

## BOOK IX: BALKA

RUPERT'S JOURNAL—Continued (Longe Intervallo). February 10, 1908.

It is so long since I even thought of this journal that I hardly know where to begin. I always heard that a married man is a pretty busy man; but since I became one, though it is a new life to me, and of a happiness undreamt of, I KNOW what that life is. But I had no idea that this King business was anything like what it is. Why, it never leaves me a moment at all to myself—or, what is worse, to Teuta. If people who condemn Kings had only a single month of my life in that capacity, they would form an opinion different from that which they hold. It might be useful to have a Professor of Kingship in the Anarchists' College—whenever it is founded!

Everything has gone on well with us, I am glad to say. Teuta is in splendid health, though she has—but only very lately—practically given up going on her own aeroplane. It was, I know, a great sacrifice to make, just as she had become an expert at it. They say here that she is one of the best drivers in the Blue Mountains—and that is in the world, for we have made that form of movement our own. Ever since we found the pitch-blende pockets in the Great Tunnel, and discovered the simple process of extracting the radium from it, we have gone on by leaps and bounds. When first Teuta told me she would “aero” no more for a while, I thought she was wise, and backed her up in it: for driving an aeroplane is trying work and hard on the nerves. I only learned then the reason for her caution—the usual one of a young wife. That was three months ago, and only this morning she told me she would not go sailing in the air, even with me, till she could do so “without risk”—she did not mean risk to herself. Aunt Janet knew what she meant, and counselled her strongly to stick to her resolution. So for the next few months I am to do my air-sailing alone.

The public works which we began immediately after the Coronation are going strong. We began at the very beginning on an elaborate system. The first thing was to adequately fortify the Blue Mouth. Whilst the fortifications were being constructed we kept all the warships in the gulf. But when the point of safety was reached, we made the ships do sentry-go along the coast, whilst we trained men for service at sea. It is our plan to take by degrees all the young men and teach them this wise, so that at the end the whole population shall be trained for sea as well as for land. And as we are teaching them the airship service, too, they will be at home in all the elements—except fire, of course, though if that should become a necessity, we shall tackle it too!

We started the Great Tunnel at the farthest inland point of the Blue Mouth, and ran it due east at an angle of 45 degrees, so that, when complete, it would go right through the first line of hills, coming out on the plateau Plazac. The plateau is not very wide—half a mile at most—and the second tunnel begins on the eastern side of it. This new tunnel is at a smaller angle, as it has to pierce the second hill—a mountain this time. When it comes out on the east side of that, it will tap the real productive belt. Here it is that our hardwood-trees are finest, and where the greatest mineral deposits are found. This plateau is of enormous length, and runs north and south round the great bulk of the central mountain, so that in time, when we put up a circular railway, we can bring, at a merely nominal cost, all sorts of material up or down. It is on this level that we have built the great factories for war material. We are tunnelling into the mountains, where are the great deposits of coal. We run the trucks in and out on the level, and can get perfect ventilation with little cost or labour. Already we are mining all the coal which we consume within our own confines, and we can, if we wish, within a year export largely. The great slopes of these tunnels give us the necessary aid of specific gravity, and as we carry an endless water-supply in great

tubes that way also, we can do whatever we wish by hydraulic power. As one by one the European and Asiatic nations began to reduce their war preparations, we took over their disbanded workmen through our agents, so that already we have a productive staff of skilled workmen larger than anywhere else in the world. I think myself that we were fortunate in being able to get ahead so fast with our preparations for war manufacture, for if some of the "Great Powers," as they call themselves, knew the measure of our present production, they would immediately try to take active measures against us. In such case we should have to fight them, which would delay us. But if we can have another year untroubled, we shall, so far as war material is concerned, be able to defy any nation in the world. And if the time may only come peacefully till we have our buildings and machinery complete, we can prepare war-stores and implements for the whole Balkan nations. And then—But that is a dream. We shall know in good time.

In the meantime all goes well. The cannon foundries are built and active. We are already beginning to turn out finished work. Of course, our first guns are not very large, but they are good. The big guns, and especially siege-guns, will come later. And when the great extensions are complete, and the boring and wire-winding machines are in working order, we can go merrily on. I suppose that by that time the whole of the upper plateau will be like a manufacturing town—at any rate, we have plenty of raw material to hand. The haematite mines seem to be inexhaustible, and as the raising of the ore is cheap and easy by means of our extraordinary water-power, and as coal comes down to the plateau by its own gravity on the cable-line, we have natural advantages which exist hardly anywhere else in the world—certainly not all together, as here. That bird's eye view of the Blue Mouth which we had from the aeroplane when Teuta saw that vision of the future has not been in vain. The aeroplane works are having a splendid output. The aeroplane is a large and visible product; there is no mistaking when it is there! We have already a large and respectable aerial fleet. The factories for explosives are, of course, far away in bare valleys, where accidental effects are minimized. So, too, are the radium works, wherein unknown dangers may lurk. The turbines in the tunnel give us all the power we want at present, and, later on, when the new tunnel, which we call the "water tunnel," which is already begun, is complete, the available power will be immense. All these works are bringing up our shipping, and we are in great hopes for the future.

So much for our material prosperity. But with it comes a larger life and greater hopes. The stress of organizing and founding these great works is practically over. As they are not only self-supporting, but largely productive, all anxiety in the way of national expenditure is minimized. And, more than all, I am able to give my unhampered attention to those matters of even more than national importance on which the ultimate development, if not the immediate strength, of our country must depend.

I am well into the subject of a great Balkan Federation. This, it turns out, has for long been the dream of Teuta's life, as also that of the present Archimandrite of Plazac, her father, who, since I last touched this journal, having taken on himself a Holy Life, was, by will of the Church, the Monks, and the People, appointed to that great office on the retirement of Petrof Vlastimir.

Such a Federation had long been in the air. For myself, I had seen its inevitableness from the first. The modern aggressions of the Dual Nation, interpreted by her past history with regard to Italy, pointed towards the necessity of such a protective measure. And now, when Servia and Bulgaria were used as blinds to cover her real movements to incorporate with herself as established the provinces, once Turkish, which had been entrusted to her temporary protection by the Treaty of Berlin; when it would seem that Montenegro was to be deprived for all time of the

hope of regaining the Bocche di Cattaro, which she had a century ago won, and held at the point of the sword, until a Great Power had, under a wrong conviction, handed it over to her neighbouring Goliath; when the Sandjack of Novi-Bazar was threatened with the fate which seemed to have already overtaken Bosnia and Herzegovina; when gallant little Montenegro was already shut out from the sea by the octopus-like grip of Dalmatia crouching along her western shore; when Turkey was dwindling down to almost ineptitude; when Greece was almost a byword, and when Albania as a nation—though still nominally subject—was of such unimpaired virility that there were great possibilities of her future, it was imperative that something must happen if the Balkan race was not to be devoured piecemeal by her northern neighbours. To the end of ultimate protection I found most of them willing to make defensive alliance.

And as the true defence consists in judicious attack, I have no doubt that an alliance so based must ultimately become one for all purposes. Albania was the most difficult to win to the scheme, as her own complications with her suzerain, combined with the pride and suspiciousness of her people, made approach a matter of extreme caution. It was only possible when I could induce her rulers to see that, no matter how great her pride and valour, the magnitude of northern advance, if unchecked, must ultimately overwhelm her.

I own that this map-making was nervous work, for I could not shut my eyes to the fact that German lust of enlargement lay behind Austria's advance. At and before that time expansion was the dominant idea of the three Great Powers of Central Europe. Russia went eastward, hoping to gather to herself the rich north-eastern provinces of China, till ultimately she should dominate the whole of Northern Europe and Asia from the Gulf of Finland to the Yellow Sea. Germany wished to link the North Sea to the Mediterranean by her own territory, and thus stand as a flawless barrier across Europe from north to south.

When Nature should have terminated the headship of the Empire-Kingdom, she, as natural heir, would creep southward through the German-speaking provinces. Thus Austria, of course kept in ignorance of her neighbour's ultimate aims, had to extend towards the south. She had been barred in her western movement by the rise of the Irredentist party in Italy, and consequently had to withdraw behind the frontiers of Carinthia, Carniola, and Istria.

My own dream of the new map was to make "Balka"—the Balkan Federation—take in ultimately all south of a line drawn from the Isle of Serpents to Aquileia. There would—must—be difficulties in the carrying out of such a scheme. Of course, it involved Austria giving up Dalmatia, Istria, and Sclavonia, as well as a part of Croatia and the Hungarian Banat. On the contrary, she might look for centuries of peace in the south. But it would make for peace so strongly that each of the States impinging on it would find it worth while to make a considerable sacrifice to have it effected. To its own integers it would offer a lasting settlement of interests which at present conflicted, and a share in a new world-power. Each of these integers would be absolutely self-governing and independent, being only united for purposes of mutual good. I did not despair that even Turkey and Greece, recognizing that benefit and safety would ensue without the destruction or even minimizing of individuality, would, sooner or later, come into the Federation. The matter is already so far advanced that within a month the various rulers of the States involved are to have a secret and informal meeting. Doubtless some larger plan and further action will be then evolved. It will be an anxious time for all in this zone—and outside it—till this matter is all settled. In any case, the manufacture of war material will go on until it is settled, one way or another.

I breathe more freely. The meeting has taken place here at Vissarion. Nominal cause of meeting: a hunting-party in the Blue Mountains. Not any formal affair. Not a Chancellor or Secretary of State or Diplomatist of any sort present. All headquarters. It was, after all, a real hunting-party. Good sportsmen, plenty of game, lots of beaters, everything organized properly, and an effective tally of results. I think we all enjoyed ourselves in the matter of sport; and as the political result was absolute unanimity of purpose and intention, there could be no possible cause of complaint.

So it is all decided. Everything is pacific. There is not a suggestion even of war, revolt, or conflicting purpose of any kind. We all go on exactly as we are doing for another year, pursuing our own individual objects, just as at present. But we are all to see that in our own households order prevails. All that is supposed to be effective is to be kept in good working order, and whatever is, at present, not adequate to possibilities is to be made so. This is all simply protective and defensive. We understand each other. But if any hulking stranger should undertake to interfere in our domestic concerns, we shall all unite on the instant to keep things as we wish them to remain. We shall be ready. Alfred's maxim of Peace shall be once more exemplified. In the meantime the factories shall work overtime in our own mountains, and the output shall be for the general good of our special community—the bill to be settled afterwards amicably. There can hardly be any difference of opinion about that, as the others will be the consumers of our surplus products. We are the producers, who produce for ourselves first, and then for the limited market of those within the Ring. As we undertake to guard our own frontiers—sea and land—and are able to do so, the goods are to be warehoused in the Blue Mountains until required—if at all—for participation in the markets of the world, and especially in the European market. If all goes well and the markets are inactive, the goods shall be duly delivered to the purchasers as arranged.

So much for the purely mercantile aspect.

#### THE VOIVODIN JANET MACKELPIE'S NOTES. May 21, 1908.

As Rupert began to neglect his Journal when he was made a King, so, too, I find in myself a tendency to leave writing to other people. But one thing I shall not be content to leave to others—little Rupert. The baby of Rupert and Teuta is much too precious a thing to be spoken of except with love, quite independent of the fact that he will be, in natural course, a King! So I have promised Teuta that whatever shall be put into this record of the first King of the Sent Leger Dynasty relating to His Royal Highness the Crown Prince shall only appear in either her hand or my own. And she has deputed the matter to me.

Our dear little Prince arrived punctually and in perfect condition. The angels that carried him evidently took the greatest care of him, and before they left him they gave him dower of all their best. He is a dear! Like both his father and his mother, and that says everything. My own private opinion is that he is a born King! He does not know what fear is, and he thinks more of everyone else than he does of his dear little self. And if those things do not show a truly royal nature, I do not know what does . . .

Teuta has read this. She held up a warning finger, and said:

“Aunt Janet dear, that is all true. He is a dear, and a King, and an angel! But we mustn't have too much about him just yet. This book is to be about Rupert. So our little man can only be what we shall call a corollary.” And so it is.

I should mention here that the book is Teuta's idea. Before little Rupert came she controlled herself wonderfully, doing only what was thought best for her under the circumstances. As I

could see that it would be a help for her to have some quiet occupation which would interest her without tiring her, I looked up (with his permission, of course) all Rupert's old letters and diaries, and journals and reports—all that I had kept for him during his absences on his adventures. At first I was a little afraid they might harm her, for at times she got so excited over some things that I had to caution her. Here again came in her wonderful self-control. I think the most soothing argument I used with her was to point out that the dear boy had come through all the dangers safely, and was actually with us, stronger and nobler than ever.

After we had read over together the whole matter several times—for it was practically new to me too, and I got nearly as excited as she was, though I have known him so much longer—we came to the conclusion that this particular volume would have to be of selected matter. There is enough of Rupert's work to make a lot of volumes and we have an ambitious literary project of some day publishing an edition de luxe of his whole collected works. It will be a rare showing amongst the works of Kings. But this is to be all about himself, so that in the future it may serve as a sort of backbone of his personal history.

By-and-by we came to a part when we had to ask him questions; and he was so interested in Teuta's work—he is really bound up body and soul in his beautiful wife, and no wonder—that we had to take him into full confidence. He promised he would help us all he could by giving us the use of his later journals, and such letters and papers as he had kept privately. He said he would make one condition—I use his own words: “As you two dear women are to be my editors, you must promise to put in everything exactly as I wrote it. It will not do to have any fake about this. I do not wish anything foolish or egotistical toned down out of affection for me. It was all written in sincerity, and if I had faults, they must not be hidden. If it is to be history, it must be true history, even if it gives you and me or any of us away.”

So we promised.

He also said that, as Sir Edward Bingham Trent, Bart.—as he is now— was sure to have some matter which we should like, he would write and ask him to send such to us. He also said that Mr. Ernest Roger Halbard Melton, of Humcroft, Salop (he always gives this name and address in full, which is his way of showing contempt), would be sure to have some relevant matter, and that he would have him written to on the subject. This he did. The Chancellor wrote him in his most grandiloquent style. Mr. E. R. H. Melton, of H., S., replied by return post. His letter is a document which speaks for itself:

HUMCROFT, SALOP,

May 30, 1908.

MY DEAR COUSIN KING RUPERT,

I am honoured by the request made on your behalf by the Lord High Chancellor of your kingdom that I should make a literary contribution to the volume which my cousin, Queen Teuta, is, with the help of your former governess, Miss MacKelpie, compiling. I am willing to do so, as you naturally wish to have in that work some contemporary record made by the Head of the House of Melton, with which you are connected, though only on the distaff side. It is a natural ambition enough, even on the part of a barbarian—or perhaps semi-barbarian— King, and far be it from me, as Head of the House, to deny you such a coveted privilege. Perhaps you may not know that I am now Head of the House; my father died three days ago. I offered my mother the use of the Dower House—to the incumbency of which, indeed, she is entitled by her marriage settlement. But she preferred to go to live at her seat, Carfax, in Kent. She went this morning after the funeral. In letting you have the use of my manuscript I make only one stipulation, but that I

expect to be rigidly adhered to. It is that all that I have written be put in the book in extenso. I do not wish any record of mine to be garbled to suit other ends than those ostensible, or whatever may be to the honour of myself or my House to be burked. I dare say you have noticed, my dear Rupert, that the compilers of family histories often, through jealousy, alter matter that they are allowed to use so as to suit their own purpose or minister to their own vanity. I think it right to tell you that I have had a certified copy made by Petter and Galpin, the law stationers, so that I shall be able to verify whether my stipulation has been honourably observed. I am having the book, which is naturally valuable, carefully packed, and shall have it forwarded to Sir Edward Bingham Trent, Baronet (which he now is—Heaven save the mark!), the Attorney. Please see that he returns it to me, and in proper order. He is not to publish for himself anything in it about him. A man of that class is apt to advertise the fact of anyone of distinction taking any notice of him. I would bring out the MS. to you myself, and stay for a while with you for some sport, only your lot—subjects I suppose you call them!—are such bounders that a gentleman's life is hardly safe amongst them. I never met anyone who had so poor an appreciation of a joke as they have. By the way, how is Teuta? She is one of them. I heard all about the hatching business. I hope the kid is all right. This is only a word in your ear, so don't get cocky, old son. I am open to a godfatherhood. Think of that, Hedda! Of course, if the other godfather and the godmother are up to the mark; I don't want to have to boost up the whole lot! Savvy? Kiss Teuta and the kid for me. I must have the boy over here for a bit later on—when he is presentable, and has learned not to be a nuisance. It will be good for him to see something of a real first-class English country house like Humcroft. To a person only accustomed to rough ways and meagre living its luxury will make a memory which will serve in time as an example to be aimed at. I shall write again soon. Don't hesitate to ask any favour which I may be able to confer on you. So long!

Your affectionate cousin,

ERNEST ROGER HALBARD MELTON.

Extract from Letter from E. Bingham Trent to Queen Teuta of the Blue Mountains.

. . . So I thought the best way to serve that appalling cad would be to take him at his word, and put in his literary contribution in full. I have had made and attested a copy of his "Record," as he calls it, so as to save you trouble. But I send the book itself, because I am afraid that unless you see his words in his own writing, you will not believe that he or anyone else ever penned seriously a document so incriminating. I am sure he must have forgotten what he had written, for even such a dull dog as he is could never have made public such a thing knowingly.

Such a nature has its revenges on itself. In this case the officers of revenge are his ipsissima verba.

RUPERT'S JOURNAL—Continued. February 1, 1909.

All is now well in train. When the Czar of Russia, on being asked by the Sclavs (as was meet) to be the referee in the "Balkan Settlement," declined on the ground that he was himself by inference an interested party, it was unanimously agreed by the Balkan rulers that the Western King should be asked to arbitrate, as all concerned had perfect confidence in his wisdom, as well as his justice. To their wish he graciously assented. The matter has now been for more than six months in his hands, and he has taken endless trouble to obtain full information. He has now

informed us through his Chancellor that his decision is almost ready, and will be communicated as soon as possible.

We have another hunting-party at Vissarion next week. Teuta is looking forward to it with extraordinary interest. She hopes then to present to our brothers of the Balkans our little son, and she is eager to know if they endorse her mother-approval of him.

RUPERT'S JOURNAL—Continued. April 15, 1909.

The arbitrator's decision has been communicated to us through the Chancellor of the Western King, who brought it to us himself as a special act of friendliness. It met with the enthusiastic approval of all. The Premier remained with us during the progress of the hunting-party, which was one of the most joyous occasions ever known. We are all of good heart, for the future of the Balkan races is now assured. The strife—internal and external—of a thousand years has ceased, and we look with hope for a long and happy time. The Chancellor brought messages of grace and courtliness and friendliness to all. And when I, as spokesman of the party, asked him if we might convey a request of His Majesty that he would honour us by attending the ceremony of making known formally the Balkan Settlement, he answered that the King had authorized him to say that he would, if such were wished by us, gladly come; and that if he should come, he would attend with a fleet as an escort. The Chancellor also told me from himself that it might be possible to have other nationalities represented on such a great occasion by Ambassadors and even fleets, though the monarchs themselves might not be able to attend. He hinted that it might be well if I put the matter in train. (He evidently took it for granted that, though I was only one of several, the matter rested with me—possibly he chose me as the one to whom to make the confidence, as I was born a stranger.) As we talked it over, he grew more enthusiastic, and finally said that, as the King was taking the lead, doubtless all the nations of the earth friendly to him would like to take a part in the ceremony. So it is likely to turn out practically an international ceremony of a unique kind. Teuta will love it, and we shall all do what we can.

JANET MACKELPIE'S NOTES. June 1, 1909.

Our dear Teuta is full of the forthcoming celebration of the Balkan Federation, which is to take place this day month, although I must say, for myself, that the ceremony is attaining to such dimensions that I am beginning to have a sort of vague fear of some kind. It almost seems uncanny. Rupert is working unceasingly—has been for some time. For weeks past he seems to have been out day and night on his aeroplane, going through and round over the country arranging matters, and seeing for himself that what has been arranged is being done. Uncle Colin is always about, too, and so is Admiral Rooke. But now Teuta is beginning to go with Rupert. That girl is simply fearless—just like Rupert. And they both seem anxious that little Rupert shall be the same. Indeed, he is the same. A few mornings ago Rupert and Teuta were about to start just after dawn from the top of the Castle. Little Rupert was there—he is always awake early and as bright as a bee. I was holding him in my arms, and when his mother leant over to kiss him good-bye, he held out his arms to her in a way that said as plainly as if he had spoken, "Take me with you."

She looked appealingly at Rupert, who nodded, and said: "All right. Take him, darling. He will have to learn some day, and the sooner the better." The baby, looking eagerly from one to the other with the same questioning in his eyes as there is sometimes in the eyes of a kitten or a

puppy—but, of course, with an eager soul behind it— saw that he was going, and almost leaped into his mother’s arms. I think she had expected him to come, for she took a little leather dress from Margareta, his nurse, and, flushing with pride, began to wrap him in it. When Teuta, holding him in her arms, stepped on the aeroplane, and took her place in the centre behind Rupert, the young men of the Crown Prince’s Guard raised a cheer, amid which Rupert pulled the levers, and they glided off into the dawn.

The Crown Prince’s Guard was established by the mountaineers themselves the day of his birth. Ten of the biggest and most powerful and cleverest young men of the nation were chosen, and were sworn in with a very impressive ceremony to guard the young Prince. They were to so arrange and order themselves and matters generally that two at least of them should always have him, or the place in which he was, within their sight. They all vowed that the last of their lives should go before harm came to him. Of course, Teuta understood, and so did Rupert. And these young men are the persons most privileged in the whole Castle. They are dear boys, every one of them, and we are all fond of them and respect them. They simply idolize the baby.

Ever since that morning little Rupert has, unless it is at a time appointed for his sleeping, gone in his mother’s arms. I think in any other place there would be some State remonstrance at the whole royal family being at once and together in a dangerous position, but in the Blue Mountains danger and fear are not thought of—indeed, they can hardly be in their terminology. And I really think the child enjoys it even more than his parents. He is just like a little bird that has found the use of his wings. Bless him!

I find that even I have to study Court ritual a little. So many nationalities are to be represented at the ceremony of the “Balkan Settlement,” and so many Kings and Princes and notabilities of all kinds are coming, that we must all take care not to make any mistakes. The Press alone would drive anyone silly. Rupert and Teuta come and sit with me sometimes in the evening when we are all too tired to work, and they rest themselves by talking matters over. Rupert says that there will be over five hundred reporters, and that the applications for permission are coming in so fast that there may be a thousand when the day comes. Last night he stopped in the middle of speaking of it, and said:

“I have an inspiration! Fancy a thousand journalists,—each wanting to get ahead of the rest, and all willing to invoke the Powers of Evil for exclusive information! The only man to look after this department is Rooke. He knows how to deal with men, and as we have already a large staff to look after the journalistic guests, he can be at the head, and appoint his own deputies to act for him. Somewhere and sometime the keeping the peace will be a matter of nerve and resolution, and Rooke is the man for the job.”

We were all concerned about one thing, naturally important in the eyes of a woman: What robes was Teuta to wear? In the old days, when there were Kings and Queens, they doubtless wore something gorgeous or impressive; but whatever it was that they wore has gone to dust centuries ago, and there were no illustrated papers in those primitive days. Teuta was talking to me eagerly, with her dear beautiful brows all wrinkled, when Rupert who was reading a bulky document of some kind, looked up and said:

“Of course, darling, you will wear your Shroud?”

“Capital!” she said, clapping her hands like a joyous child. “The very thing, and our people will like it.”

I own that for a moment I was dismayed. It was a horrible test of a woman’s love and devotion. At a time when she was entertaining Kings and notabilities in her own house—and be sure they would all be decked in their finery—to have to appear in such a garment! A plain thing with

nothing even pretty, let alone gorgeous, about it! I expressed my views to Rupert, for I feared that Teuta might be disappointed, though she might not care to say so; but before he could say a word Teuta answered:

“Oh, thank you so much, dear! I should love that above everything, but I did not like to suggest it, lest you should think me arrogant or presuming; for, indeed, Rupert, I am very proud of it, and of the way our people look on it.”

“Why not?” said Rupert, in his direct way. “It is a thing for us all to be proud of; the nation has already adopted it as a national emblem—our emblem of courage and devotion and patriotism, which will always, I hope, be treasured beyond price by the men and women of our Dynasty, the Nation, that is—of the Nation that is to be.”

Later on in the evening we had a strange endorsement of the national will. A “People’s Deputation” of mountaineers, without any official notice or introduction, arrived at the Castle late in the evening in the manner established by Rupert’s “Proclamation of Freedom,” wherein all citizens were entitled to send a deputation to the King, at will and in private, on any subject of State importance. This deputation was composed of seventeen men, one selected from each political section, so that the body as a whole represented the entire nation. They were of all sorts of social rank and all degrees of fortune, but they were mainly “of the people.” They spoke hesitatingly—possibly because Teuta, or even because I, was present—but with a manifest earnestness. They made but one request—that the Queen should, on the great occasion of the Balkan Federation, wear as robes of State the Shroud that they loved to see her in. The spokesman, addressing the Queen, said in tones of rugged eloquence:

“This is a matter, Your Majesty, that the women naturally have a say in, so we have, of course, consulted them. They have discussed the matter by themselves, and then with us, and they are agreed without a flaw that it will be good for the Nation and for Womankind that you do this thing. You have shown to them, and to the world at large, what women should do, what they can do, and they want to make, in memory of your great act, the Shroud a garment of pride and honour for women who have deserved well of their country. In the future it can be a garment to be worn only by privileged women who have earned the right. But they hope, and we hope with them, that on this occasion of our Nation taking the lead before the eyes of the world, all our women may wear it on that day as a means of showing overtly their willingness to do their duty, even to the death. And so”—here he turned to the King—”Rupert, we trust that Her Majesty Queen Teuta will understand that in doing as the women of the Blue Mountains wish, she will bind afresh to the Queen the loyal devotion which she won from them as Voivodin. Henceforth and for all time the Shroud shall be a dress of honour in our Land.”

Teuta looked all ablaze with love and pride and devotion. Stars in her eyes shone like white fire as she assured them of the granting of their request. She finished her little speech:

“I feared that if I carried out my own wish, it might look arrogant, but Rupert has expressed the same wish, and now I feel that I am free to wear that dress which brought me to you and to Rupert”—here she beamed on him, and took his hand—”fortified as I am by your wishes and the command of my lord the King.”

Rupert took her in his arms and kissed her fondly before them all, saying:

“Tell your wives, my brothers, and the rest of the Blue Mountain women, that that is the answer of the husband who loves and honours his wife. All the world shall see at the ceremony of the Federation of Balka that we men love and honour the women who are loyal and can die for duty. And, men of the Blue Mountains, some day before long we shall organize that great idea,

and make it a permanent thing—that the Order of the Shroud is the highest guerdon that a noble-hearted woman can wear.”

Teuta disappeared for a few moments, and came back with the Crown Prince in her arms. Everyone present asked to be allowed to kiss him, which they did kneeling.

#### THE FEDERATION BALKA. By the Correspondents of “Free America.”

The Editors of Free America have thought it well to put in consecutive order the reports and descriptions of their Special Correspondents, of whom there were present no less than eight. Not a word they wrote is omitted, but the various parts of their reports are placed in different order, so that, whilst nothing which any of them recorded is left out, the reader may be able to follow the proceedings from the various points of view of the writers who had the most favourable opportunity of moment. In so large an assemblage of journalists—there were present over a thousand—they could not all be present in one place; so our men, in consultation amongst themselves, arranged to scatter, so as to cover the whole proceeding from the various “coigns of vantage,” using their skill and experience in selecting these points. One was situated on the summit of the steel-clad tower in the entrance to the Blue Mouth; another on the “Press-boat,” which was moored alongside King Rupert’s armoured yacht, The Lady, whereon were gathered the various Kings and rulers of the Balkan States, all of whom were in the Federation; another was in a swift torpedo-boat, with a roving commission to cruise round the harbour as desired; another took his place on the top of the great mountain which overlooks Plazac, and so had a bird’s-eye view of the whole scene of operations; two others were on the forts to right and left of the Blue Mouth; another was posted at the entrance to the Great Tunnel which runs from the water level right up through the mountains to the plateau, where the mines and factories are situate; another had the privilege of a place on an aeroplane, which went everywhere and saw everything. This aeroplane was driven by an old Special Correspondent of Free America, who had been a chum of our Special in the Japanese and Russian War, and who has taken service on the Blue Mountain Official Gazette.

PLAZAC,

June 30, 1909.

Two days before the time appointed for the ceremony the guests of the Land of the Blue Mountains began to arrive. The earlier comers were mostly the journalists who had come from almost over the whole inhabited world. King Rupert, who does things well, had made a camp for their exclusive use. There was a separate tent for each—of course, a small one, as there were over a thousand journalists—but there were big tents for general use scattered about—refectories, reading and writing rooms, a library, idle rooms for rest, etc. In the rooms for reading and writing, which were the work-rooms for general use, were newspapers, the latest attainable from all over the world, Blue-Books, guides, directories, and all such aids to work as forethought could arrange. There was for this special service a body of some hundreds of capable servants in special dress and bearing identification numbers—in fact, King Rupert “did us fine,” to use a slang phrase of pregnant meaning.

There were other camps for special service, all of them well arranged, and with plenty of facility for transport. Each of the Federating Monarchs had a camp of his own, in which he had erected a magnificent pavilion. For the Western King, who had acted as Arbitrator in the matter of the Federation, a veritable palace had been built by King Rupert—a sort of Aladdin’s palace it

must have been, for only a few weeks ago the place it occupied was, I was told, only primeval wilderness. King Rupert and his Queen, Teuta, had a pavilion like the rest of the Federators of Balka, but infinitely more modest, both in size and adornments.

Everywhere were guards of the Blue Mountains, armed only with the "handjar," which is the national weapon. They wore the national dress, but so arranged in colour and accoutrement that the general air of uniformity took the place of a rigid uniform. There must have been at least seventy or eighty thousand of them.

The first day was one of investigation of details by the visitors. During the second day the retinues of the great Federators came. Some of these retinues were vast. For instance, the Soldan (though only just become a Federator) sent of one kind or another more than a thousand men. A brave show they made, for they are fine men, and drilled to perfection. As they swaggered along, singly or in mass, with their gay jackets and baggy trousers, their helmets surmounted by the golden crescent, they looked a foe not to be despised. Landreck Martin, the Nestor of journalists, said to me, as we stood together looking at them:

"To-day we witness a new departure in Blue Mountain history. This is the first occasion for a thousand years that so large a Turkish body has entered the Blue Mountains with a reasonable prospect of ever getting out again."

July 1, 1909.

To-day, the day appointed for the ceremony, was auspiciously fine, even for the Blue Mountains, where at this time of year the weather is nearly always fine. They are early folk in the Blue Mountains, but to-day things began to hum before daybreak. There were bugle-calls all over the place—everything here is arranged by calls of musical instruments—trumpets, or bugles, or drums (if, indeed, the drum can be called a musical instrument)—or by lights, if it be after dark. We journalists were all ready; coffee and bread-and-butter had been thoughtfully served early in our sleeping-tents, and an elaborate breakfast was going on all the time in the refectory pavilions. We had a preliminary look round, and then there was a sort of general pause for breakfast. We took advantage of it, and attacked the sumptuous—indeed, memorable—meal which was served for us.

The ceremony was to commence at noon, but at ten o'clock the whole place was astir—not merely beginning to move, but actually moving; everybody taking their places for the great ceremony. As noon drew near, the excitement was intense and prolonged. One by one the various signatories to the Federation began to assemble. They all came by sea; such of them as had sea-boards of their own having their fleets around them. Such as had no fleets of their own were attended by at least one of the Blue Mountain ironclads. And I am bound to say that I never in my life saw more dangerous craft than these little warships of King Rupert of the Blue Mountains. As they entered the Blue Mouth each ship took her appointed station, those which carried the signatories being close together in an isolated group in a little bay almost surrounded by high cliffs in the farthest recesses of the mighty harbour. King Rupert's armoured yacht all the time lay close inshore, hard by the mouth of the Great Tunnel which runs straight into the mountain from a wide plateau, partly natural rock, partly built up with mighty blocks of stone. Here it is, I am told, that the inland products are brought down to the modern town of Plazac. Just as the clocks were chiming the half-hour before noon this yacht glided out into the expanse of the "Mouth." Behind her came twelve great barges, royally decked, and draped each in the colour of the signatory nation. On each of these the ruler entered with his guard, and was carried

to Rupert's yacht, he going on the bridge, whilst his suite remained on the lower deck. In the meantime whole fleets had been appearing on the southern horizon; the nations were sending their maritime quota to the christening of "Balka"! In such wonderful order as can only be seen with squadrons of fighting ships, the mighty throng swept into the Blue Mouth, and took up their stations in groups. The only armament of a Great Power now missing was that of the Western King. But there was time. Indeed, as the crowd everywhere began to look at their watches a long line of ships began to spread up northward from the Italian coast. They came at great speed—nearly twenty knots. It was a really wonderful sight—fifty of the finest ships in the world; the very latest expression of naval giants, each seemingly typical of its class—Dreadnoughts, cruisers, destroyers. They came in a wedge, with the King's yacht flying the Royal Standard the apex. Every ship of the squadron bore a red ensign long enough to float from the masthead to the water. From the armoured tower in the waterway one could see the myriad of faces—white stars on both land and sea—for the great harbour was now alive with ships and each and all of them alive with men.

Suddenly, without any direct cause, the white masses became eclipsed—everyone had turned round, and was looking the other way. I looked across the bay and up the mountain behind—a mighty mountain, whose slopes run up to the very sky, ridge after ridge seeming like itself a mountain. Far away on the very top the standard of the Blue Mountains was run up on a mighty Flagstaff which seemed like a shaft of light. It was two hundred feet high, and painted white, and as at the distance the steel stays were invisible, it towered up in lonely grandeur. At its foot was a dark mass grouped behind a white space, which I could not make out till I used my field-glasses.

Then I knew it was King Rupert and the Queen in the midst of a group of mountaineers. They were on the aero station behind the platform of the aero, which seemed to shine—shine, not glitter—as though it were overlaid with plates of gold.

Again the faces looked west. The Western Squadron was drawing near to the entrance of the Blue Mouth. On the bridge of the yacht stood the Western King in uniform of an Admiral, and by him his Queen in a dress of royal purple, splendid with gold. Another glance at the mountain-top showed that it had seemed to become alive. A whole park of artillery seemed to have suddenly sprung to life, round each its crew ready for action. Amongst the group at the foot of the Flagstaff we could distinguish King Rupert; his vast height and bulk stood out from and above all round him. Close to him was a patch of white, which we understood to be Queen Teuta, whom the Blue Mountaineers simply adore.

By this time the armoured yacht, bearing all the signatories to "Balka" (excepting King Rupert), had moved out towards the entrance, and lay still and silent, waiting the coming of the Royal Arbitrator, whose whole squadron simultaneously slowed down, and hardly drifted in the seething water of their backing engines.

When the flag which was in the yacht's prow was almost opposite the armoured fort, the Western King held up a roll of vellum handed to him by one of his officers. We onlookers held our breath, for in an instant was such a scene as we can never hope to see again.

At the raising of the Western King's hand, a gun was fired away on the top of the mountain where rose the mighty Flagstaff with the standard of the Blue Mountains. Then came the thunder of salute from the guns, bright flashes and reports, which echoed down the hillsides in never-ending sequence. At the first gun, by some trick of signalling, the flag of the Federated "Balka" floated out from the top of the Flagstaff, which had been mysteriously raised, and flew above that of the Blue Mountains.

At the same moment the figures of Rupert and Teuta sank; they were taking their places on the aeroplane. An instant after, like a great golden bird, it seemed to shoot out into the air, and then, dipping its head, dropped downward at an obtuse angle. We could see the King and Queen from time waist upwards—the King in Blue Mountain dress of green; the Queen, wrapped in her white Shroud, holding her baby on her breast. When far out from the mountain-top and over the Blue Mouth, the wings and tail of the great bird-like machine went up, and the aero dropped like a stone, till it was only some few hundred feet over the water. Then the wings and tail went down, but with diminishing speed. Below the expanse of the plane the King and Queen were now seen seated together on the tiny steering platform, which seemed to have been lowered; she sat behind her husband, after the manner of matrons of the Blue Mountains. That coming of that aeroplane was the most striking episode of all this wonderful day.

After floating for a few seconds, the engines began to work, whilst the planes moved back to their normal with beautiful simultaneity. There was a golden aero finding its safety in gliding movement. At the same time the steering platform was rising, so that once more the occupants were not far below, but above the plane. They were now only about a hundred feet above the water, moving from the far end of the Blue Mouth towards the entrance in the open space between the two lines of the fighting ships of the various nationalities, all of which had by now their yards manned—a manoeuvre which had begun at the firing of the first gun on the mountain-top. As the aero passed along, all the seamen began to cheer—a cheering which they kept up till the King and Queen had come so close to the Western King's vessel that the two Kings and Queens could greet each other. The wind was now beginning to blow westward from the mountain-top, and it took the sounds towards the armoured fort, so that at moments we could distinguish the cheers of the various nationalities, amongst which, more keen than the others, came the soft "Ban Zai!" of the Japanese.

King Rupert, holding his steering levers, sat like a man of marble. Behind him his beautiful wife, clad in her Shroud, and holding in her arms the young Crown Prince, seemed like a veritable statue.

The aero, guided by Rupert's unerring hand, lit softly on the after-deck of the Western King's yacht; and King Rupert, stepping on deck, lifted from her seat Queen Teuta with her baby in her arms. It was only when the Blue Mountain King stood amongst other men that one could realize his enormous stature. He stood literally head and shoulders over every other man present.

Whilst the aeroplane was giving up its burden, the Western King and his Queen were descending from the bridge. The host and hostess, hand in hand—after their usual fashion, as it seems—hurried forward to greet their guests. The meeting was touching in its simplicity. The two monarchs shook hands, and their consorts, representatives of the foremost types of national beauty of the North and South, instinctively drew close and kissed each other. Then the hostess Queen, moving towards the Western King, kneeled before him with the gracious obeisance of a Blue Mountain hostess, and kissed his hand.

Her words of greeting were:

"You are welcome, sire, to the Blue Mountains. We are grateful to you for all you have done for Balka, and to you and Her Majesty for giving us the honour of your presence."

The King seemed moved. Accustomed as he was to the ritual of great occasions, the warmth and sincerity, together with the gracious humility of this old Eastern custom, touched him, monarch though he was of a great land and many races in the Far East. Impulsively he broke through Court ritual, and did a thing which, I have since been told, won for him for ever a holy place in the warm hearts of the Blue Mountaineers. Sinking on his knee before the beautiful

shroud-clad Queen, he raised her hand and kissed it. The act was seen by all in and around the Blue Mouth, and a mighty cheering rose, which seemed to rise and swell as it ran far and wide up the hillsides, till it faded away on the far-off mountain-top, where rose majestically the mighty Flagstaff bearing the standard of the Balkan Federation.

For myself, I can never forget that wonderful scene of a nation's enthusiasm, and the core of it is engraven on my memory. That spotless deck, typical of all that is perfect in naval use; the King and Queen of the greatest nation of the earth<sup>1</sup> received by the newest King and Queen—a King and Queen who won empire for themselves, so that the former subject of another King received him as a brother-monarch on a history-making occasion, when a new world-power was, under his tutelage, springing into existence. The fair Northern Queen in the arms of the dark Southern Queen with the starry eyes. The simple splendour of Northern dress arrayed against that of almost peasant plainness of the giant King of the South. But all were eclipsed—even the thousand years of royal lineage of the Western King, Rupert's natural dower of stature, and the other Queen's bearing of royal dignity and sweetness—by the elemental simplicity of Teuta's Shroud. Not one of all that mighty throng but knew something of her wonderful story; and not one but felt glad and proud that such a noble woman had won an empire through her own bravery, even in the jaws of the grave.

The armoured yacht, with the remainder of the signatories to the Balkan Federation, drew close, and the rulers stepped on board to greet the Western King, the Arbitrator, Rupert leaving his task as personal host and joining them. He took his part modestly in the rear of the group, and made a fresh obeisance in his new capacity.

Presently another warship, The Balka, drew close. It contained the ambassadors of Foreign Powers, and the Chancellors and high officials of the Balkan nations. It was followed by a fleet of warships, each one representing a Balkan Power. The great Western fleet lay at their moorings, but with the exception of manning their yards, took no immediate part in the proceedings.

On the deck of the new-comer the Balkan monarchs took their places, the officials of each State grading themselves behind their monarch. The Ambassadors formed a foremost group by themselves.

Last came the Western King, quite alone (save for the two Queens), bearing in his hand the vellum scroll, the record of his arbitration. This he proceeded to read, a polyglot copy of it having been already supplied to every Monarch, Ambassador, and official present. It was a long statement, but the occasion was so stupendous—so intense—that the time flew by quickly. The cheering had ceased the moment the Arbitrator opened the scroll, and a veritable silence of the grave abounded.

When the reading was concluded Rupert raised his hand, and on the instant came a terrific salvo of cannon-shots from not only the ships in the port, but seemingly all up and over the hillsides away to the very summit.

When the cheering which followed the salute had somewhat toned down, those on board talked together, and presentations were made. Then the barges took the whole company to the armour-clad fort in the entrance-way to the Blue Mouth. Here, in front, had been arranged for the occasion, platforms for the starting of aeroplanes. Behind them were the various thrones of state for the Western King and Queen, and the various rulers of "Balka"—as the new and completed Balkan Federation had become—de jure as well as de facto. Behind were seats for the rest of the company. All was a blaze of crimson and gold. We of the Press were all expectant, for some

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<sup>1</sup> Greatest Kingdom—Editor Free America.

ceremony had manifestly been arranged, but of all details of it we had been kept in ignorance. So far as I could tell from the faces, those present were at best but partially informed. They were certainly ignorant of all details, and even of the entire programme of the day. There is a certain kind of expectation which is not concerned in the mere execution of fore-ordered things.

The aero on which the King and Queen had come down from the mountain now arrived on the platform in the charge of a tall young mountaineer, who stepped from the steering-platform at once. King Rupert, having handed his Queen (who still carried her baby) into her seat, took his place, and pulled a lever. The aero went forward, and seemed to fall head foremost off the fort. It was but a dip, however, such as a skilful diver takes from a height into shallow water, for the plane made an upward curve, and in a few seconds was skimming upwards towards the Flagstaff. Despite the wind, it arrived there in an incredibly short time. Immediately after his flight another aero, a big one this time, glided to the platform. To this immediately stepped a body of ten tall, fine-looking young men. The driver pulled his levers, and the plane glided out on the track of the King. The Western King, who was noticing, said to the Lord High Admiral, who had been himself in command of the ship of war, and now stood close behind him:

“Who are those men, Admiral?”

“The Guard of the Crown Prince, Your Majesty. They are appointed by the Nation.”

“Tell me, Admiral, have they any special duties?”

“Yes, Your Majesty,” came the answer: “to die, if need be, for the young Prince!”

“Quite right! That is fine service. But how if any of them should die?”

“Your Majesty, if one of them should die, there are ten thousand eager to take his place.”

“Fine, fine! It is good to have even one man eager to give his life for duty. But ten thousand! That is what makes a nation!”

When King Rupert reached the platform by the Flagstaff, the Royal Standard of the Blue Mountains was hauled up under it. Rupert stood up and raised his hand. In a second a cannon beside him was fired; then, quick as thought, others were fired in sequence, as though by one prolonged lightning-flash. The roar was incessant, but getting less in detonating sound as the distance and the hills subdued it. But in the general silence which prevailed round us we could hear the sound as though passing in a distant circle, till finally the line which had gone northward came back by the south, stopping at the last gun to south'ard of the Flagstaff.

“What was that wonderful circle?” asked the King of the Lord High Admiral.

“That, Your Majesty, is the line of the frontier of the Blue Mountains. Rupert has ten thousand cannon in line.”

“And who fires them? I thought all the army must be here.”

“The women, Your Majesty. They are on frontier duty to-day, so that the men can come here.”

Just at that moment one of the Crown Prince's Guards brought to the side of the King's aero something like a rubber ball on the end of a string. The Queen held it out to the baby in her arms, who grabbed at it. The guard drew back. Pressing that ball must have given some signal, for on the instant a cannon, elevated to perpendicular, was fired. A shell went straight up an enormous distance. The shell burst, and sent out both a light so bright that it could be seen in the daylight, and a red smoke, which might have been seen from the heights of the Calabrian Mountains over in Italy.

As the shell burst, the King's aero seemed once more to spring from the platform out into mid-air, dipped as before, and glided out over the Blue Mouth with a rapidity which, to look at, took one's breath away.

As it came, followed by the aero of the Crown Prince's Guard and a group of other aers, the whole mountain-sides seemed to become alive. From everywhere, right away up to the farthest visible mountain-tops, darted aeroplanes, till a host of them were rushing with dreadful speed in the wake of the King. The King turned to Queen Teuta, and evidently said something, for she beckoned to the Captain of the Crown Prince's Guard, who was steering the plane. He swerved away to the right, and instead of following above the open track between the lines of warships, went high over the outer line. One of those on board began to drop something, which, fluttering down, landed on every occasion on the bridge of the ship high over which they then were.

The Western King said again to the Gospodar Rooke (the Lord High Admiral):

“It must need some skill to drop a letter with such accuracy.”

With imperturbable face the Admiral replied:

“It is easier to drop bombs, Your Majesty.”

The flight of aeroplanes was a memorable sight. It helped to make history. Henceforth no nation with an eye for either defence or attack can hope for success without the mastery of the air.

In the meantime—and after that time, too—God help the nation that attacks “Balka” or any part of it, so long as Rupert and Teuta live in the hearts of that people, and bind them into an irresistible unity.