

Extracts from the book “Sketches of the Crimea: Pictures of Crimean Life, History and Nature” by E. L. Markov, St.-Petersburg 1902. – 520 P, re-print by Kiev “Stilos” Publishing house, 2009.

“There is only one Crimea in Russia and only one Southern coast in the Crimea. Whenever we become more sophisticated and get used to value not only profits and eating pleasures the Southern coast will be turned into a row of dachas for the Russian capitals. There will be nothing of it left but parks, vineyards, houses. Such a dacha is too small for a country of 80 million. Capital assets will take hold of it with enthusiasm which will be the same as indifference they feel towards this Russian gem now. A woman having ruined her health and corrupted her soul in the ugly atmosphere of glamorous life, will have a desire to inhale a reviving warm and humid air fountain which is breathed by the valleys of the Southern coast. She will want to blow away the waste of restless nights and fake inspiration with healthy juice of Crimean grapes and life-giving water of the Crimean Sea. Everything that can nestle will nestle against the warmth, the light, the sea, and the grapes here. Ruined lie of capital life will rush to find salvation here in the simplicity and truth of nature. It’s difficult to forecast how high the land price on the Southern coast will rocket up in the nearest future after railway facilities to Sevastopol are constructed.

As early as in summer 1868 deserted stony uphill slopes near Yalta and Alupka looking like piles of broken roof tiles were sold for 10-12 rubles per square fathom that is for 24000 and 36000 rubles per square arpent. The rent price and the cost of dacha life will mount accordingly. Bare owners of the Southern coast will not afford to survive this rush of strange environment. They will either be run over by the rush of capital assets or will be tempted by their proposals and will leave the whole Southern coast for enterprises of a single fund little by little. It is quite certain that then the ancient charm of life on the Southern coast will vanish as it has started disappearing in Yalta and other more visited places. Restless spirit of trading activity will flourish among splendid warm valleys the main charm of which is the silence of half-wild desert and the barbaric simplicity of household. A forest will unclog, an animal will run away, mountain springs will not prattle, a Tatar in his Asian dress will be shown only in a circus, comfortable European cottages will replace clay Tartar huts with brushwood chimneys, a desert will turn into a city and a silent forest into a noisy market but...but who will benefit from it, dear reader? Will this charming place become even more charming because of it? Will you be happier if an Asian is dressed like a German?”

P. 314-315.

“You should definitely go from Ay-Danil station to Gurzuf Fundukleya. It is one of the most picturesque and peculiar places which once seen cannot be forgotten. If you pass by Gurzuf Park in a moonlit night you will be impressed by a long threading alley closely surrounded with black arrows of cypress. A Tartar village Gurzuf huddled with bare rocks of the seashore will spread out before you from above a wide verandah of a house in the luxurious manorial park. High conic cliffs eaten by time and stuck above the sea top this specific village full of Tartar squalor, crowd and mottling. A travelling artist would hardly stop painting here. On top of the cliff there is also a half ruined castle. Pieces of its walls, towers and stairs can be seen on the unscalable steep. This is the village of Gorzuvit once being a Greek and then Genoese settlement which protected an access to Gurzuf and Artek gulfs rich in fish and wonderful ship quays. You shall quite enough wander the rocky passes of the village to explore Tartar types, Tartar life and reach Gorzuvit citadel. Your efforts will be requited with a really marvelous view you could enjoy from top of the cliff, you could at the same time see forest Yayla, the park, village Gurzuf and the blue sea that is pocked with white moths of sails.”

P. 347-348.

«The quietest and the most pleasant bay is located between Gurzuf rocks and Ayu-Dag Mountain. It is always full of dark shadows of forests and Ayu-Dag rocks reflected in it. All rare settlements of this place are also instinct with some kind of deserted silence. The gigantic hump of gloomy and unscalable Medved-Mountain divides them from the outside world and shades them with its stony fastness. A few cliffs fancily picked by sea waves and wind are undoubtedly the leftovers of a rocky cape. They are like islands in the sea around which fishermen huddle together and on top of them there are swarms of sea birds. Everyone who came to Ayu-Dag by sea from outside Yalta can never forget these picturesque cliffs. I remember a real Venetian night with the full moon, with the quietly splashing sea, with a quiet song and happy thoughts when we were swimming in a roomy boat from Magarachskaya hermitage to Gurzuf gardens. We were gently swayed and rocked like in a cradle. Poorly blown sails of ships hurrying to Yalta to get in time for a morning market were silently swimming past us. Dark capes and bays of the bidding farewell coast were silently disappearing one by one. A child's head was sleeping sweetly on my laps in the full moonlight; his flaxy curls messed up, while a singsong woman's voice was heard to the strains of a piano far in the sea as it can never be heard in private... Fishermen's boats were swaying beautifully in the shadows of Gurzuf cliffs and when a sleepy fisherman started picking up grey mullets splashing in the cage, seagulls shook up on their lonely cliff with such a stunning alarm... We were wandering along a magically lit park like in a fairy tale and black shadows of cypresses were falling on us and the cypresses themselves looked like real giants.

Having passed by Sultan Kirym-Girey's cozy dacha which is situated on the very seashore and hidden there between thick fig and nut trees you come up to princess Potyomkina's Artek. It is already in the kingdom of Ayu-Dag. Artek is situated on its foothill that's why it's always so dark there. The best part of Artek is on top of the mountain. There's a small monastery as sophisticated as everything on the Southern coast. A small church looks like a vineyard summer house while cells resemble pretty dachas. It is indeed a home of a hieromonk from Svyatogorye who says mass without his congregation and lives in this heavenly hermitage.

I would not advise anyone to climb a humpbacked mass of Ayu-Dag. There's no trace of a road but there are big downfalls. It's easy to get lost but there are no peculiar views. Once we got lost there with one professor having decided to look for ancient ruins on its top together, without a guide. It was impossible to ride a horse; it was even hardly possible to drag horses. But instead we could examine and count the horrible downfalls which Ayu-Dag shows to the sea. Between its narrow and high cliffs stretched forward like a monster's paws there are such slums, such gulfs that suit best to hide a smuggler and a sea reaver because they are concealed with rocky islands and a forest.