



Cannon Peep from Battlements On Monasteries at Mt. Athos, the Eveless Eden, Where 6,000 Holy Men Are Ready to Fight to the Last if Czar Fails to Send Aid.

WILL the czar, as the head of the Holy Mother Church of Russia, answer the plea of the 6,000 monks of Mt. Athos and send troops to their famous Eveless Eden, where some of the most priceless relics of the church are now imperiled by the spread of war in the Balkans?

The fear of war is a nightmare of horror to the monks of Mt. Athos and they have sent two of their four presidents on a pilgrimage in sackcloth and ashes to Athens to lay their terror before the representatives of the czar.

Mt. Athos is about eighty miles from Salonika, and no woman or female of any kind, not even a cow or a chicken, is permitted to set foot in the precincts of the holy mountain. Erisso, on the contrary, which lies in shouting distance from the boundary, is virtually a manless Eden, settled almost entirely by women—largely relatives of the monks. The emissaries to Athens ask protection also for Erisso.

Mt. Athos is not ignorant of war. Hence the high, wide walls and watch towers which give the monasteries the visage of feudal castles, an illusion heightened by the muzzles of cannon that peep through the ivy-grown battlements. The monks fought, with dire results to themselves, in the Greek war for independence from Ottoman rule in the early part of the last century. In the Middle Ages they were constantly subject to raids from marauding Saracens, and today they are exposed to attacks from roving bands of bandits that infest the surrounding country.

The community is made up of twenty convents and chapels, each of which is a repository of curious works of art and precious relics, such as the girdle of the Virgin, given to her by St. Thomas, and bits of the true cross, all of which are said to possess miraculous curative pow-

ers. In one beautiful shrine reposes the head of St. John Chrysostom, "from whose golden mouth words flowed sweeter than honey and more convincing than armies." Other sacred vessels, chalices, patens and censers are of heavy gold studded with gems of great value; still others are of embossed silver representing the highest period of Byzantine workmanship.

The monks know, in a vague, uncomprehending way, that these treasures are sufficient to tempt the men of the world, and they fear not only the coming of a conquering army, but more immediately the devastating raids by bandits sufficiently strong to overpower their hired guard of fifty soldiers.

The two presidents who set out for Athens embarked on the turbulent waters of the Aegean sea in one of the community's old world boats. They are armed only with a loaf of brown bread, a pinch of salt and an icon of rare beauty. The czar in person they could not reach, and so they went as best they could to his representative at Athens.

Prince Demidoff, the Russian minister, received them with large ceremony, and took from them their rough fare to be replaced by his own. It was the first time they had ever tasted milk or partaken of chicken. The minister assured them that he would put the matter in person before the emperor and recommend that a contingent of Russian marines be sent to guard the peninsula if they had to come all the way from Archangel to get there.

One of the monasteries on Mt. Athos is purely Russian, St. Panteleimon—"the always merciful." It stands near the small bay of Daphne and its oratories gleam white among the olive and orange trees. This monastery is the largest and one of the most imposing of all the structures within the boundaries of the holy



mountain. It is and is not a monastery for among its monks are no fewer than fifteen hundred Russians transported there principally for political reasons. The majority of them are youthful, and their stolid, typically Russian countenances, with their smoldering eyes, contrast strangely with the thin, intellectual faces and dancing eyes of their Greek companions.

Northmost on the western slope of the peninsula is the monastery of Konstantonites, the oldest of all and one of the most picturesque. It rises like a fairy palace from a ring of cypress trees. Its roofs are incredibly lofty, with windows only in the upper half. On the top, peeping out here and there, are numerous ramparts. The monastery was founded early in the fifth century by the son of Constantine the Great. The czar granted it by the Byzantine emperor, with his signature scrawled in the blood of some animal, still reposes in the archives of the convent.

Entrance to this monastery, as to most of the others, is gained by means of a basket lowered from one of the windows in the first tier, about half way up, to which point the walls are sheer and impregnable.

To the passerby on the deck of a coast steamer, Mt. Athos, with its strange, fantastic architecture from slope to summit, presents a picture of such extraordinary beauty that it perhaps cannot be equaled in the entire world. The holy

mountain is the fingernail of the peninsula, which stretches south into the Aegean. It is girt on three sides by the sea.

The Turks, in their occupation of Mt. Athos, preserved the sacred relics and treasures of gold and precious stones, but, what the monks valued more than the gold and jewels, their priceless manuscripts, were used as wadding for the Turk guns.

The religious ceremonies on the mountain are most rigorous. During the period of Lent the monks pray or attend mass sixteen hours every day. And their period of Lent lasts one-third of the year. The rest of the year is divided each day into eight hours for prayer, eight for manual labor and eight for rest.

The community is divided into distinct classes: idiorhythmic, in which each brother is a rule unto himself, and cenobitic, in which the recluses live in common. The latter have one father superior, who is elected for life. The former is more or less of an aristocratic oligarchy.

There are three other minor classes in which the monks are literally hermits. The western slope of the mountain, which is barren and grim in comparison to the bright verdure of the eastern side, is the domain of the hermits. Its craggy sides are dotted with their miniature hermitages, which seem to be suspended in air like dream nests by invisible cords. It is the wonder of the world how these hermitages were built on the precipitous peaks and how they continue to withstand the onslaughts of the terrific gales that rage around the mountains.

The danger to which the monks are subject is near and real, for the brigand band in this part of the country is a perfectly organized body, with a leader whose word is law under penalty of death. As yet the czar has not sent the expedition to protect them, and perhaps will not. So now a second deputation has been dispatched to Athens—this time with the

most precious of the sacred possessions to be placed in the security of the steel safe in the imperial Russian legation.

The black-robed elders are taking the relics to Athens under guard of ten of the hired soldiers. They, too, set forth from their cliffs and crags and ventured out on the Aegean in another of the old world boats. Later, if the Russian marines are not sent, it is planned to convey the rest of the treasures to Athens.

One of the most interesting sidelights on the mountain is the view the monks take of the United States. A recent article by Cleason P. Lazarte, from which some of the more intimate of the foregoing facts have been drawn, contains an interview with the prior of Monastery Watopedi, one of the largest. The conver-

sation turned to America, and the prior said:

"In that country, both good and bad, prosperity and calamity, seem always to be on an extensive scale, challenging our admiration by their greatness. In this the United States resembles those tropical forests where the life-giving bread tree and poisonous plants grow side by side in equal luxuriance."

The monks are not frightened by the vastness of the present war raging over the face of Europe. They do not tremble at the thought of peril to themselves. Their only wish is to protect the treasures of the church. They fear only that some of these will fall into the hands of those of different faith, and this possibility is a living horror on the holy mountain.

Astor Sparkler Dazzles as He Joins House of Lords

THE introduction of William Waldorf Astor into the House of Lords the other day was an interesting event. He took his seat as Baron Astor of Hever, in the county of Kent.

His sponsors were Baron Cheylesmore, who married in 1892 Miss Elizabeth French, of New York, and Baron Newton, a member of the government.

The ceremony was rather quaint, and Astor went through it with an air of some impatience. He first appeared at the bar of the House attired in a scarlet robe trimmed with ermine and a three-cornered hat, accompanied by his sponsors, similarly dressed. They were received by the garter king of arms, who led them in single file, Astor in the middle, up the floor to the wooolsack, where Astor presented his patent to the lord high chancellor, who merely opened the scroll and returned it. They then retired, walking backward and bowing to the table, and as Cheylesmore was not going quickly enough for the new baron the latter turned and pushed him, to the astonishment of the spectators, among whom were several ladies in the peeresses' gallery.

At the table the clerk of Parliament read out the king's patent to "our right trusty and well beloved cousin" conferring upon him a barony in the United Kingdom. That having been done, the garter king of arms again led the procession to the baron's bench, where Astor and his two sponsors seated themselves.

But there was one other formality to be observed. They rose three times in their places, took off their hats and bowed to the lord high chancellor, who acknowledged each bow by taking off his own three-cornered hat, which he only uses on these occasions.

William Waldorf Astor was now a full-fledged peer of the United Kingdom, a dignity that can only be taken from him by attainder. He did not look any happier than usual. It was observed that he wore a diamond ring of extraordinary size and brilliancy, the flashes from which dazzled his fellow noblemen as he fingered his hat.

The ceremony was concluded by his going once more to the wooolsack and shaking hands with the lord high chancellor, after which he left the chamber to receive the congratulations of his family and friends.