

# Chapter 15

## LIFE IN FOREIGN LANDS

THE life which our migrant townsmen led during all their stay in foreign lands was life in the open country often far from cities in which only the leaders of the groups lived who worked for the sale of the lime which they produced.

It was a difficult life full of misery which was increased by the lack of bodily needs and spiritual well-being; and their diet was sparse due to their economic status.

With the passage of time their life got better and especially that of leaders in the cities who evolved into labor procurers and industrialists.

They had under their guidance all our countrymen who came to them in search of work and for other reasons for which they needed advice. This was due to the development of a spirit of cooperation which was highly cherished in foreign lands among our townsmen.

# Chapter 16

## RETURN FROM ABROAD

AS was mentioned, the migrations were for about nine months to a year, beginning in February or March and ending in December in the case of profitable work. However,

even after a long absence in foreign lands they returned home and many were heralded as they approached in groups, on foot or riding mules, with gun salutes and songs.

After a brief rest, the returnees from foreign lands devoted time to the squaring away and solution of family problems and paying of debts which accumulated during their absence. The unmarried ones thought about marriage, because most men of Asvestohorion desired that their future wife would be chosen among women of our hometown. For this reason very often in later years, many young women were sent from our town to America, since the men from Asvestohorion who resided there had asked them to be their wives, a sign which showed the love and cohesion of the emigrants for their hometown.

The returnees from foreign lands contracted many weddings and, particularly during the winter months of their stay at their hometown, they were responsible for more than a hundred weddings being performed, and even 15 on a single Sunday. The increase of the population as shown in a census of 1908-09 rose from 4,500 to 5,000 inhabitants.

Later the weddings decreased due to the economic depression, but also because of the new social concepts concerning the economic settlement (dowry policy) which had become burdensome in more recent years.

## Chapter 17

### CELEBRATION OF THE WEDDING

**W**EDDINGS were celebrated in ancient times with great fanfare, with great enthusiasm and joy, and lasted for many

days. Much effort and money was expended for the ten to fifteen day preparation for a wedding.

Here, in brief, is the celebration of weddings:

Preparations began early on Monday of the last week before the wedding. In accordance with their custom, representatives of only the bride and groom went to the church of Theotokos the Right in Salonica where they attended the holy liturgy.

On Tuesday they went to Langada where the weekly business took place, the so-called Bazaar, and they purchased all the necessary foodstuffs and other needs for the wedding day celebration.

On Wednesday, a group of young people, friends of the groom, went to the nearby forest of Kouri and brought the necessary firewood for the preparation of the meals for the wedding.

On Thursday, many invited friends of the bride and groom went to Salonica to buy the presents for the newlyweds, but taking advantage at the same time of the restaurant of our townsman from Asvestohorion, the late Asterios Tsiakires which was located at Oun-kapan, where today is found the drugstore of our townsman Mr. Aristotle Hatziasteriou. The cost of the happy affair, which had been estimated before the wedding, was paid for gladly by the groom .

On Friday, they came to the bride's house to look over her dowry, which was transported on Sunday morning by horse to the groom's quarters. The invitations to relatives and friends were made on this day by a friend on horseback holding the filled wine bottle, and decorated with gold and ivy, which are ancient emblems of weddings.

On Saturday afternoon the celebration of the wedding began, with the usual domestic musical organs and drums or violins, with the usual line of basket-carrying young ladies who brought the bride's presents from the home of the



groom in baskets with the leader of the group carrying her basket on her head in a "basket-carrier."

The best man was invited late on Saturday evening by a group of young men friends of the groom, who brought to him the koulaki (kouloura) or round bread, a special kind of bread, and also food specially prepared, after which there followed revelry for many hours.

Likewise on Saturday evening revelry took place in the home of the groom as well as that of the bride with the celebrations continuing throughout the night. At the home of the groom only relatives and close friends came. At the home of the bride, however, the affair took place in a narrow circle, because here came only her close friends, maybe a few well-known acquaintances, who during the week had helped her with preparations for the wedding.

On Sunday morning after the holy liturgy, the invited guests went to the homes of the couple to be married, and the group started from the home of the groom and went to the home of the bride. From there, accompanied by musicians and dancers singing "the night is black in the mountains while snow falls on the boulders" the bride's dowry was transported to the home of the groom.

In the meantime, until the return from the transportation of the dowry and the pick-up of the best man from his home, the bride was being readied by her many friends who decorated her, combed her hair and fixed her up while singing different songs such as follows.

To the bride they said:

"When your mother was giving birth to you, all the trees were in bloom, and the birds from the nests. They, too, sang.

When your mother was giving birth, the sun lowered down and gave you the beauty and then arose again.

You have very blond hair thrown over your shoulders which angels comb with golden combs.

Even if you were a princess you would not have such joy,

so that they will weigh your body with the pearl, your eyebrows look as they were drawn with a pencil, they have no mate anywhere, your coral lips."

And, on the departure of the bride from her home for the church there followed:

"Bride with golden decorations, partridge of the mountain, the time has arrived to go to the groom's house.

Everyone wishes you live like a good housewife and to the house that you go to scatter about joy."

When everything is ready for proceeding to the church, a time of departure of the bride from her parents and obviously a moment of great emotion, the bride comes out of the family home, followed by her mother, who expresses her wishes and throws a small quantity of wine from a glass, some oats and much confetti.

The entire wedding procession proceeds toward the church for the wedding, where invited and uninvited guests gather and, after the wedding ceremony, with increased enthusiasm and gladness, they all return to the groom's house preceded by many dancers.

At the entrance to the groom's house the bride's mother and father-in-law meet her enthusiastically, they kiss her on the forehead, and she, in turn, returns the greeting by kissing their hands which were extended to her, and at the same time they gave her a pomegranate and an apple in a basket. The pomegranate was thrown by the bride behind her toward the people that followed her wedding procession while she threw the apple to the front of her. The actions symbolize the happiness and multiplication of the family, just like the contents of the pomegranate and the apple with their seeds.

Already the bride is in the groom's house and she sits in a corner of the room near the best man and her parents. A rich feast awaits everyone.

First were served various fruits and dry seeds or nuts, next plenty of choice foods with ample wine. During this banquet

which lasted more than four hours, the bride gave out various gifts, mostly handkerchiefs to many of the invited close relatives and friends, kissing each and every hand at the same time and receiving in turn money from them. And when the wine had enlivened their spirits they started singing various table songs, some of which I quote below:

1st Just look at the Margioliko, the drunkard who pulls his little fez between his eyebrows, I am not Margiolikos, I am not a drunkard, love has aroused me and I am aroused.

Forty yellow gold florins (coins) on a silk string were dangling in the evening and on a Saturday evening, my sugar-sweet lady, together we will celebrate, so that we may enjoy love.

2nd With this silver cup I want to drink five or six and if I do not get drunk my lady keep treating us until daybreak and I will sit and relate to you the troubles of foreign lands, what troubles one finds in strange lands, since childhood I was left orphaned of mother and of father. My siblings gave me away to a Bulgarian widow and for twelve years I never saw her. And after twelve and near fifteen the young lady comes out of the bath and I come from the barber and we went and met in a narrow alley. Give me my pay, my siblings have informed me to go so they can marry me off. Stranger, if you want marriage if you want a wife I have twelve slave girls and you can have your choice; you want the red-haired one, take her; do you want the black-eyed one? I don't want the red-haired one nor the black-eyed one, I only want my belongings, I want my pay.

Likewise, the following table songs were sung:

The sun shines on the mountains, it shines in the ravines, so shine the mountain robbers and the followers of Kolo-kotronis riding on horseback to church, praying while they ride, etc.



3rd Here is Kitsiou's mother sitting by the river, etc. or likewise.

4th Get up wretched Ali Pasha, to go to Tepeleni, etc.

All of the above patriotic songs are taken from the life of the guerrillas.

After the above events there followed a dance in which the newlyweds took part, usually in the square called the Baktses (garden) where today stands the electric light building. Later, as the evening hours neared, all went away wishing the newlyweds many happy days.

On the following Monday the relatives and friends returned, bringing various sweets to the newlyweds; the celebration was resumed but only with fruits consisting of apples and dry nuts with plenty of wine. In the late hours they all left, ending the fifteen day emotional celebration of the wedding of the children of both families.