

# A Story of The Balkans

By DONALD CHAMBERLIN

Shortly after the assassination of the Austrian royalties in Serbia that brought on the big European war I was talking with my friend Hardegan about it and noticed that he was under considerable emotion.

"If the subject is disagreeable to you, Ned," I said, "let us change it."

He made no reply for a few moments, then lowering his voice said:

"You know that my wife was born and brought up in one of the Balkan states."

"I know that you have been very secretive about your wife's past," I replied.

"There is a reason for my secretiveness. The people of the Balkan states have lived in a constant state of oppression by the Turks and of late years in dread of being absorbed by one or another of European sovereigns. My wife had spent her childhood in familiarity with the barbarous acts of the Turks and when she became a woman saw her country in process of passing into an empire lying to the west."

He then told me the following story: "My wife, as you know, is called Anna. That is not her name, but I shall not give you her real name or tell you where is her birthplace. When I went abroad before settling down to my profession I put aside a year for travel. In Vienna I made the acquaintance of an Austrian of prominence who let me into the secret of Austrian intentions respecting the provinces lying to the eastward of the empire. That summer Bosnia and Herzegovina were annexed.

"From Vienna I went to Serbia and thence through all the Balkan states. In one of them—I shall not say which—I met my wife. We took a desperate fancy to each other at once. Her family was noble, and, she being both refined and intelligent, there seemed no reason why we should not be married except that we were of a different race.

"After our engagement I told my wife what I had learned about Austrian intentions concerning certain Balkan states. I noticed that she listened with deep emotion. She hated the Austrians and seemed to dread

their encroachment. My information confirmed certain hints she had received that the emperor of Austria was about to appropriate her native state and that a certain Austrian diplomat was then in the capital—in which she lived—who was taking certain preparatory steps for the occupation. This seemed to work upon her mind, distressing her very much.

"I was glad when our wedding day arrived, for she was to leave her home with me for America. The bridal was solemnized with a certain barbaric splendor which was enhanced by the picturesque costumes of all but myself. I wearing the usual American clothes and looking for all the world like a weed in a flower garden.

"In the evening after the ceremony my wife bade goodby to her family and friends with so much emotion that I wondered if she would be content in our far distant home. Then we entered the carriage that was to take us to the station. Before starting my wife told me to ask the coachman to stop at the house of a friend of hers to whom she wished to say goodby. I noticed that Anna carried in her hand a small package, and I asked her why she had not put it in a trunk or a satchel. She replied that it was glass and perishable.

"When we reached her friend's house she asked me to remain in the carriage while she went in and bade her friend goodby. She would not be gone more than two or three minutes. I assented. She went to the door, still carrying the package. A young woman admitted her; the two disappeared inside for about a minute; then Anna reappeared and returned to me—without the package. I saw no evidence of an emotional parting between the two girl friends. Indeed, both seemed absorbed in something else.

"From Anna's home we passed into Hungary. In the morning we were at Budapest, and at the hotel I noticed knots of persons talking excitedly on some subject and on inquiry learned that an attempt had been made during the night in the city we had left to assassinate the Austrian diplomat, who was preparing the way for the state's annexation. A woman had thrown a bomb through an open window into a room where her intended victim was sitting. He was badly injured, but not killed. The news did not appear in the newspapers. It was simply whispered from one person to another. Indeed, it was never published to the world.

"When I rejoined my wife I told her what I had heard. She turned pale and in two quick questions asked if the girl who had thrown the bomb had been captured and if the attempt had

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been successful. The answer to the first question I did not know. The second I answered mechanically, for my wife's emotion, taken with other events, led me to suspect that she had delivered to the assassin the bomb that had been used.

"The look of horror on my face revealed to Anna what was on my mind. Claspng her arms about me, she confessed that she had been a party to the attempted assassination and begged me not to turn against her. Despite my repugnance to her participation in what the world considered a crime, I could not turn away from a bride of less than a day.

"We must get out of Austria at once," I said, and within half an hour we were on our way to the train."

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