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**Bread Crumbs Instead of Lead Bullets – The Duel  
in the Journal *Furnica/The Ant***

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**Abstract:** The Journal *Furnica/The Ant* was one of those magazines in Romania that mocked the duel in their pages. The editors of this publication claimed that the honor business is the business where the “witnesses have fun, drinking and eating at the expense of” those who are fighting a duel. The same editors believed that the interest in the affairs of honor was shown especially by those individuals who lack honor. Their assertions were reinforced by the fact that many of those who “went out on the site” to solve a “matter of honor” did everything possible to avoid a real confrontation. The research of the present work encompasses the analysis of 70 articles which were published between September 1904 and October 1930.

**Keywords:** the history of the press; the interwar period; the duel; the newspaper; the honor

## 1. Introduction

The *affair of honor* is the business where “witnesses have fun, drinking and eating on the count” of those who fight in the duel. Interest in *honest businesses* shows, in particular, those individuals who lack the honor. The conviction of those who turn to *the duel* is *that two shots changed without result* can bring the fame that formerly enjoyed only the Swordsman knights<sup>2</sup>. That is what the editors of the Journal “*Furnica/The Ant*” wrote about *duel* and *those involved in a duel*.

As a news subject, the duel enjoyed the appreciation of Romanian newspaper and journal readers between the end of the 19th century and the years that marked the beginning of the Second World War. *Honorary affairs* articles involving more or less known people have led readers to think of “*knights of other times who defended their honor by holding the Gospel in one hand and the sword in the other.*” (Teodorașcu, 2016, p. 269) The great number of *duel* news from newspapers and magazines has eventually led readers to consider the fight of honor as trivial. (Teodorașcu, 2016, p. 278) Despite this, *the duel* continued to exist. Between November 1940 and January 1941, some church magazines in Transylvania commented in negative terms on Bucharest officials' decision to reintroduce the duel into military regulations and to set up a school for fencing in the capital of the country.

*Furnica/The Ant* was one of those magazines that laughed *the duel* on their pages. As is the case with publications of this type, the audience was divided into supporters and contestants. In the *history of the Romanian press from the first beginnings until 1916*, N. Iorga, the author of the research that gave the

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<sup>2</sup> Toate la un loc: zece minute de distracție americană/All together: ten minutes of American amusement. *Furnica/The Ant*, year XXV, no. 7, 12 August 1930, p. 7.

name of the volume, and C. Bacalbasa, who published a study on the Romanian press in the same volume, had different positions from the magazine analyzed in our paper.

While Iorga claimed that *Furnica/The Ant* was appreciated only for some time by *a superficial part of the Romanian society*, (Iorga, 1922, p. 160) Bacalbaşa said about the same publication that this was the first genuine humoristic journal in the Romanian press: leaving the old system of making a purely political opposition from a humorous newspaper; G.G. Ranetti and N.D. Taranu made a weekly newspaper with a varied content, with very little political matter. The attempt has succeeded as the newspaper has become popular and lives on.” (Bacalbasa, 1922, p. 185) Moreover, in the article-program, *Furnica/The Ant* promised readers that it would be a magazine that is for everybody<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. Pro or Con?

In Romania, the fashion of the duel was brought by wealthy young people who, after completing their studies abroad, have kept the habits acquired in the years away from home. One of the most famous Romanian duels is the one in which George Emanoil Lahovary, the owner of *L'Indépendance Roumaine*, was killed by Nicolae Filipescu, a journalist and a politician. In most cases, the challenges of the duel arose because of either violent press articles or sharp talks in Parliament. (Teodoraşcu, 2016, p. 275)

In the opinion of some important people of those times, *the duel* was a *necessary evil*, which the man, as far as possible, had to avoid. C. G. Costa-Foru, a participant in several duels as both a duelist and a witness, claimed that if a man was to choose between *duel* and *shame*, the choice of the one in this situation must be the duel:

“Now, if you were to ask me:

- Are you *for or against* the duel?

I would answer you categorically:

I was for until I came to be against. And yet, even today, if I needed it, I am ready, at any time, to prove that I cherish more honor than life and that I am happy to sacrifice it for a faith, or for an idea, either in a duel or otherwise.

When it comes to balance, which places people to choose between living a villain or shame, proving that he prefers the death of wickedness, then only the duel becomes an honorable solution.” (Costa-Foru, 1937, p. 55)

However, C.G. Costa-Foru said that in a duel the most important role has the witnesses. A duel, according to the same source, ends with the death of one of the duelists only if the witnesses have been badly chosen: “... as a leading author said in a writing on the duel, “not swords [nor] the bullets kill, but only the witnesses.” (Costa-Foru, 1937, p. 56) Costa-Foru supported his words by telling the way a duel he himself witnessed. The Duelists were N.D. Taranu, one of the two directors of the magazine *Furnica/The Ant*, and the poet Dimitrie Anghel. “The affair of honor” ended without blood being shed after Costa-Foru told the two combatants that just that day his wife gave birth to a baby girl.

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<sup>1</sup> *Furnica/The Ant*. *Furnica/The Ant*, year I, no. 1, 19 September, 1904, p. 1.

Here too we will show that the poet Dimitrie Anghel called “on site” and the second director of *Furnica/The Ant*, G. Ranetti, but he refused the duel<sup>1</sup>. Regarding all this, C.G. Costa-Foru wrote in 1912 in *Adevărul/The truth* an article<sup>2</sup> that spanned more than two columns. The text attracted the irony from the readers as the author claimed it was for the duel, but at the same time it was against the duel.

### 3. The Courage of the Duelist

What draws particular attention to Costa-Foru's story is Dimitrie Anghel's state before the time when he should have started his duel with N.D. Taranu: “It was the warlike appearance of a medieval knight. The poet defied of death.” (Costa-Foru, 1937, p. 56) In a work of 1919, the following statement was made: “Courage, in its simplest form, is the contempt for death.”<sup>3</sup> A definition of courage is also found in a *national education manual for citizens and soldiers*:

“Courage is called the quality that the soldier has to bear without complaining the hardships and shortcomings he encounters in peace time and to face without fear the sufferings and dangers he encounters during the war.

Courage is manifested in various forms: strength of soul, cold blood, patience, perseverance, boldness, presence of spirit, own opinion, initiative, responsibility of deeds, severity, calm, bravery, courage, heroism, determination, energy, will.

The controversies of courage are: discouragement, sadness, disappointment, mourning, indignation, chastity, fear, terror, fright, misery, wickedness.

Each of these evils is shown in the different circumstances of life.

The man has to fight, in all ways, to earn his living; his struggle is all the more fierce with the more energy he has.” (Arifeanu, 1921, p. 93)

For the journalists from *Furnica/The Ant*, not the strength shown in wars and duels defines *courage*, but something else. Things that matter everyday life, such as *the courage* of one's own opinions, say about a man if he is courageous or not.<sup>4</sup> Among the main reasons that made two men of honor to use the duel to solve a problem of honor were *swearing in the gazette*. People were politicians with journalists, as well as journalists with journalists. In most cases, the duel was only to provide the duelists with “*a pretty free ad*”<sup>5</sup>

With the help of stories (real or even invented) about duel and duelists, the editors at *Furnica/The Ant* sought to highlight the ridiculous situations created by the duel:

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<sup>1</sup> George Ranetti, „Cazul «cavalerului» Anghel/The case of teh night „Anghel”. *Furnica/The Ant*, year VIII, no. 39, 31 May 1912, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> C.G. Costa-Foru, Părerile unui spectator – Duelul/The opinions of a spectator – the Duel. *Adevărul/The truth*, XXV year, no. 8158, 30 May 1912, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Gh. B.P. Curajul (Rezumat dintr-un discurs ținut în Duma din Moscova de către Ch. Richet, prof. la fac. de medicină din Paris)/Courage (Abstract from a speech held in the Duma in Moscow by Ch. Richet, professor of medicine at Paris). *Educația/Education*, year II, no. 3, March 1919, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> \*\*\* Curajul!/Courage!. *Furnica/The ant*, year I, no. 4, 10 October 1904, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Gogu Delafefelei, Din mizeriile anului nou/ From the miseries of the new year. *Furnica/The ant*, year I, no. 17, 9 Jan. 1905, p. 6.

“Many suffered because of the duel, for it was impossible to replace their heads and their authentic hearts, broken by the bullet of a revolver or the sharp point of a sword, another head or other rubber heart or even metallic. Many were injured in their arms, ribs, and finally in any place they could reach the tip of the sword. But most of them, who make a crushing majority over the others, have settled on site. These were, of course, the best initiates in the art of the duel.

For, or both were coward and hence the distance between them was greater than the one prescribed in the rules of the duel; or the witnesses have recourse to a stratagem and put in place the bullets of lead donuts made of soft bread, - to avoid the catastrophe.”<sup>1</sup>

In a text published on February 15, 1907, *Furnica/The Ant* presented to his readers the sensational case of Mr. Popescu, from Bușteni, who, in a single duel, fought with two at once and came out victorious: “... he sat beautiful between the two opponents, with the left hand beating with the gun, while the right hand angrily held the sword. Both opponents were “wounded to death.”<sup>2</sup> In another text, it was shown that the *Fetus* organizes for its readers a contest whose prize was “an admirable field,” where the “lucky winner” could solve its serious honour affairs.<sup>3</sup>

In most of the *battles of honor* presented in *Furnica/The Ant*, the protagonists were either military staff or MPs.

If a civilian could refuse a duel challenge, in the case of the officers, things were different. An officer had to “get out on the field” with someone who at some point insulted him, even if he did not want to do that. Otherwise, he would have to know the anger of his superiors. In this sense, we are writing a fragment from an article published in 1908:

“The victim of a stupid and barbaric prejudice, which in civil society subsists only in very few puffy heads, but unfortunately imposed rigorously in the military world constituted in the medieval cast, Major Sturdza had to fight in duel with Captain Catuneanu, who, following an article of general criticism of the habits of some of the officers, threw the first epithet of “scoundrel”.

The minutes of the duel say that one centimeter more the sword would have had penetrated deeper into Major Sturdza's cheek, the carotid would have been cut and the young officer would have fallen dead in a moment.

Then, the gentlemen of the duel, isn't it an idiocy, isn't it inhuman? [...]

It is not good for commanders, like military chiefs, to teach officers the absurd idea that a man's honor lies at the top of a sword.”<sup>4</sup>

There have been many cases where two politicians have “come out on the ground” to solve a “business of honor.” Most of the time, the duels “were blowing in the wind.” For such cases, witnesses were using the formula “two bullets with no result”. Nicolae Filipescu, for example, was argued by the editors at *Furnica/The Ant* that although he did nothing to avoid a duel, he preferred to “win in the field” (“Duelul Filipescu-Bădărău/The duel Filipescu-Bădărău”<sup>5</sup> and “Duelul Filipescu-Cantacuzino/The

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<sup>1</sup> Doinaru, Binefacerile duelului/ The Beat of the Duel. *Furnica/The Ant*, year I, no 16, 2 Jan. 1905, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Nicollo Mascalzoni, Diverse/Diverse. *Furnica/The Ant*, year III, no. 127, 15 February, 1907, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Jorju Delamizilu, Premiile «Furniceii»/The “Ants” Awards. *Furnica/The Ant*, year V, no. 252, Thursday 9 July 1909, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Jorju Delamizilu, Duelul în armată/The Duel in the army. *Furnica/The Ant*, year IV, no. 197, 19 June 1908, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Tarascou, Duelul Filipescu-Bădărău/The duel Filipescu-Bădărău. *Furnica/The Ant*, year II, nr. 75, 1906, p. 2.

duel of Filipescu-Cantacuzino<sup>1</sup>”). This situation was most probably explained by the fact that N. Filipescu was spiritually depressed by the regret that, in 1898, George Lahovary was killed in a duel, as we have shown above, for which he was “to 6 months imprisonment”. (Bacalbasa, 1928, p. 228)

#### 4. Conclusions

According to the editors of *Furnica/The Ant* magazine, the duel was a way for many Romanian *men of honor* to get *free advertising*. C. G. Costa-Foru said that although he was against the duel, he would always accept to fight in a duel or witness one. The statement, though it seems strange, has an explanation. Many of those who were “on site” to solve a “problem of honor” did their best to avoid a real confrontation. In Romania, most of the duels started “on the ground” but ended at the restaurant.

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<sup>1</sup> Prințul Ghytza, „Duelul Filipescu-Cantacuzino/The duel Filipescu-Cantacuzino. *Furnica/The Ant*, year VI, no. 26, 4 March 1910, p. 2.