

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

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Publication year / Godina izdavanja: **2024**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:270:133667>

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-12-27**

Repository / Repozitorij:

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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?)