

CHAPTER XXXIX

FLYING FROM VIENNA TO CONSTANTINOPLE

In the summer of 1930, Grandfather, Grandmother and Grace, together with Miss Kavanaugh and Miss Shield, flew from Vienna to Constantinople about 1,000 miles across the Balkan States, and from Constantinople to Athens and Athens to Italy - about 1,000 miles over the sea.

They left Vienna by the C. I. D. N. A. line in an eight passenger plane with pilot, co-pilot and radio equipment. The day was fair and the route for some time led down the Danube, over the flat country resembling the western plains of the United States. Eight passengers took off from Vienna, three of whom left the plane at the first stop (Buda Pest) and from there on Grandfather's party had the plane to themselves.

The Blue Danube, the broad expanse of farm land in Hungary and Jugo Slavia and here and there a tiny village with a haystack back of each cottage made a pleasant view.

The second stop was made at Belgrade (capital of Jugo Slavia) and with a new crew, as evening approached, we hopped over the mountains into Roumania. The mountains were not very high, but with the lengthening shadows of evening, appeared picturesque. At Vienna we were told that for military reasons taking photographs from the air were not allowed. However, they left Grandfather his two movie cameras and Grace her still camera, and since no special stress was laid on the prohibition, Grandfather took a few colored movies from the window, and when the sun set behind the Balkan Mountains in the afterglow and lit up the clouds in a gorgeous glow of superb red, Grandfather took the finest sunset picture it had ever been his fortune to obtain.

As darkness came on, the lights began to dot the mountain side and soon the lights of Bucharest were seen, and with the aid of a brilliant flare, the plane safely landed. All were in excellent spirits as we dined at the leading hotel of Queen Marie's home town.

Grandfather, upon arrival, changed a \$20 American Express note into Roumanian money and received a huge handful of exceptionally large paper money in denominations that seemed to run into astronomical figures. So he stuck the whole amount into an outside coat pocket. After a time the cashier came to say that he had made a mistake in his calculation. So Grandfather returned the handful and received back part of it. However, there was still too much to be carried elsewhere and once more the outside coat pocket was pressed into service as a money bag. However, after it appeared that these ludicrous looking paper doll blankets would buy real food, the hilarity of the party began to turn into respect and appreciation.

Next morning the party arose early and, as the sun rose, drove past Queen Marie's palace, the opera house and war memorial to the airport, where, lo and behold, a four passenger plane stood ready to take the party of five for the final hop to Constantinople. However, the ladies smilingly took the four seats, Grandfather took the seat designed for a co-pilot, and sans co-pilot and sans radio, they hopped over some low mountains and safely landed at the airport, which to the disappointment of the party, was reached before a view was had of Constantinople.

When the plane left Bucharest, all the cameras were taken by the police, tied up with rope, the knots were sealed with a police stamp and the cameras were placed in charge of the pilot. At the Constantinople airport the pilot turned the cameras over to the police, who returned

Grace's still camera but refused to return the movie cameras, stating that it was against the law to take a moving picture at any time in Constantinople.

We arrived on Friday, which is the Turkish Sunday, and were scheduled to leave on the following day, which was a holiday. The Turkish custom house could function sufficiently on Friday to take the cameras away, but not sufficiently to transport them to another airport and return them on a holiday. Moreover, all had passport visas into Turkey, but to get out again the visas had to be stamped and the police could not stamp the visas on Friday or on a holiday. However, Grandfather had traveled enough to surmise that all this could in some manner be solved - but how? Well, no matter, next morning the cameras were at the other airport and the visas had been stamped.

Constantinople presented none of the colorful scenes of which we had all read - no longer were there veiled women, or men in bright colored clothes. All was drab and unclean, and there was a surliness if not actual hostility in the atmosphere that made us quite content that our stay was to be short.

The party had only the still camera, but Grace took a considerable number of excellent pictures. When, however, she wished to take a picture of a man carrying a picturesque bundle on his back, a policeman would not let the man stop long enough to have his picture taken. There was no traffic jam - the policeman just wished to act ugly.

Strange contrast between the ill-kept humanity sullenly holding the key to the Black Sea and the beautiful setting with which God endowed the city. It seemed altogether too bad that in the settlement of the World War some other disposition had not been made of this natural beauty spot.

St. Sophia, however, was not disappointing except that one could not help but wish that he might wipe off the Moslem decorations and reveal once more the glorious Christian mosaics which are believed still to lie beneath the Mohammedan whitewash.

The mosque of Suleiman Amed and the other mosques were interesting and impressive and in some of the buildings had been uncovered portions of Christian mosaic which were feebly reminiscent of the days when Constantinople was really the city of Constantino and the capitol of Christendom. The market was dingy and smelled none too sweetly and, so far as Grandfather could see, was nothing to write poetry about. The ladies, however, would see it and buy a bit of drapery for a souvenir.

If the day had proved more interesting than pleasant, at any rate the evening drive with views of Golden Horn and Bosphorus and of Asia Minor across the way was delightful. However, beautiful as the panoramic scenes when we recollected the sullen looks and unhospitable attitude of the natives, we did not regret that our visit to the city of the Sultans was brief.