

# THE HOTEL CLERK ON THE TURKISH DOWNS

BY IRVIN S. COBB.

"I'M GLAD I don't live in Turkey these times," said the House Detective of the St. Rockless.

"I'm glad I don't live in Turkey any time," said the Hotel Clerk. "I'm also glad I don't live in Patagonia, or New South Wales, or the Peninsula of Northern Michigan. To be quite frank with you, Larry, there's more'n a million places that I'm glad I don't live in. I can stand for hours at a time listening to a skilled yodeler that calls off the names of the towns up at the Grand Central Station without being overwhelmed by a strange, wistful longing to go to Ashabula, Ohio, and all points west. I'd rather live right here in New York with its teeming population of five million people. I know it's got five million people, because I see fully three million of them all trying to get on the same subway train going home every night.

"But, if it's not a personal matter, might I ask what has suddenly embittered you against Turkey? Who asked you to live there, anyway? I didn't hear that an enthusiastic delegate from the Turkish Chamber of Commerce, the Constantinople C. A. B. post and the Common Council had been around offering you the freedom of the city and begging you to come right along before all the choice residential villa sites are gobbled up by real estate speculators. Have you been blackballed by the Young Turks' Country and Coochie-Coochie Club, or what?"

"Well, it's the way they've been carrying on over there," said the House Detective, "showing and cutting and scrapping. We ain't them Turks anyway."

"They're merely getting a constitution," explained the Hotel Clerk. "It's always that way when a country that's never had a constitution is getting one. Babes behave the same way when they're testing. This thing of acquiring a constitution is merely drunk and disorderly conduct, assault and battery and unlawful assemblage, on a large scale. If the parties that want a constitution are there with the punch and they get the decision, either on points or a knockout, they're a bunch of grand little patriots, and future generations will name third-class postoffices and race horses for them. But if the regular police force is too strong for them, they join the Bad Society and get 30 days on the Island for resisting an officer."

"Look at the Russians, for example. It seemed to me that, as Russians go, they were doing very well under an unlimited despotism, which is something like being under the Standard Oil, only not so severe, and in their simple Russian way, drinking the kerosene out of the family lamp and living on those little gray-green mushrooms that reside in the woods. They got a Duma, and the Duma got the constitution bug in their head and, like anybody who could eat a cavabar sandwich and eat it, they went into a situation that carried things to an extreme. But the Grand Dukes got to the Czar first and made up his mind for him the other way. It being that kind of a mind,

and one snowy forenoon shortly after this time there was a noise like rattling iron chains along the road to Siberia looked out of the front windows and saw the leading spirits of the recent Duma starting on the first legislative junket in the history of their country.

"So how any Russian statesman who thinks his land needs a constitution and wants to make a speech on the subject, goes down in the night and confides his remarks to a semi-detached rat-hole.

"But in Turkey, from what I can gather, it was the ladies that really started it. Ever since the days of the Prophet, up until quite recently, the high-caste Turkish lady had been content to stay in a harem, which is the institution on which most of our county jails in this country are modeled. She had the lower part of her face buried in a nose-bag, the same as a truck team at high noon, and spent her time developing a figure that helped a lot towards carrying out the comparison of a Norman horse immersed in oats. For to be a success as a Turkish lady had to be fat. Those muscular ones you saw from time to time with the Streets of Cairo show at an Elks carnival didn't move in the best set back home. Slenderness wasn't any more popular in a harem than it is at the Chicago stockyards.

No, I may say I wouldn't have lasted a week in Turkey. They'd a-kidnaped her. Some dark night there'd been a furniture wagon backed up at the side door of her hotel and in the morning she'd be missing, and when next you heard from her she'd be a massive but helpless prisoner, immured in the seraglio of some powerful man, closely guarded by the same group of daring plane-movers that were hired to commit the abduction. That's the way it used to be.

"But all of a sudden a wave of female independence swept through the Turkish Empire. The leading ladies took off their nose-bags, and the populace at large had a look. Then they had another look and became indeed desperate. They felt that the situation was one which could not be relieved by any ordinary means, such as going over into the Balkans and killing off a few of the Christians, who occupy the same position in the political arrangements of that country that the Democrats do in this. So they decided to have a constitution. They are now engaged in having it. And after they have it I wonder what they'll do with it."

"The paper says the Sultan, old Abdul Humid, or whatever his foolish name is, has been raging like a caged lion," said the House Detective.

"Well, I don't know how a caged lion rages, but I know how a caged lion smells, and any other horrible details that you have you can keep to yourself," said the Hotel Clerk. "And, anyway, I don't blame him for raging. He's a very sick man to start with. Every paper I pick up says he's the sickest man in Europe, although none of them ever told what was the matter with him, unless it was the one that stated he had four or five regular wives and a barn full of deputy wives and any number of ladies-in-waiting scattered around the neighborhood. I guess he's the indispensible Ottoman Kid, all right. Amos then there's coming Abdul Az-iz fussing around



GETTING A NEW CONSTITUTION

with old Abdul Az-wuz, whose either his uncle or his past partner. I forgot which. The last I heard about the Sultan he'd gone into his bomb-proof and was letting the Albanian bodyguard do the rough outside work.

"They say them Albanian guys is the tough scrappers, all right," commented the House Detective.

"Till have to ask them to show me," said the Hotel Clerk. "I saw a picture of a row of them. They wear a costume

that's a cross between a lamp chimney and a bareback rider and their weapons are the same kind that they sell you at the installment-house to loop up the draperies of your Oriental cozy corners with. I have my doubts about any man being able to fight very hard when he's got a pistol and a gun or two and I'll guarantee to look any Armenian child that lives, single-handed, by myself, and I'm no professional fighter at that. They might even have put it on our friends the Chi-

nese here a few years back, when the Chiniks still entertained the notion that the proper way to afflict the invader was to march out on the serried field shooting fire-crackers and go through the parrot situation. But it only took one short summer for our other friends, the Japs, to cure them of the delusion that the fan drill was mightier than the dum-dum bullet in modern warfare, and I've a notion that if the Turks tackled the Chinese now there'd be more widows in

the rug store than in the hand laundry. And I positively shudder to think what would happen to the bloodthirsty Albanian body guard if it got at a set of utilities reserves from the West Thirtieth-street Police Station.

"The way I do it out, a constitution ain't fitted for any race that's not civilized all the way up," said the House Detective.

"Quite right," said the Hotel Clerk. "There's a lot of things besides constitutions that the Turks and the rest of the uncivilized nations couldn't assimilate without a severe course of training. Now there's the Filipino head hunter. He's a poor untutored cuss that goes about dressed up in the scenario of a pair of pants and totting a spear with a head on it like one of those tools that a Masonic lodge uses when it's laying a cornerstone. But he's a good sport, according to his lights, about once in so long he encases his person in a sketchy first act of a suit of clothes, made out of grass, with a seashell waistband, and goes forth and puts a dent in his rival's brown gentleman that's dead and another that's beating it back through the Samar high grass in the general direction of Poseny County. If the friends of the deceased should happen to overtake our hero, the formalities are simple in the extreme. They merely leave part of him there and take the rest of him home with them on the end of a pole. There's another variant bolo in Bologna and a new face, with a set smile on it, over the garden gate of the opposition village. The incident has been closed in a manner satisfactory to all concerned.

"If you should suggest to this crude savage that instead of being slaughtered on the spot, he ought to enter an insanity plea, he wouldn't grasp your meaning at all. He'd think you were taking advantage of his lack of education to kid him along and he'd feel aggrieved because you didn't go ahead and edit him down with from scratch and cease your frivolous and ill-timed jesting. And if he'd carried his brother along with him to see that it was a finished job, and you as his lawyer should advise that it would be easy to grove by competent alienists that both of them went crazy together, having been acized simultaneously with the new variety of insanity known as family group bunch that it would be a blamed sight more profitable probably double up in an uncontrollable outburst of laughter. He'd never get it through his skull.

"You're right, Larry. In what you said just now, there are many things about the higher civilization that you couldn't get a savage nation to accept yet awhile, and I'm afraid they'd never believe in an up-to-date insanity defense such as we have in the more expensive murder cases.

"In fact, Larry, I never heard of anybody that would believe in 'em except some jurists."

# Conversations with an Old Sport

IN WHICH HE SHOWS UP THE RESULTS OF "EARLY TO BED AND EARLY TO RISE."

"THIS sporting life is a pleasant existence," said the up-state banker, who had come down to see the sights, "but it's a cinch that it doesn't do a fellow much good, and it's against all the rules of longevity. It's got me on the bum since I hit this village. I tell you if we only fully realized just how much some of our pleasures clip off the rag end of our lives we'd be a blamed sight more careful how we indulged our cravings for entertainment. I'll admit that I've had more fun crammed into the few days of my life since I met you fellows than I would ordinarily have in a year's existence, but when I begin to figure up at the rate the dopesters tell us our fun costs us, I find that I am due to die just about ten years earlier than I would have if I had stayed at home. These figures are alarming when you stop to ponder on them awhile, and after a little figuring I find that one more night like last night would make me dead and planted five years ago day before yesterday, allowing myself the average life of 75 years and deducting for dissipation at the rate we are led to believe it costs us."

"Well," replied the broker, "let me tell you that if the moralists' dope is right, by adding onto my present age the number of years that I have lost through dissipation, I find that my term of existence would have had old Methuselah in the infant class. Yes, sir, if I had never chewed, smoked or drank, and left the midnight boogie supper on the table instead of sticking it under my vest, take it from me that I'd be the oldest inhabitant of at least six more generations, and instead of these gray hairs that you see on my dome of thought, today you'd see me in the nursery playing with my dolly. That is assuming that the moralists have their figures pertaining to the cost of dissipation down pat."

"Well," exclaimed the Old Sport, "also assuming that the moralists' dope is correct, if there is anything that posterity ought to be thankful for it is that some guy invented dissipation, so that a couple of old fools like you two wouldn't live to contaminate the future ages with your presence. It's only another proof of those eternal nit-boose joints are a beneficial institution and should be encouraged. Nature gave us the cigarette because we have the ducts to smoke them, and the one past exterminates the other. A lot of these long-faced moralists who try to put dissipation on the blink are simply blind to the fitness of things as provided by nature. Take it from me, if they'd close up the boogie joints and the Great White Way they wouldn't be able to find enough foot killers to supply the demand."

"I guess you're right," replied the banker, "but there's one thought that is deeply impressed on my mind this morning, and that is that if some genius would only invent something that would make wine taste as good coming up as it does going down he would take a thundering lot of misery out of the world and get his name splattered all over the ball of fame. You fellows down here in the city may think that 'early to



bed and early to rise" is a humdrum existence, but I guess after all it's the dope that wins out in the stretch."

"I guess you're hooked up in a wrestling match with Mr. R. E. Morse," this morning, replied the Old Sport. "But getting down to cases on the 'early to bed and early to rise' dope, let me tell you that the object lessons that are splattered around this old dump of a world kind of puts this 'early to bed and early to rise' dope in the wheat belt, where the population hits the hay when the chickens go to roost and are feeding the stock when the gray dawgs gets on the job, you'll find a lot of old mummies hobbling around on a cane before they hit the half-century mark. But you drop into a downtown cafe in this wicked city at 2 A. M. and you'll find a bunch of 50 who haven't put on their first wrinkle yet and can nail the last night car on the fly in the middle of the block."

"The wise guy who ripped off this slab that 'early to bed and early to rise' makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise," may have hugg'd the dope that he was injecting a little wisdom into the world, but take it from me, it's a



losing tip. You'll find a blamed sight more health, wealth and wisdom planted behind a slab of steak in the downtown eating joints at midnight than you'll find hugging the hay in the home ranch. If you keep your lamps trimmed as you plug along the path of life, you'll notice that the city sport who considers it a public disgrace to go to bed the same day on which he got up is a pretty sleek specimen of manhood when he hits the 50-mile strap pile. Out in the wheat belt, where the population hits the hay when the chickens go to roost and are feeding the stock when the gray dawgs gets on the job, you'll find a lot of old mummies hobbling around on a cane before they hit the half-century mark.

"At the age when your 'early to bed and early to rise' farmer is doing the Rip Van Winkle stunt propped up in an easy chair in the shade of the old apple tree, your night owl of a city sport is still doing the shows and splattering his presence along the Great White Way through the midnight hours, and he doesn't look ready to cash in yet either, not by a long shot.

"Now, these object lessons that we have stabling us in the mug every day are a blamed sight stronger proofs than a few coined phrases that have been



shoved onto posterity as a relic of the dark ages by a bunch of long-faced garret ink slingers with a chronic case of stuporous melancholia, and to the guy with an observant turn of mind they put a good sized crimp in the thundering lot of this 'How to live long and be happy' dope. "And let me tell you that there's a blamed good reason for it, too. These guys will hand you a wad of dope on how to be healthy and live long, and fill you up with a string of restrictions, the very observance of which will insert a harmful monotony into your daily life that is in itself a more killing pace than any you can cut out for yourself. They don't seem to be hen to the dreadful effects of monotony, but you can take it from me that monotony is responsible for a blamed sight more blighted lives and prematurely withered souls and untimely ends than porterhouse steaks and mugs of ale at midnight. And any guy can dig up examples that will prove my assertion right among his own circle of acquaintances.

"There's nothing to it, the guy who chucks monotony out of the bundle of baggage that he lugs along the path of life is going to have a blamed sight better chance of getting a long and pleasant journey than the dud who loads himself



down with monotonous directions and plugs through each day like a piece of mechanism doing the same old stunts. And take my tip, fellows, an overdose of pleasure constitutes monotony just as much as an overdose of work. The guy who hits the right trail to happiness and longevity is the one who makes one divert the other. A man can't plug along through life like a clock without busting his mainspring.

"Take it from me, the guy who tries to live by any set of rules, I don't give a continental cuss what they are, is going



to get through with his job in time to give his less precise and more sporty friends a chance to buy floral offerings and float around to his darkened home and chew the rag about how natural he looks.

"They can bust their larynx yelling about a sporting life being too fast a pace if they want to and they can keep right on shoveling this 'early to bed and early to rise' dope into youthful thick tanks till they put the kids on the bum, for all I care, but the motto that I'll keep tacked up in the family living room

roads: "As we plug along the path of life, let us live by the way."

"Even if it were a double riveted cinch that any dud could live to be 100 years old by following this healthy and longevousy dope, I'll gamble that you'll not butt into many who would want to live 100 years if they had to plug along on that schedule. I've got a good-sized notion to spend the blamed shucks in an up-to-date insanity defense such as we have in the more expensive murder cases.

"In fact, Larry, I never heard of anybody that would believe in 'em except some jurists."

**A Russian Beauty Farm.**  
Woman's Life.  
A wealthy Russian noticed that many of the recruits in the Russo-Turkish war were inferior in physique. He accordingly established what really is a beauty farm. He employs on his estate only the handsomest and healthiest villagers. These he encourages to enter upon matrimony by free grants of land, payment of all marriage fees and an annuity of 50 rubles a year for every child born. Since the institution of this farm 40 model marriages have taken place and more than 100 children have been born.

**Frogs After Chicken-Pie.**  
Tork Cor. Philadelphia Record.  
Mrs. Caroline Ferguson, living near Margareta Furnace, had for some time been missing young chickens. Near the house is a pond and Mrs. Ferguson declares that she saw a frog leap from the water catch a chick which had strayed near, and leap back again with it. The pond has since been drained and every frog, a dozen or more slain. Now no more chicks are missed.

A hotel is being built at Berlin which will be the largest in the world.