chicken house and are necessary for feeding the fowls.