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Marie, Queen of Rumania

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**MY COUNTRY**

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**THE COUNTRY  
THAT I LOVE**

PRESTON

## FOREWORD

My great great grandmother, Queen Marie of Romania, a descendant of kings and queens, emperors and empresses. Marie, Princess of Edinburgh was born at Eastwell Manor in Kent County in the south of England where she spent most of her childhood as a very lively, outgoing and intelligent young girl who enjoyed a less formal education, being balanced with relative freedom on the Eastwell estate, at Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace. After living in England and Malta, she moved to Coburg where she later met Crown Prince Ferdinand.

As I travel around Romania meeting people from very different backgrounds people talk of Marie with great warmth and admiration for her which gives me the feeling that Queen Marie is still with us today. She was one of us, she represented us as a people, as a culture and as a united nation made up of many ethnicities. Due to her less formal education that gave her the freedom to explore her own identity, Marie was able to relate to the peasants, the middle and upper class but also the aristocrats. Being able to relate with them gave her the power

of diplomacy that later allowed her to influence her husband, King Ferdinand, Romanian politicians, but also to negotiate on behalf of Greater Romania at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The ability to understand a nation is the key to fully represent their values and she fully understood this.

It was not always easy for Marie in Romania and during the start of her marriage. The Romanian court under the rule of King Carol I was very strict, very German and Marie's independence had been restricted. It took some years for Marie to adapt to her new life in the Romanian Royal Court, but once she had done so, she started to embrace her new adopted country as she discovered the traditions and cultures. These discoveries led her to be a great supporter of the arts through scholarships and an admirer of the traditional costumes, through which she became a fashion icon. Nowadays we almost always see pictures of our beautiful Queen in traditional costumes that she helped promote nationally and internationally. Queen Marie went on to support the charity "Domnița Maria", which was founded in 1893, in order to protect, preserve and to pass on the craft and the traditional Romanian folk art. A few years later, in 1901, she became the honorary president of the "Artistic Youth" charity, which evolved into the longest-lived artistic entity in Romania, in the first half of the twentieth century. But beyond all this, was the love for the country, a homeland that she came to love above all else.

When I think of Queen Marie, I think of a person that was incredibly courageous, who knew the power of setting an example and to not hide behind the palace walls. She showed her true self and the meaning of being royal while being a true ambassador, a voice for her people and her adopted nation. I find it remarkable to think that she rode her horse on the front during WWI dodging bullets to motivate the Romanian troops. I also cannot forget the courage that she showed when visiting hospitals during the Spanish flu pandemic. As well as being a hero, she was a true diplomat, one that was loved not only by Romania, but Europe and the United States where she was received by large crowds of people wherever she travelled. In society today, we may not have many examples to follow, but times are repeating themselves and personalities like Queen Marie are ones that we can follow and inspire to, even today.

“And my people and I will look at each other face to face. This was my time, a time that was not given to many beings in the world, although during this time, my dear Romanians not only cheered an idea, a tradition or a symbol, but also cheered a being that they had come to understand. The foreigner was no longer a foreigner. She was theirs...” Queen Maria

His Royal Highness  
Prince Nicholas of Romania



## PREFACE

I FEEL that a few words are necessary to explain when and why this book was written. At one time I thought of modifying it, but reading it through again, as its author, I well realized that that throbbing note of suppressed anguish running through the whole was the real thread holding its pages together; if changed, much of their meaning, may I even say of their charm, would be lost.

At Jassy, after our retreat, and all the grief and misery attached to it, we lived through a time of intensest and most demoralising depression. We had been hard hit, very hard; three quarters of our country had had to be surrendered; winter was upon us, and with it famine, want, and pestilence. Spirits were at lowest ebb, and confusion reigned in our midst.

I stood in the centre of it all, myself a refugee, a Queen with empty hands, a mother who had just buried her youngest child, one of the first victims of the epidemics raging around us—I felt this depression at first, as one too broken by personal grief to be able to help others. Little

by little, however, the intense suffering around me tore me away from my own sorrow, gave me the ardent and intense desire to be of use to my people, and through them to my country, at a moment when all hope seemed to be abandoning us.

There was something within me which told me that my voice above all others was now necessary to them; we had become so small, so shivering, so helpless; and in our more primitive countries the idea of "a mother" near by, to whom all can turn, is a great comfort, I might even say the greatest comfort. But how get into nearer and direct contact with the masses? How, as Queen, raise my voice so that it could be heard by thousands and thousands...?

Then, one day, an old professor came to me, himself a writer—a friend. He too had lost everything; but, like his Queen, he felt that some reaction must be brought about, some effort, some outward sign that faithful hearts were watching over those too broken, too poor, too miserable to lift their heads and struggle on. This old friend had just read *My Country*, published in England; he approved of it, said I must write more, that this was a good beginning, but that there were many beauties left to describe—that the Rumanians were happy, flattered that I, their Queen, the Princess born in a far-off land, should have so deeply absorbed the charm of my adopted country as to be able to describe it so accurately. "I shall translate it, he said, but you must add to it; so many have left their homes, have been torn away from what they loved,

that you will reach their hearts by speaking to them about the cherished regions they had to abandon."

"Chapter by chapter we shall publish it in the most popular newspaper, the one which finds its way into the trenches, into the villages even. In that way your voice will reach those who have never even seen you; you will become a reality to them, they will feel your heart beating with theirs, your soul suffering with theirs, and it will be a wonderful thing for them and for you."

"Not many Sovereigns are given your gift, use it; you must come forward now, put aside all hesitation, all diffidence, all self-consciousness; I shall translate what you write as you write it, and if you vary the places you describe, you will always be sure to touch one or the other of your readers who come from that part—believe me, it is your duty to use that power of expression given to you—it may be an unusual thing for a Queen to do, but is not our situation tragically unusual? Is it not the duty of each to help when he can, as he can...?"

That was what the old patriot had to say, and considering his arguments sufficient, I put all timidity on one side and began talking to my people.

At first I wrote a few short pages telling them how my heart was with them, how I shared their sorrow, their anxiety, their humiliation; encouraging them to face the adversity of to-day in the firm intention of remaining steadfast, of not giving way to despair; and when I had stirred up their emotions and made them listen, I kept

their interest alive by publishing every other week a chapter describing one or another of the parts torn from us. They got accustomed to wait impatiently for the appearance of these chapters, which later were printed in a small volume, upon atrocious war-paper, with still more atrocious ink.

Fifteen thousand of these ugly little volumes were snapped up in no time, and when I wandered amongst the sick and wounded, through hundreds of hospitals, they kept asking for "the Queen's little book," which each sufferer wanted to lay under his pillow as a precious possession.

These pages have never yet been published in English; in which language they were written, as I can write in no other.

Of course, I cannot expect that, in our more unemotional after-war days, they should awaken one quarter of the interest which they then aroused in the hearts of my stricken Rumanians; but, perhaps, even to-day, they may please some. There are no war-pictures amongst them—those I collected in another volume—but the anguish of that time rings through them, and that is what makes them poignant to the one who wrote them, and I hope to be forgiven for not purging them of that underlying note of tragedy felt through every line.

The original volume ends after the chapter about Jassy, but as it is being published so many years later, I felt that perhaps it would add to the book's interest if I wrote a

few after-war pages, speaking of the joy of return, a joy mixed with much pain, as can well be imagined; but, all the same, it is a story that ends well, and there is something in that...

The illustrations were made by my daughter, the Queen of Greece, then quite a girl; they may be faulty, but they have the right atmosphere, the right feeling, for she too loves her country well!



Marie

**FIRST PART**

**MY COUNTRY**

The Queen of a small Country!

Those who are accustomed to see rulers of greater lands can little understand what it means.

It means work and anxiety and hope, and great toiling for small results. But the field is large, and, if the heart be willing, great is the work.

When young I thought it all work, uphill work; but the passing years brought another knowledge, a blessed knowledge, and now I know.

This is a small country, a new country, but it is a country I love. I want others to love it also; therefore listen to a few words about it. Let me paint a few pictures, draw a few sketches as I have seen them, first with my eyes, then with my heart.



## CHAPTER 1

Once I was a stranger to this people; now I am one of them, and, because I came from so far, better was I able to see them with their good qualities and with their defects.

Their country is a fruitful country, a country of vast plains, of waving corn, of deep forests, of rocky mountains, of rivers that in spring-time are turbulent with foaming waters, that in summer are but sluggish streams lost amongst stones. A country where peasants toil 'neath scorching suns, a country untouched by the squalor of manufactories, a country of extremes where the winters are icy and the summers burning hot.

A link between East and West.

At first it was an alien country, its roads too dusty, too endless its plains. I had to learn to see its beauties—to feel its needs with my heart.

Little by little the stranger became one of them, and now she would like the country of her birth to see this other country through the eyes of its Queen.

Yes, little by little I learnt to understand this people, and little by little it learned to understand me.

Now we trust each other, and so, if God wills, together we shall go towards a greater future!

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My love of freedom and vast horizons, my love of open air and unexplored paths led to many a discovery. Alone I would ride for hours to reach a forlorn village, to see a crumbling church standing amongst its rustic crosses at a river's edge, or to be at a certain spot at sunset when sky and earth would be drenched with flaming red.

Oh! the Rumanian sunsets, how wondrous they are!

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Once I was riding slowly homewards.

The day had been torrid, the air was heavy with dust. In oceans of burnished gold the corn-fields spread before me. No breath of wind stirred their ripeness; they seemed waiting for the hour of harvest, proud of being the wealth of the land.

As far as my eye could reach, corn-fields, corn-fields, dwindling away towards the horizon in a vapoury line. A blue haze lay over the world, and with it a smell of dew and ripening seed was slowly rising out of the ground.

At the end of the road stood a well, its long pole like a giant finger pointing eternally to the sky. Beside it an old stone cross leaning on one side as though tired, a cross erected with the well in remembrance of some one who was dead....

Peace enveloped me—my horse made no movement, it also was under the evening spell.

From afar a herd of buffaloes came slowly towards me over the long straight road: an ungainly procession of beasts that might have belonged to antediluvian times.

One by one they advanced—mud-covered, patient, swinging their ugly bodies, carrying stiffly their heavily-horned heads, their vacant eyes staring at nothing, though here and there with raised faces they seemed to be seeking something from the skies.

From under their hoofs rose clouds of dust accompanying their every stride. The sinking sun caught hold of it, turning it into fiery smoke. It was as a veil of light spread over these beasts of burden, a glorious radiance advancing with them towards their rest.

I stood quite still and looked upon them as they passed me one by one.... And that evening a curtain seemed to have been drawn away from many a mystery. I had understood the meaning of the vast and fertile plain.

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Twenty-three years have I now spent in this country, each day bringing its joy or its sorrow, its light or its shade; with each year my interests widened, my understanding deepened; I knew where I was needed to help.

I am not going to talk of my country's institutions, of its politics, of names known to the world. Others have done this more cleverly than I ever could. I want only to

speak of its soul, of its atmosphere, of its peasants and soldiers, of things that made me love this country, that made my heart beat with its heart.

I have moved amongst the most humble. I have entered their cottages, asked them questions, taken their new-born in my arms.

I talked their language awkwardly, making many a mistake; but, although a stranger, nowhere amongst the peasants did I meet with distrust or suspicion. They were ready to converse with me, ready to let me enter their cottages, and especially ready to speak of their woes. It is always of their woes that the poor have to relate, but these did it with singular dignity, speaking of death and misery with stoic resignation, counting the graves of their children as another would count the trees planted round his house.

They are poor, they are ignorant, these peasants. They are neglected and superstitious, but there is a grand nobility in their race. They are frugal and sober, their wants are few, their desires limited; but one great dream each man cherishes in the depth of his heart: he wishes to be a landowner, to possess the ground that he tills; he wishes to call it his own. This they one and all told me; it was the monotonous refrain of all their talk.

## CHAPTER 15

BEFORE closing these pages, I would paint a last picture, a new picture, an after-war picture, but with something of the peacefulness in it of those pre-war visions so dear to my heart.

On the other side of our mountains, now no more barriers separating our people in two halves, stands a small castle on a steep jutting rock.

It is but a rustic stronghold, in olden times a fortress, built perhaps by Crusaders, but more probably a point of defence from the days of the Turkish invasions.

Against a background of hills and mountains, of which the lower ones are thickly covered with forests of fir and beech; solid, stolid, and lonesome it stands, a watchman placed between plain and highland, guarding the entrance of a mountain-pass.

Its walls, which are high and several yards in breadth, are built according to the level and shape of the rock, and

are so welded together with their foundation as to have actually become one. Several irregular-shaped towers rise from these immense impregnable-looking walls, whilst a narrow stone stairway, composed of many, many steps, runs steeply up to a heavily-barred door, sole entry to the fortress, a secretive, mysterious-looking little place.

It has no special pretensions to beauty, no distinctive architecture; it is just a solid, primitive, pugnacious-looking stronghold, and if it has a story it has kept it locked away in its solitary stone heart.

In former days, many years ago, when it was still on alien ground, I had once driven past this queer little fortress; its extreme loneliness had attracted me; I wondered to whom it might belong and why it looked so forsaken and uncared for; it filled me with the desire to possess it and to awake it to life.

It was but a fleeting vision, passed in a flash, effaced by the dust of my motor, just a dream-picture quickly left behind, but I never forgot it: strong, squat, uncommon of shape; standing out on its rock against a wooded background, guardian of the mountain road and of the several small villages lying at its feet.

When these regions became ours, one of my first visits was to this solitary fortress, which had made such a strong impression upon me, wondering if it still existed, fearing that it might have crumbled with so much else, since through this valley too the enemy had swept towards our plains.

To my intense relief, there it stood untouched with its air of pugnacious strength, a stolid, lonesome, lifeless, almost eyeless thing.

We decided to explore it; so, full of anticipation we climbed the precipitous road leading up to it, climbed its many steps of stone, and having secured its key, opened the secretive-looking door, sole entry to its mysteries...

What a quaint, delicious little place! A small inner court entirely shut in by high, intensely thick walls, pierced here and there by small loop-holes, rather shaky wooden galleries running round those walls somewhere near the top. Tiny disconnected stairs leading into the different towers, into several low-domed whitewashed rooms, others with heavily-beamed ceilings, the whole squat, incredibly solid, in good repair, not at all a ruin, but as bare and empty as a forsaken heart.

A silent, sad little place, but extraordinarily attractive, with a superb view from each wee window, and to me it seemed to have a sleeping soul longing to be awaked...

My children and I immediately began weaving dreams around Bran or Brana, the strange, solitary, fascinating little castle, which belonged to no one; whom nobody had ever cared for, which had never been loved nor inhabited as long as anyone could remember; Bran, Brana... that weird, picturesque, poetical, mysterious little place...

And one day... for such are the opening words to events big and small... one day... a deputation from the town of Brasov, to which it seems Bran belonged, came

to me, and with words resembling words used through all ages when offering gifts to royal people, Bran was offered to me! Bran or Brana, the little castle, the solitary, rugged, pugnacious-looking little stronghold was offered to me!...

I could hardly believe my ears, but they had brought all sorts of papers with them, with seals and signatures and solemn-sounding formulas according to the law. I, too, had to sign my name; it was all done with much ceremony, many good wishes and blessings, and fine, kind words. Then the deputation departed, leaving me with that solemn, signed, sealed paper—and Bran was mine, was mine...

Like the old gentleman who once, many years ago, had left me his forsaken villa in the melancholy weed-grown park, had the town of Brasov been pleased with the thought that their lonesome little castle should be given over into the hands of one who would care for it, and awake it to a life it had never known? I cannot say, but the glorious fact remained; whatever may have been their motive, they had come and had offered it to me. Henceforth, Brana, the beloved, belonged to me!

That was a glorious moment when I went to take possession of my own little fortress, and all the peasants from miles around rejoiced with me, for my coming was a blessed event in their careworn, colourless lives. Now the lonesome, soulless, masterless little stronghold would awake to life, would look down from its height,



would suddenly become a point of gravitation, a protector watching over their weal and woe.

They came in crowds to welcome me, all in their best Sunday costumes, to wish me good luck, good health, a long life; they came to express their satisfaction that the castle had become mine, they also came, of course, with their complaints and needs, and petitions, for one is not queen and mother of a people solely to receive congratulations and to hear expressions of content!

Oh! with what joy and interest I set about making my Bran liveable, putting in certain comforts, letting in more light, repairing the shaky galleries, creating new rooms in odd corners; making use of the huge timbered loft, using waste spaces, digging out secret little passages and stairs, turning queer little dungeons into living-rooms, but withal taking greatest care to preserve the austere, primitive aspect of the place.

We have a dear old architect belonging to our household, inherited from King Carol's times. He, too, had always dreamed that one day it would be granted him to repair an old castle; now this quaint building has become his pet work. He has settled down there like an owl in an old wall and devotes all his love, all his skill, to make a real treasure out of my precious little place. But we are in no hurry to complete our work, we are like children with a beloved toy of which we never weary; each year we improve something, without allowing its original aspect to change. It is still the impregnable, pugnacious lit-

tle fortress, but now it has been given a soul, its eyes are open, it is wide awake, joyfully alive....

Within, its walls are still severely whitewashed. Bran's rough, rustic appearance has been preserved, its several stairs are still steep and crooked, the rooms uneven of shape, built according to the rock beneath, nearly each one on a different level. You have to be careful not to stumble over the thresholds, not to hit your head against the low lintels of the doors; in fact, all the time you have to keep looking out because you are for ever turning unexpected corners and never know when you are going to encounter a step, a low ceiling, a projecting beam. Some of my own generation have shaken their heads, little approving of my taste for such an unpractical habitation; "at your age," they rather unkindly remarked!

But I love it! and with that all is said! Something of the child has remained in my heart perhaps, a love of romance, discovery, adventures; besides, I invite few of my own generation to live there with me, they only come to see it, when I inhabit it; I take my children, their friends, or younger friends of my own, who see nothing but the virtues of my treasure!

Behind its incredibly thick walls I have collected a strange medley of old things of a more or less rustic kind: quaint carvings, ancient figures in wood, stone, or metal; figures which do not feel out of place in such austere medieval surroundings; strange old icons upon golden background, deliciously mellowed by time, old carpets

and rugs, stone jars and mortars, bronze, copper, and brass vessels, peasant pottery from many lands; quaint old chests and cupboards, heavy old oaken tables, settles, and stools; but there are also huge soft easy-chairs, sofas, and couches, which, if the right colours and stuffs are chosen, harmonize agreeably with the rest, blending perfectly with their more austere companions. And everywhere, flowers, flowers, the brightest, the simplest, marigolds, calendulas, sunflowers, rubechias, representing a complete scale of oranges and yellows; then roses and asters, dahlias, lupins, larkspurs, and delphiniums, great flaming bunches of nasturtiums, huge proud nose-gays of tiger-lilies and the beloved white cottage lily, each colour finding its right background; taking a special value against the whitewashed walls, or on the time-blackened tables and chests, in the deep window embrasures, peeping from quaint little niches cut out in the tremendous thickness of the walls.

I never saw any house love flowers as my little old castle does; its every corner wants them, accepts them, asks for them....

All the galleries have boxes gorgeous with scarlet geraniums, and half of the inner court has been walled off separately and transformed into a little paved garden, one blaze of colour. This wee garden is also the proud possessor of a well several hundred feet deep.

My old architect has a special talent for building the most delightful fireplaces; every kind of shape, general-

ly walled into each room according to the size and style of the room; they are mostly quite plain peasant-hearths, whitewashed, built of bricks with all sorts of odd corners and shelves jutting out from them, so that pots and jars and ancient icons can find the right little places to stand on, each object looking as though it had been there always, as though it had been made for that special place.

Below the castle lies an old orchard alongside of a damp emerald-green meadow, where forget-me-nots grow in masses. I am transforming the orchard into a sort of kitchen flower-garden, a veritable orgy of colour, upon which the little fortress looks down with what formerly would have been a frown, but which to-day certainly more resembles a smile.

At certain dates the poorest amongst the peasants climb the castle's steep stone steps and crowd into my fortress-enclosure, and there, feudal-wise, I distribute corn, maize, money and clothing. A more picturesque, tattered, end-of-the-world assembly can hardly be imagined; strange, long-haired old men with white shirts, broad leathern belts and earth-coloured coats; tiny wizened-faced old women, like uncanny witches, come down from their far-off mountain-sides; large-eyed pathetic war-orphans brought hither by careworn foster-mothers, already heavily burdened with innumerable children of their own; one and all, patient, respectful, all-enduring, full of quiet dignity in spite of their crushing poverty. They all crowd round me, kissing my hands, the sleeve or

the hem of my dress, full of profuse thanks, which make my gifts seem much too meagre.

Then they all troop out again, old men and tottering old crones, careworn mothers and orphan-children, all calling down blessings on my head in the most picturesque language, wishing good luck, good health, long life, prosperity and a heart for their misery; begging me to come again, to come often, not to forget them, to descend from my height towards them and no end of other things, whilst I, feeling humbled, watch them climbing down my steep steps, limping off each with his small share, dispersing, going back to their poor little homes amongst the hills....

Occasionally, accompanied by one or the other of my children, or by some of my younger followers, clad in the bright costume of the country, astride a hardy mountain pony I ride up, up into the hills upon fearfully steep, uneven paths, in spring-time but torrent-beds. Then it happens that quite unexpectedly we come upon some of those weird, wizened, limping old men and women, who assemble in my castle courtyard to receive alms. They greet us joyfully but with slowly dawning astonishment, wondering what ever could have moved the Queen to wander into such far-off, never-visited corners, upon such ill-kept precipitous roads. I halt and hold converse with them, they shake their heads and sigh and smile, using quaint expressions which nearly always end in some

blessing or good wish, and the petition that we should be sure and come again....

Up, up, beyond beaten trails into shadow-filled fir-forests, dark, mysterious, sweet with the pungent perfume of sun-warmed resin, through dense thickets full of night, opening out on to moss-coated glades shut in by sombre fir-trees, regular and magnificent, like an army of giants, the many-shaded indigo mountains forming a background, so magnificent, so perfect, so changeless in its strength and stability that gratitude rises suddenly from my heart like a prayer. Beauty, beauty! eternal, indestructible, beauty of form, colour, detail, ever again it is as a deep religion to me, making me believe in things beyond this life, making me believe in hope, truth, goodness, the conquering of evil, of death....

With dusk we return, picking our way carefully over rolling stones, our shadows lengthening weirdly as though we and even our ponies were walking on stilts.

I have also been at Bran, or Brana the Beloved as it sometimes amuses me to call my castle, who through me has gained a soul, on an early winter's night when the snow was on the ground, and a large moon was sending her ghostly beams stealthily into my carefully locked courtyard, as though trying to discover secrets we were anxious to conceal from the outer world.

The pugnacious small castle had that night a quite different aspect; it had suddenly become ethereal, bodiless, a sort of dream, a vision of my own fantasy.

A waxen taper in hand, a thick, dark yellow taper made by the nuns, smelling deliciously of honey, I began wandering all through my stronghold, up and down its many steep stairs, in and out of ridiculously low passages, carefully stepping over uneven thresholds, on to secretive-looking galleries leading to squat towers with wee windows, whence I could look down, down upon the peaceful valley beneath, with its river winding through it like a shimmering path.

There was no sound; only a deep silence, the world lying fast asleep, all white under its first coating of snow, silvered by the moon's intense light. A strange, incredible little place, hardly to be imagined in our teeming, striving, bustling times, a lost little corner of peace. I felt inconceivably far away from everyday life, almost a stranger to myself, but oh! so much in sympathy with this old-world, almost incongruous habitation, which I cared to share only with those who understood its charm as I did. I kept my life here jealously apart from all those who were too accustomed to a royal, conventional, over-comfortable way of living.

Huh! but how cold it was! how ghostly, looking down, suspended over such a giddy height, and how my honey-scented taper dripped in the sudden blasts of wind which caught me round each corner. I must hurry back to the big flaming fire crackling on the huge hearth in the long low room, which had once been a loft and where the others were assembled, chatting and telling tales, oc-

asionally listening to the wind whistling round the ancient walls. Oh! how cozy it was round that giant fireplace, which made quite a room in itself, walled within the other, with a big roof under which one could creep close up to the flame.

But now to bed. We all scattered to our different apartments in the four corners of the castle. I climbed down my own secret stairs, a tiny, steep, stone flight hidden away in the thickness of the wall, with a niche at the top and another at the bottom, and a wee antique oil-lamp flickering in each, like those used centuries ago by Christians in the catacombs. There was something of the sensation of a catacomb about those dark little stairs leading down... down... as into a well.

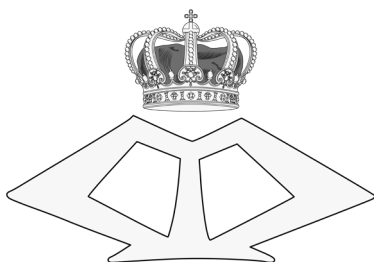
How the wind howled round my bedroom, an isolated chamber in one of the towers. Low-domed and white, it has quaint, perforated marble windows, remnants of some ancient Byzantine church which I brought back from Greece and which seem perfectly at home here.

A fire was crackling in one of the little white hearths, characteristic of the house, the leaping flames filling the small room with ever-changing light and shade, gilding the white walls, making the old icons and the silver lamps hanging before them glow, throwing unexpected colours upon the soft, dark blue Chinese carpet.

In a nook between the two windows, upon an old stone capital of a church pillar, stands a monk carved in wood. An austere figure with a wonderful ascetic face; he

is the silent guardian of this room, the companion of my hours of solitude. A taper burns beside him, and a blue Persian jar, full of flowers that are always fresh, stands at his feet. His attitude is one of prayer; with bent head and closed eyes he stands there, a perfect picture of patience and abnegation. Given to me once by my mother, he has been moved from house to house, but this low vaulted chamber, around which the four winds howl and whistle, chanting their dimmallest dirges, is his right setting; here he has found his final home. He pays no attention to me whatsoever, but the ruddy glow from the flames gives him an uncanny look of real life. He watches over my sleep, and when I awake at dawn, there he is, praying still, his face pale and more austere than ever in the growing light...

Have I been able to describe some of the charm of Brana the Beloved? I fear not. The child who loves it best said: You will never be able to make anybody who has not seen it understand what it is really like! I am afraid this is true, but I have spoken about it as a lover singing of his love—it is the best I can do. You see, it is a love which has come to me in my riper years, on the other side of that chasm which cut my life in two—so it is something of a symbol to me, a sign that one can begin again... even after war and exile... a little differently no doubt, but with that ever young energy and that undying renewal of faith and hope, of which, thank God, the human heart is eternally capable...



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