Brighter Bulgaria
A Sooner Helps Bring Learning to That Charming Country
By Edith Perry, '19

Five years as principal of a school in the picturesque Bulgarian hills may develop your talents along a variety of lines; I was a successful architect, or that is, the two buildings I put up are still standing; I was a pretty good doctor, I cured a variety of headaches that occurred just previous to a particularly hard lesson; I was a pretty good nerve specialist, functioning in the face of 220 panicky girls in the jaws of an earthquake; I learned to tell people to get on and off in their own language; but strange as it may seem a five year sojourn in the Bulgarian hills does not give a math major the literary facilities to paint a glowing picture for The Sooner Magazine.

Busy at her spinning
The Bulgarian peasant women are rarely idle, and this woman spins as she walks about the farmyard.

Like most Americans who have made the rounds of Europe I don't know a thing about it. In addition to having a mathematical mind I have also an abnormal distaste for travel. Boats and trains, so far as I was concerned, are to be slept on. They are the straight lines between two points, the points being of major interest and importance.

I am not politically minded so I can't discourse on European entanglements; and not having any social aspirations I can't deal with society in the gay capitals. So I'll just confine my words to Bulgaria.

In the cities Bulgarians are the same as French or German or American. The college students are just as dapper as the Sooner students. They study all the things Sooner students study (and a great deal more). And they have something of Russian aptitude for the languages.

They have operas, theaters, and movies. Harold Lloyd and Charlie Chaplin are well known to people who never heard of Calvin Coolidge. The Charleston and the Black Bottom have come in through the fashionable resort of Varna on the Black Sea.

But it is not of Sofia and Plovdiv and Varna that I think when I speak of Bulgaria but rather of the little villages scattered through all the hills and mountains. There is a Bulgarian expression which literally translated means "among the nature" and it is among the nature that I love the Bulgarians best. In these small hidden villages the boys flautt embroidered shirts and the women wear bright flowers in their hair. Their sombre homespun dresses are always livened up by the addition of bright braid at neck, sleeve holes and around the hem.

These people live in villages and go out from them to tend their vineyards and look after their sheep. When I recall these, then it is I truly wish I'd less aptitude for figures and a little more ability to use words. The spring days in Bulgaria are indescribable. Bulgaria is a land of flowers—from the little snow drops that appear before the snow melts, to the chrysanthemums that last until Thanksgiving time, the country is never without flowers. This love of flowers is a passion with men and women. I have seen grizzled old officers with swords clanking, digging around under last year's vegetation for the fragrant little white snow blossoms. And then I've heard them get together and compare notes on the best places to find snow drops much as American men might compare their scores at golf.

But I started to tell about those spring days in Bulgaria. The white plum trees are huge balls dotting the valley and in our part of the hills at least, the air along the peaceful country roads was fragrant with lilacs. Both purple and white lilacs might be found wild. The Bulgarian people would consider it positively indecent to let anyone come or go without suitable bouquets. All American doctor came to our town to lecture and was the recipient of numerous bouquets. His native aversion for anything so sissy as a bouquet warred with his desire to do the correct thing and so he carted his bouquets home from the lecture hall and discreetly deposited them in our living room. But just when he was ready to
leave in his auto one of the Americans appeared with the numerous bouquets and the poor man was forced to drive off swaddled in roses. He always said it was a matter of speculation with him just how far out of town he ought to get before throwing away his bouquets.

But autumns are equally beautiful as springtimes. There is more gorgeous coloring. Every shade of yellow and red appears in the fields, the vineyards and on the trees along the road. Winter is a drift of white snow that fails to melt for weeks at a time. One travels in the provinces by sleigh.

And there is the music. How can I ever forget the band and its marching airs. *Tech Belle Dunif,* (quite white Danube) *beeca shumne,* (happily roaring), is one of the marching airs as is also the national anthem, *Skumne Maritza,* (Maritza is the longest river in Bulgaria). There is a song for every occasion and for every village and a score for every hero. And such heroes as they herald in song and legend. Chrusto Botev is the most remarkable man, straying out of that imaginary world where poets are supposed to live to become the greatest of the revolutionary leaders in the war for freedom. I don't know if another nation counts its greatest poet and its greatest warrior in the same man.

Speaking of warriors, it is a strange thing that most of Bulgaria's warriors were born in the peacefulness of the rose valley. And how could a math major do justice to the rose valley, between the proud old Balkan and Shredna Planena.

But to speak of the school of which I was principal is another story. The longer I was in Bulgaria the more respect I had for the Bulgarian system of education. Great emphasis is laid on Latin, geography, mathematics and science. In mathematics the girls of the gymnasium go clear through problems I didn't have until the sophomore year in the university.

The humorous expressions of struggling students might provide fun for Sooner readers. It was quite a grown up Bulgarian who announced at the theater that they were going to present "The Grasshopper in the Oven." It turned out to be the "Cricket on the Hearth." A careless speller in domestic science washed her hands in soup and served soap as the first course, an enterprising English student claimed that Scott wrote hysterical novels, that Emerson said "I'm the queen of the May, Mother" and that Milton wrote the "Oath on his Blindness," the last line of which was "They also serve who only stand and wait."

NE must be prepared to receive a variety of gifts from the generous Bulgarians. Once a man wanting me to write an English letter for him and fearing that I should have to be bribed, brought me a live hen. He was so pleased with the letter that he added a generous hunk of white cheese. Village women wishing to express their appreciation would reach down in the pockets of their homespun sukmans and fetch out a handful of dried plums.

One has all kinds of people to deal with. I shall never forget the old Russian who had done some interior decorating. When he came for his money I had only a nondescript variety of small bills to give him and as paper money is issued for amounts as low as three and a half cents I had quite a handful to give him. I counted it carefully and then handing it to him asked, "Will you count it?" He drew himself up as though insulted, kicked his heels together and said, "Of course not." He put the uncounted bills in his pocket.

And then there was Pena. She's a Bulgarian feminist all right. She builds everything from houses to highways. Pena wanted me to appear properly (Turn to page 180, please)
a few lines from “Man-Talk” by this author:

“Once more the flag is flying
   Over grim blue ranks scar-thinned
And lance and feathered bonnets
Go streaming down the wind.”

Muna Lee does a number of realistic pieces that bring to mind Edgar Lee Masters and his Spoon River Anthology. Stella Reinhardt makes a gallant little piece of verse in “Growth,” and her verse forms are refreshing.

We couldn't possibly leave Stanley Vestal's “King David” unmentioned. Here is rollicking humor. One imagines that the old patriarch laughs heartily at the clever impudence of these verses.

After reading through this university anthology for 1929, we can't help feeling with enthusiasm, perhaps dilletantish, that Oklahoma may produce some bards of real note.—Luthera Mills.

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On Ranching in Oklahoma

Dr. Edward Everett Dale, acting dean of the graduate school, and a former ranchman, has written an article entitled “Ranching on the Cheyenne-Arapahoe Reservation,” published in the December issue of the Cattleman, organ of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers' association at Fort Worth.

An interesting feature of the article was a full page illustration portraying a type of advertising in territorial Oklahoma newspapers. This consists of brands of various ranches. The page was reproduced from the February 20, 1886 issue of the Cheyenne Reporter, published at Darlington, Indian Territory.

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Rascoe on Mencken

With reference to the recent anathema, (so regarded by the majority of Oklahomans who read it), delivered by H. L. Mencken in the American Mercury and directed at Oklahoma, Burton Rascoe wrote a letter to Faith Hieronymous, editor of the book column in the Sunday Tulsa Daily World. The following excerpt may or may not be illuminating as to Mr. Mencken's reason for voicing his latest thoughts about the Sooner state.

“Mencken wrote that paragraph not to annoy Oklahomans but to annoy me. He knows I came from Oklahoma. He thought that by saying what he said he would get me sore and provoke me into an attack on Marylanders, of which Mencken is one. You all forget that Mencken recently wrote an article in which he said that, so far as literature is concerned, New York was a sink hole and a slum, and that the only state in the union that was producing authentic and original work at the moment was Oklahoma. I think he exaggerates; but when he wrote something like the above, merely to rag me, you get on your ear.

“What Oklahoma needs is more oil wells and a sense of humor.”

Brighter Bulgaria

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clad at a reception in the town hall where we were all to be dressed in native costume. Among other things she presented me with her ear screws, heavy gold coins but lo and behold Pena discovered I hadn't any holes in my ears and she laughed as though she never heard of anything so funny. We still laugh over it.

And then there was the time King Boris came to our city to drive in the very first train. There was a banquet in his honor and the day before I'd lost a crown off a tooth, had to have it pulled and so I appeared at the banquet much swollen and unable to partake of any food. Another element of comedy entered in. I was the only woman present and the only “temperance” person. But I waved my glass of water gaily with the rest of them and cried “Long live the king.” I drank water to the king, to the prosperity of Bulgaria, the fact is I even drank water to our “descendants.” But the king's as much of a bachelor as I am a spinster so why not drink to our descendants.

But the thing I miss most in coming back to America is the friendly curiosity of the Bulgars. You never go walking without someone saying, “Keda hode te le?” meaning to ask, “Where are you going?” At first I was tempted to say it's my own business but I understood after awhile it was just human friendliness. I got so used to it that I used to start up the street explaining to everyone I met that I was just running down to the bank, or the post office, or going for a little walk.

Don't think Bulgaria uncivilized, because even in our village which had its first train this year I've heard grand opera from Vienna over a first class radio. All modern things are coming in to those peaceful hills but if the time ever comes when the Bulgars cease to care where people are going and pass each other in silence I'll be truly sorry.

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Dr. D. B. Johnson, president of Winthrop college for women at Rock Hill, South Carolina, died December 26 at the age of seventy-two years.