

*In the front of the train the dining car, with its frivolous curtains up, throws a special luster over the whole scene. Large gas cylinders illuminate a veritable banquet hall.*

*The bright-white tablecloths and napkins, artistically and coquettishly folded by the sommeliers, the glittering glasses, the ruby red and topaz white wine, the crystal-clear water decanters and the silver capsules of the champagne bottles — they blind the eyes of the public both inside and outside, and contradict the sorrow of parting that can be read from people's faces.*

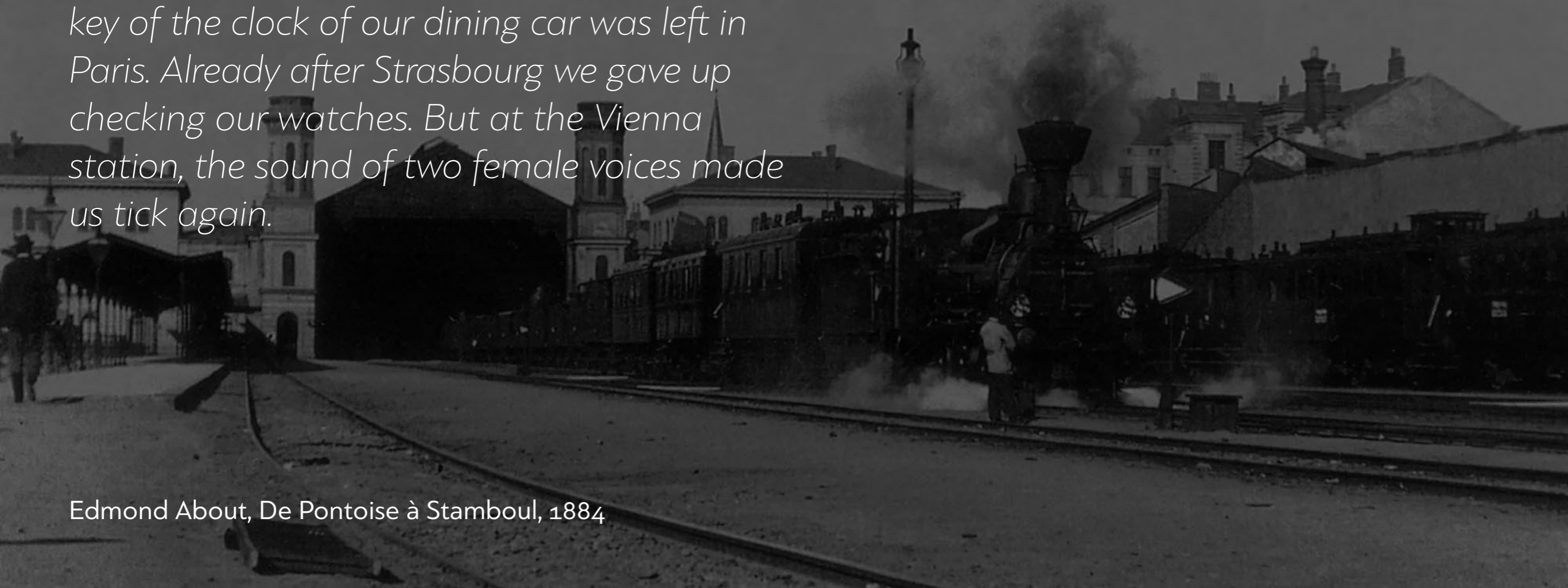
*... The food is exquisite. It must be said, during the entire trip from Paris to Bucharest the menus vie with each other in variety and sophistication — even if they are prepared in the microscopic galley at one end of the dining car.*

Henri Opper de Blowitz, *Une course à Constantinople*, 1884



*We have crossed the Austrian border and arrive at Simbach where we enter the Prague time zone, following the time of Munich, Stuttgart and the German time. A feature of the Austrian monarchy is that the clock strikes twice an hour, once in Prague and once in Pest: the Bohemian and Hungarian time. Only the Vienna time does not exist because Vienna adapts to the clocks of Berlin. To avoid confusion, and in an intelligent attempt at neutrality, the key of the clock of our dining car was left in Paris. Already after Strasbourg we gave up checking our watches. But at the Vienna station, the sound of two female voices made us tick again.*

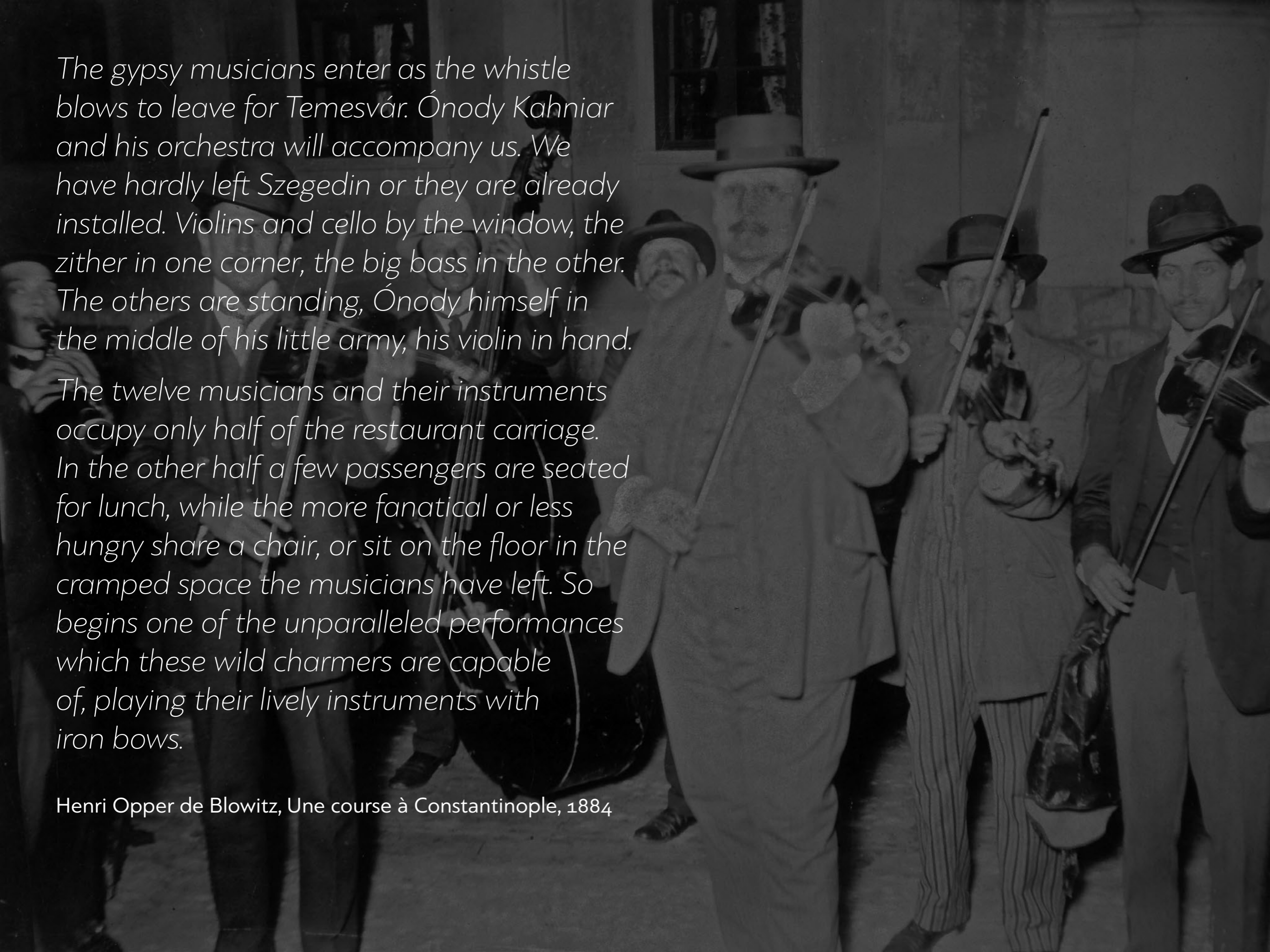
*Amid the friendly buzz suddenly graceful female voices were heard. While four of our French companions left the train to visit the electricity exhibition, a senior official of the Austrian Federal Railways came on board, Mr. Von Scala — together with his wife and her sister. They added a new, delicate element to our journey delights, which pleasantly tempered the exuberance of a large company of men.*



*The gypsy musicians enter as the whistle blows to leave for Temesvár. Ónody Kahniar and his orchestra will accompany us. We have hardly left Szegedin or they are already installed. Violins and cello by the window, the zither in one corner, the big bass in the other. The others are standing, Ónody himself in the middle of his little army, his violin in hand.*

*The twelve musicians and their instruments occupy only half of the restaurant carriage. In the other half a few passengers are seated for lunch, while the more fanatical or less hungry share a chair, or sit on the floor in the cramped space the musicians have left. So begins one of the unparalleled performances which these wild charmers are capable of, playing their lively instruments with iron bows.*

Henri Opper de Blowitz, Une course à Constantinople, 1884



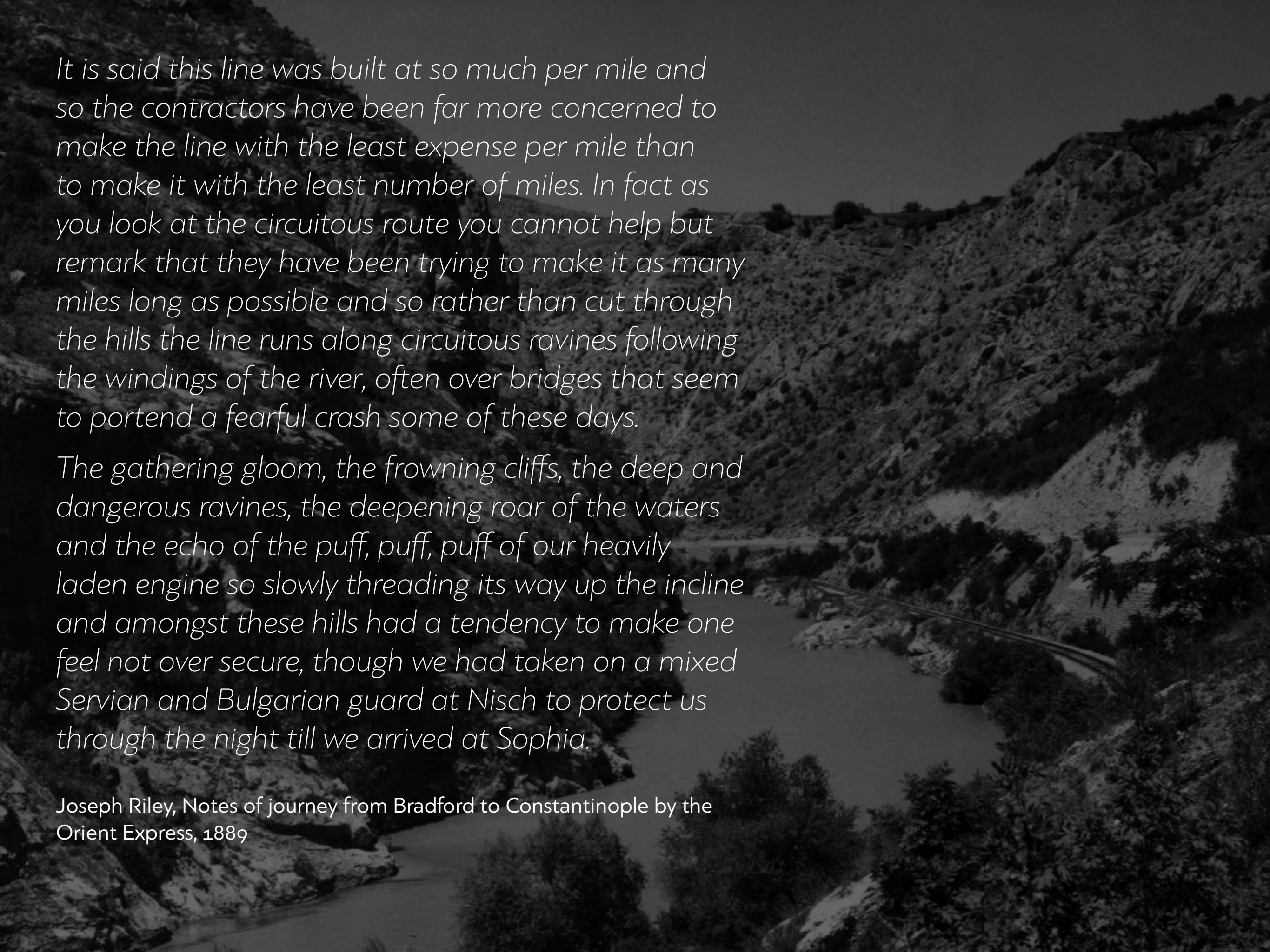
*At Giurgiu, we leave our sleeping cars to cross the beautiful blue Danube, which after all is perfectly yellow, in a little boat, and in a few minutes we arrive in Bulgaria.*

*... At the Russe railway station we are warned that the train could well be attacked, armed bandits, sometimes made up of a hundred men, laid waste the land. Each clutched the butt of his faithful revolver, but it was in vain that we had polished our weapons, nothing came of it.*

*The last stage of our journey began at Varna, when we embarked on the Espero, a beautiful ship of the Austro-Hungarian Lloyd line. A crowd of poor people were sleeping on deck, covered in blankets.*

*... The Black Sea showed us its bad character, then it was very hot in the dining saloon, so much so that.. but night fell, its cloak hiding any weaknesses well.*





*It is said this line was built at so much per mile and so the contractors have been far more concerned to make the line with the least expense per mile than to make it with the least number of miles. In fact as you look at the circuitous route you cannot help but remark that they have been trying to make it as many miles long as possible and so rather than cut through the hills the line runs along circuitous ravines following the windings of the river, often over bridges that seem to portend a fearful crash some of these days.*

*The gathering gloom, the frowning cliffs, the deep and dangerous ravines, the deepening roar of the waters and the echo of the puff, puff, puff of our heavily laden engine so slowly threading its way up the incline and amongst these hills had a tendency to make one feel not over secure, though we had taken on a mixed Servian and Bulgarian guard at Nisch to protect us through the night till we arrived at Sophia.*

**Joseph Riley, Notes of journey from Bradford to Constantinople by the Orient Express, 1889**

*When I first arrived the babel of sounds were most confusing. Till the train had come to a stand the crowd of onlookers had been kept outside the barriers of a strange looking way side station. To me it had nothing of the character of a large station attached to so important a termini as Constantinople must be. I looked out for the indications of a large and respectable station in vain. I was greatly disappointed in the station premises, there seemed to be no platform.*

*... My friends came down upon me as an avalanche the moment the gates were open. What a rush – car owners – out porters – Turkish soldiers – Turkish people – Jews – Greeks – Armenians – in every conceivable costume and character save the Chinese.*

Joseph Riley, Notes of journey from Bradford to Constantinople by the Orient Express, 1889

