

# Extract from Dalmatinac iz Tudjine : (From the Dalmatian in Exile)

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Extract from "Dalmatinac iz Tudjine" (From the Dalmatian in Exile) Pages 10, 11, 12( to line 30) where the poet returns to the actualities of life on the gumfields. In the oral tradition of Dalmatian folk poetry the verse is repetitive- the listener must be constantly reminded of the total picture. It is important to remember that the title sequence(the three poems, From the Dalmatian in Exile) sets out to paint as grim a picture as possible, its purpose is to dissuade would-be emigrants. By stressing the Protestantism of the country( to the poet, and the simple Dalmatian folk, Protestantism is equated with Lutheranism ) the poet knows the effect it will have on Catholic father and mother. I imagine, as I read, the women crossing themselves with dread as they listen. But the poet does not reckon on the money-hunger of these poverty-ridden people, they simply had no money for anything above bare necessities. By sending a son to New Zealand they could get money to build a house, buy a piece of land, perhaps educate another son. To raise the money for the passage out they had recourse to the village moneylender, a hundred per cent interest rate was common.

I would stress that the original is in telling rhymed couplets, strictly metrical. All I have given here is a bald translation of the sense but the effect of the poem is dissipated.

Translations from Dalmatian In Exile (Dalmatinac iz tudjine).  
very literal, no attempt at versification.

....but I leave all this to make my poem of New Zealand,  
Ah, Dalmatia, if I could but give you news of your dear sons  
How this wild, hard country beats them down,  
in what plight they find themselves  
what they suffer here. ...

Well, I'll try to put it all down,  
step by step- my pen will tell it all  
as best it can  
for I have never been a clever one  
unschooled in books and learning-  
I had had only six years in the lower school at Zaoztrog  
but asking God to help me I will tell the travail of my brothers  
so that your children will know what their brothers endure  
in this wilderness of New Zealand.

So now my hand, go to your task  
write before feeling grows cold.

We were reared in the Holy Catholic faith  
protected from the devil by its prayers and holy words-  
that is those who heeded its teachings,  
but not so here in New Zealand.  
We have no religion here  
and it is no fault of our own  
For New Zealand is a barbarous country  
bringing damnation to the soul of every man  
especially to Roman Catholics  
we we Dalmatians are...  
members of the Faith of Christ  
that we hold firmly in our hearts  
that Holy Church whose primacy we adhere to...  
But her commandments, who obeys them here?  
Not a tenth of our people  
for our ways are confused  
those ways that kept us firm in faith  
while we lived in your loving shade.

But in this new country  
we are like a people lost....

we do not hear the sermons of our priests  
that formerly sustained our hopes of heaven  
and kept us prepared against untimely death-  
from which God preserve us-  
for our roads would be all darkness  
if we had to carry our sins with us forever unshriven....

These are the travails of our souls  
 this is the risk we daily face...  
 to die unshriven...

Now my thoughts bear me on to tell  
 what the poor body endures  
 How it strives from dawn to dark  
 for the cursed Kauri Gum.

In the morning, before daybreak  
 we cook our own breakfast  
 enough to hold soul, and body together  
 and off we go to the gumfields  
 taking a hunk of bread, a billy of tea  
 to sustain us through the days work to nightfall.

The gumdigger hoists spade on shoulder  
 and sets off.. comes to the gumfield  
 and begins to dig, without mercy on his body  
 heedless of the sweat that pours in rivers  
 his head bent to the ground  
 he has not time to look at the sun,  
 hardly stretch himself  
 but he is accustomed to this heavy work  
 digs down till he's six feet down in the earth  
 and suffers his agony  
 takes his spade and digs deeper  
 till he is thigh deep in swamp water...  
 can any life be harder than that?  
 And when it rains there is water above him, too  
 till he could drown in it-  
 for that is what is to be gumdigger  
 but he is resigned, hoping only for a good day's pay..

See our plight, we work like animals  
 while our souls go unattended..  
 live in danger of sudden death,  
 our souls unshriven,  
 lost to the sweet ceremonies of our mother the church..  
 No Bells, no Bell Towers  
 their voice of Holy Church is stilled for us...  
 not only that, we are assailed from without  
 by the Godless enemies of Christ's religion  
 who work day and night against him  
 in the wicked cities...  
 If you happened to be in the City of Auckland  
 on a Sunday- Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand  
 and look around you and see how many different religions  
 proclaim their creeds  
 and hear how the city echoes with the Lutheran bells  
 and the bells of other false religions...  
 You see their priests standing on the street corners  
 shouting out their false doctrines  
 propogating their heresies..

A All along the main streets you'll see them

here one, there another  
 shouting from his box,  
 fairly bursting with his false knowledge  
 trying to convert you,  
 doing all he can to convince you  
 that there is no better religion than his own.  
 Then on the next corner you'll come upon another  
 with a ~~banner~~ waving banner,  
 Lions and tigers rampant!  
 Dear God, those lions and tigers don't have his ferocity  
 as he shouts his creed  
 The miracle is that the heavens don't fall down upon him-  
 such lies he tells!

(Patent  
 medicine  
 vendors!)

But the worst time is around seven in the evening  
 All these preachers of the various religions  
 trying to snare the Dalmatian youth with honeyed words..  
 tempting like Lucifer, hoping to make him stray from right paths,  
 to pull him by the coat-tails to their false churches  
 that they praise to the skies...

Not one but many like this:  
 and we have to look upon all this wickedness  
 alas they blind the eyes of many  
 and lure them to their wily webs..  
 the weak ones turn vainly in their meshes  
 losing soul and virtue  
 straying from those right paths of their fathers..  
 turn here and there in confusion...lost.  
 So it is too often with us wretches here  
 now we have no right sermons  
 to keep us on the straight road  
 out of the devil's snatching claws  
 We long for your safe shores, oh, Dalmatia!  
 hoping to get free and live again in our dear homeland  
 with our days happy and peaceful once more...

so we pray the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver us from our bondage...

This was probably written from Anteo Kosovich  
 first impressions of Auckland - remember  
 his lack of English, a strange thing is  
 his omission of any reference to St. Patrick's -  
 my reason for deducing it to be a first impression.  
 But could be a deliberate withdrawal.

(Sahabun Army?)