

Rural Pleasures of the Peasants— Wrestling and Dancing.

The scene was more like a fair than a picnic. All the perambulatory merchants, who commonly occupied the dirty little square in the center of the village, had moved to the grove in pursuit of their regular customers. The water and sherbet venders clinked their glasses everywhere, and the sweetmeat dealers found especially ready bargains. Almost every tributary nationality was represented, but the largest sprinkling were Bulgarians. These latter were distinguishable by black sheepskin cap worn instead of the common fez. The women were mostly covered by the *fe-reja*, the favorite colors being purple and Mollah green. The centre of attraction for the moment was a level space near the creek, where a large ring had been marked out and most of the male population had assembled. An officious master of ceremonies kept back the crowd, and in a few moments two brawny Turks, stripped to the waist, stepped into the open space and took up positions facing each other on opposite sides of the ring. Their bodies shone as if they had been greased. At a word they moved cautiously forward, each looking steadily into the other's eyes. Then, quick as a flash, one of them darted forward and grappled his antagonist for the underhold. But the latter was not taken unawares. There was a sudden bending forward of his body, a sharp, shunting, outward motion of his arms, throwing those of his opponent away from him, a confused arms-length struggle, a closing hug, and then, after several minutes' twisting and tripping, a decisive fall. The people, who seemed to be well acquainted with the champions, went perfectly crazy with alternate joy and regret, according to the varying fortunes of their respective favorites. They yelled and groaned, and danced and slapped each other on the back, and made remarks about the forms and personal features of the actors that had more of truth than delicacy in them. The first pair were succeeded by a second, and these by others, and at least twenty rounds had been decided before they knocked off for dinner. A blonde Albanian woman, whose trousers hung down so they looked like a skirt, brought us cheese and black bread, roast pork and cake, a sort of succotash, with vinegar in it, and a mild sort of wine. The provisions had evidently been prepared at the public expense and were dealt to each group alike. Families ate by themselves or with friends, and everything was set on the cloths between them. Forks there were none, and the occasion being informal, the usual preliminary hand-washing was dispensed with. The highest in rank dipped at once with his hand into the common mess bowls and invited the others to follow suit. The Americans were given a mess by themselves and so were able to keep the dirt from becoming international.

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