

OLD YOTSO IS WATCHING...

by Ivan Vazov

When I recall our fathers, grandfathers and kindred who passed to the other world before the liberation of our homeland, before they could behold the sweet rays of freedom, I often ask myself what would be their amazement, their joy, if by a miracle they should awake from their eternal sleep in the grave, come forth into the light of day and look around them: how would they be struck by all that was unknown, incredible in the life around them, in which they would feel strangers. . .

But the unfortunate dear souls will not rise from the grave to be gladdened by the marvels of freedom on which we, already habituated to them, now gaze indifferently, and of which they never dreamed even in their most wonderful visions! . . .

No, they will not rise from the grave: no one has risen from the grave. . .

* * *

However there was one man, who died on the eve of the War of Liberation, who did not rise from his grave — yet could experience the surprise at the sight of liberated Bulgaria which one risen from the grave would feel, without experiencing that disenchantment felt by us who are alive and can see.

That man was eighty-four year old Yotso.

He lived in a remote mountain village of a few cottages, nestling a high desolate hollow of the Stara-Planina range, above the Isker ravine.

Old Yotso, a simple but lively old man, who had lived the life of a serf with all its burdens, profanities and hopelessness, had had the misfortune at the age of sixty-four, just before the Russo-Turkish War began, suddenly to grow blind.

He still lived, but was dead to life, to the light of day. Yet in his heart he secretly cherished an unextinguished longing to see things „Bulgarian“ — that was how he spoke of liberated Bulgaria.

In his heart there lived only pictures of the dark past; in his old and vigorous memory surged a thick swarm of remembrances of serf life, memories fearful and foul. In his thoughts he would see clearly all that his eyes had ever seen; in the gloom would appear clearly red fez, harness, whips, fierce Turks with fierce faces, the long serf