



ENLARGED FACSIMILE OF A SILVER COIN OF THE CHALKIDIC CONFEDERACY, IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM. OBVERSE, LAUREL-CROWNED HEAD OF APOLLO. REVERSE, KITHARA.

A JOURNEY IN THESSALY.

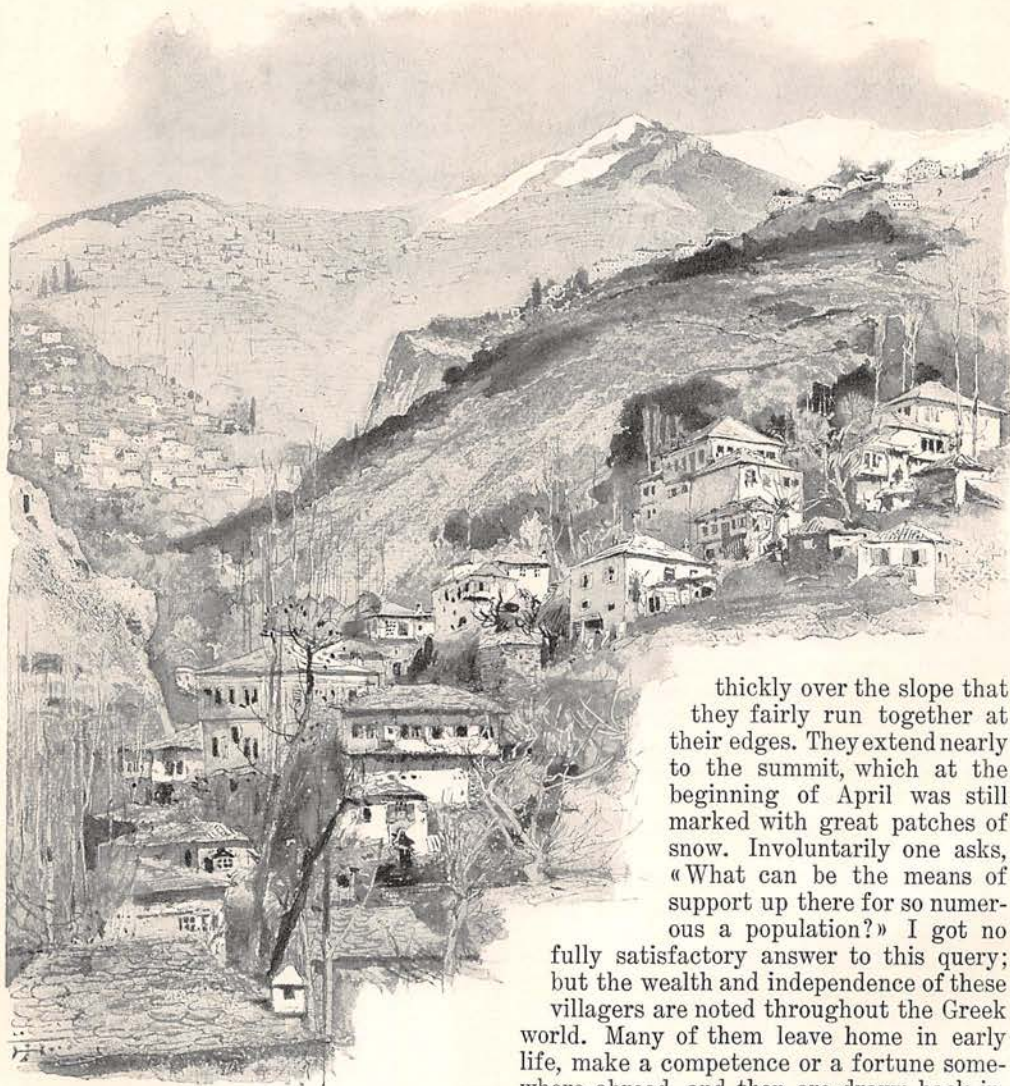
THE Homeric and the modern world are brought very close together in Thessaly, with few traces left of the intervening links in the chain of history. The locomotive screams up and down the plains of Achilles, under the shadow of Pelion, in full view of Olympos. This contrast was continually before my mind while visiting fertile Phthia; and since then the desolation of war has overspread the land, bringing yet other and painfully modern associations—of victory for the wrong cause—to the haunts of Homer's gods and heroes.

Wherever you start from, you must first make trial of the sea if you would go to Thessaly otherwise than on foot or on horseback. It is still unconnected by rail either with Europe—the Greek does not count his own land as part of that continent—or with the rest of Greece. From Peiræus there are three lines of Greek steamers to Volo. That is one indication that the Greeks are now, as of old, a folk that trade and journey much by sea. And any who doubt the capacity or the future of the Greek should see the port and city of Peiræus, and read the descriptions of travelers who saw them in the first years of Greek independence. In 1834 one tumble-down building, the Turkish customhouse, was all. Now the line of the ancient walls incloses a commercial and manufacturing city of nearly fifty thousand people; and ships of all nations, but mostly Greek, crowd the landlocked harbor, the capacity of which has lately been much enlarged by dredging.

Our steamer was advertised to sail at seven in the evening, but nine o'clock came before it got under way. Next morning we had rounded the temple-crowned promontory of Sunion and were between Attica and Eu-

boea when we emerged from the malodorous cabin. The defects of Greek steamers need not be dwelt on, but no one should go to Thessaly unless he can accept with a fair degree of resignation a plentiful lack of cleanliness. Then, too, the largest boats are small, and the wind may be strong. Also, let the traveler provide himself beforehand with something for breakfast if he wants anything, for the Greek eats nothing with his black coffee, or at most nibbles a few mouthfuls of *paximáthi* (a hard, slightly sweetened cake) or of a peculiar round pretzel known as *kouloúri*. The *kouloúri* does very well, but even *kouloúria* cannot be had on shipboard. Finally, the long delays at all the little intervening ports are a trial to Western patience.

To offset these drawbacks, the scenery is an unfailing delight. Two things above all others characterize the scenery of Greece. First are the marvelous color-effects wrought by a Southern sun in a pellucid atmosphere. This excess of *plein air*, this ever-changing aura of ethereal hues, mocks the painter's palette, as it does all verbal description. And then one must add that incomparably blue sea, to whose flashing wavelets the Æschylean phrase, "unnumbered laughter," is more fitting than to those of any other waters. In the second place, no other region so small can boast such great variety. Sailing up the Eubœan strait, after the Cyclades have grown dim astern, one passes a striking succession of green shores, bare gray mountains with one or two caps of snow, and here and there a forest. Those smiling fields on the left were part of Aulis, where the thousand ships of the Achæans gathered, "bearing woes to Priam and the Trojans." Then comes the narrow Euripos with its rushing



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

THE SLOPE OF PELION.

current. Again the strait widens; the long stretch of gray cliffs ahead of us on the right is the base of Makistos, one in the series of mountains that Æschylos makes bear the signal-beacons between Troy and Mycenæ. Before we entered the Maliac Gulf, however, it was too dark to catch even a distant glimpse of Thermopylæ. At daylight next morning we lay at anchor in the harbor of Volo, some seven or eight hours late.

Mount Pelion rises directly behind the town. From the harbor one gets the full effect of its more than a mile of height. But what surprises one is the way the whole mountain-side is mottled with clusters of white houses. These villages are spread so

thickly over the slope that they fairly run together at their edges. They extend nearly to the summit, which at the beginning of April was still marked with great patches of snow. Involuntarily one asks, "What can be the means of support up there for so numerous a population?" I got no fully satisfactory answer to this query; but the wealth and independence of these villagers are noted throughout the Greek world. Many of them leave home in early life, make a competence or a fortune somewhere abroad, and then are drawn back irresistibly to their native village, to spend their later years on their beloved mountain, perhaps building a public fountain or endowing a school by will. Even from below one can see that the houses are many of them not those of ordinary peasants. They are built of stone, usually neatly stuccoed, and roofed with tiles, or more often with huge, irregular stone slabs; and, embowered as they are in trees, from a distance they certainly look very attractive. Whether the ash still grows there, such as that from which Chiron fashioned the spear that he gave to Peleus, I know not. The forest is no longer dense enough to hide the dells that Pindar sang,—the dells in which the wise centaur taught the boy Achilles,—though the same mountain brooks continue to make them

musical and cool in summer. If Jason were to sail back once more into these waters with Medea and his Argonauts, he would find his native Iolkos quite gone. It lay on a spur of Pelion, a little east, and the Pagasai that Philip of Macedon seized lay to the west of their modern successor, Volo, which, like nearly all cities of free Hellas, looks, and is, very modern indeed—a commonplace town of twelve thousand people.

We directed our boatmen toward one of the long row of buildings lining the water's edge which bore the double sign, *Ξενοδοχείον τῆς Γαλλίας—Hôtel de France*; but not a room was vacant at that hour, nor was any encouragement given to suppose that one would be vacated that day. The train was to leave at 7:30; we had just time to take a leisurely breakfast and drive to the station, at the extreme west of the town. The road winds out from Volo in a westerly direction among the hills to Velestino, where it branches to the right for Larissa and to the left for Tríkkala, to serve the two portions into which the great interior plain of Thessaly is divided. Velestino is ancient Pherai. Lying at the southeastern corner of the plain, it commands the natural outlet of all Thessaly to the sea. A fine acropolis and copious springs that still gush forth in the midst of the town make it a natural stronghold. It was the seat of one of those bloody and powerful tyrant families whose struggles for supremacy made Thessaly a byword for lawlessness, and gave Philip of Macedon the first opportunity to make his hand felt in the affairs of Greece. At Pherai, too, still earlier dwelt Admetos, whose flocks Apollo kept for a year, and whose wife, Alkestis, Jason's cousin, offered her life instead of his, and was brought back from the grave by Herakles to her undeserving husband. Nor is Velestino's poetic glory wholly ancient. It was the home of the patriot Rhegas, whose fiery songs thrilled all Hellenic hearts and nerved them for the struggle. His execution by Turkey, in 1798,

lent to his verse the consecration of martyrdom, hastened the ripening of the time, and made Velestino a national shrine, though Europe allowed Turkey to retain it, with the rest of Thessaly, till 1881.

From this point one begins to see how very different Thessaly is from the rest of Greece. The common type of Greek plain is formed by a stream filling up a little estuary, or depositing an alluvial strip along an inward-curving shore; mountains close it in, except on one side, where it is open to the sea; an acropolis somewhere near one edge enabled a ruling family or stout-hearted clan to control the tilth and adjacent mountain pasturage. But the plain of Thessaly is shut off from the sea by mountains, and an eye accustomed to the usual Greek scale for plains is astonished at the extent of this rich open country. Railway construction across this level expanse is a simple affair. Why, then, in the name of common sense, does this line, while aiming straight at Larissa, suddenly deflect, without apparent cause, to the left, run awhile at right angles to the course which would lead directly to the goal, and stop out in the open field, a full mile from the outskirts of the town? This is another mystery I did not fathom.

Our expectation on the score of inns was not high, but even so, our hearts fell a little as we passed along the bare and unswept corridors and inspected the rooms of the Hotel Olympos. Furniture and toilet ar-



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

LARISSA, FROM THE PENEIOS.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

MOUNT OSSA.

rangements were primitive; but as we looked out of the window toward the north we got our first distinct view of Mount Olympos. The morning had been obscure with haze; this was now clearing away, and the mountain, twenty-five miles off, lifted its white dome directly before us. It is certainly the most impressive height in Greece. True, Turkey holds it now; but we must still say «in Greece,» for Homer's geography is more permanent than mere political boundaries. It is far lower than many a Swiss mountain, being only 9754 feet high (one must never look to be astonished by the colossal in anything Greek). But we might fancy their very mountains had been shaped by that people whose sense of form lent grace to all they touched, and majesty to what elsewhere would scarcely appear large. Olympos is broad-based, and firmly set upon the earth; it rises gently toward heaven, and stands proudly in serene completeness. Mont Blanc affects one in the same way, but has to climb nearly a mile higher to do so. In both cases the effect is partly due to the unbroken white that infolds the summit. No wonder the people who dwelt in sight of it placed there the abode of their gods.

We had a long afternoon in which to rest, see Larissa, and engage a carriage to Tempe for the morrow. We wandered about the town, through the bazaar, and over the gentle ascent of the acropolis. Little of man's handiwork from antiquity is to be seen here or anywhere else in this region. What future

excavations may reveal is uncertain; the deposit of three thousand years is probably deep. The very name Larissa is Pelasgic, antedating Homer by an unknown interval. We descended to the river, crossed the handsome stone bridge, and strolled along the meadow on the farther side. The Peneios was then perhaps forty or fifty feet wide, and had much the color and current of the Tiber at Rome; the banks have the raw look that so variable a stream insists on maintaining. Just across the bridge a

mosque added a charming touch to a scene that really lacked most of the elements of a beautiful suburban view. It is remarkable how a Doric or an Ionic structure is robbed of part of its nobility in a picture, while the combination of dome and minaret puts off its shabbiness and assumes added grace when presented to the eye through a graphic medium. The lines of the former demand the larger scale of reality for their proper effect, while those of a mosque, and Turkish architecture generally, far less noble in themselves, rather gain by the transfer and reduction. Water-carriers were filling various receptacles, large and small, from the river. Recollecting the dubious look of the water set before us at lunch, I made inquiries, and learned that the entire water-supply of the thirteen thousand people is drawn from the river by these primitive methods. My informant was enthusiastic in extolling the virtues of the muddy fluid for drinking. His face beamed with satisfaction and local pride as he said, «No one has any trouble here»—spreading one broad hand over the hypogastric region—«if he drinks *this* water!»

When a Larissæan carriage-owner sees two foreigners in his streets, he knows they would like to drive to Tempe. It was part of our scheme, in wandering through the town, to invite his proposals, that we might hold the vantage-ground of apparent indifference during the inevitable contest of bargaining. Before long several vehicles had been offered.

Finally one driver, in the retirement of a side street, came down to a reasonable figure, and we shook hands upon it to complete what is known in Greek by the harmonious name of *symphonía*.

Tempe is on the Turkish border, admirably adapted to the operations of brigands, and there had been some disturbance in the neighborhood within a year. Before leaving Athens we had been warned that we ought not to visit the vale without a guard of soldiers. We had quietly put such thoughts aside, since other well-informed friends had ridiculed the notion of danger. Now it happened that the police headquarters for the district stood across the way from our dining-room, and a family of storks, making their home on the roof of the building, somehow invited confidence. Accordingly, at the suggestion of the *Kyria* (as the natives called her), I entered the office, and inquired if it was there considered perfectly safe to make the excursion without escort. The result was that, though the entire region was deemed entirely secure, it was rather assumed that we desired guards, and they were ordered. At half-past seven, then, the following morning the carriage drove up, and our soldiers three duly ap-

peared, armed with guns and a variety of odd-looking knives. Really, the danger from these rough-looking fellows was quite as great as from brigands. But then the danger from brigands was quite as small as that from our guards, and, in spite of rough looks, there is no more kindly fellow in the world than the Greek peasant and common soldier. Two sat with the driver, but the biggest of the three had to squeeze into a little seat facing us. The carriage really had a heavy load, and as the driver had distinctly understood, in making the bargain, that we were but two, it was clear that our «sym-



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

ST. STEPHEN'S; KALABAKA.

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ST. STEPHEN'S ON THE CLIFF.

phony » would result in discord unless he was paid extra. He was good enough, however, to postpone all objections till the end, and we started off merrily, following at first a tolerable road along the course of the Peneios. Then the road faded out, and we were driving across the plains, bearing slightly to the right of Olympos, whose noble form rose directly to the north, his many folds half filled with lessening shadow. The sharp peak of Ossa, higher than Mount Washington, towered up on the east, stretching out one arm to distant Pelion; the whole western horizon was filled by the jagged and snowy summits of Pindos. No plain could have a finer setting. The broad, treeless fields appear to be naturally fertile, but for the most part were wholly untilled, given up to great flocks of sheep; several flocks we saw that must have counted a thousand each. We came in sight of perhaps a dozen tumuli, just such funeral mounds as were heaped up over Homer's heroes, and

almost certainly dating from that age. They lie scattered about the whole plain, rarely more than one or two in sight at a time. Storks were feeding here and there; great birds from the mountains wheeled through the air above us. At the base of one of the foot-hills was a village of Vlachs, the shepherd folk that in summer lead the old nomad life, and in winter add a few thousands to the population of the towns. We had seen in Larissa some of the Vlach women, thick-set and swarthy, sitting in a row on the curbstone, knitting like mad, and offering their coarse handiwork for sale; chattering Roumanian with each other, but knowing enough Greek to bargain with customers. In three hours and a half we reached the entrance of the defile; half an hour farther we could drive slowly; the rest had to be done on foot.

The vale is about four and a half miles long; the tawny and swiftly eddying current of the Peneios, averaging perhaps forty feet



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

THE MONASTERY OF HOLY TRINITY.

wide that day, leaves barely room for the building of a road along its right bank. On each side the mountains rise steeply, now rich with vegetation, now sheer cliff, from five hundred to fifteen hundred feet or more; above that the walls recede and ascend in more leisurely fashion, to culminate in Olympus and Ossa. One can easily understand how it was said that earth-shaking Poseidon, with his trident, had beneficently opened the mountains to give passage to the pent-up waters.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

IN THE VALE OF TEMPE.

The bay, or sweet laurel, the daphne of Apollo, grows abundantly, as of old, here in its early home, where Apollo himself received purification from the blood of Python, and whence he returned to Delphi crowned with the sacred leaves. Several abundant springs gush up from the rock here and there within a few feet of the river; its opaque flood seems all the more turbid by contrast with their crystalline purity. We drank, and thought of the Castalian Spring at Delphi. We walked on until, from an ascent in the path, we obtained a beautiful view of the Gulf of Salonica, and beyond it the Chalkidic Peninsula—the «sacred mountain» our guardian angels called it, from the monasteries of Mount Athos. I have always regretted that we did not push on a little farther, that we might have looked down upon the plain at the eastern end of the vale. But the flesh was weak, and we turned back. Altogether Tempe reminded me strongly of two other valleys which were then fresh in my memory—South Cheyenne Cañon, near Colorado Springs, and the Italian side of the Simplon Pass. In spite of great differences in detail, the general resemblance is marked, and it would be hard to decide which is the most attractive. Reluctantly we rejoined the driver, and retraced the journey of the morning.

Our next objective point was the monasteries of Metéora—«the high in air.» To reach these it was necessary to spend six or seven hours in going by train back to Veles-

tino, and thence to Kalabáka, the western terminus of the other branch of the road. The principal city of western Thessaly is Trikkala, of some fifteen thousand inhabitants in summer and eighteen thousand in winter, overlooked by a picturesque Turkish fort on the site of the ancient citadel. We intended to throw ourselves on the hospitality of a monastery that night, and made no stay at Trikkala; but while the train halted here a few minutes one painful scene burned itself into my memory. It was a group of women porters contending with one another for their burdens. By their skirts and hair, and their shrill, cracked voices, they must have been meant for women; but face and open bosom were so brown and withered, and they bent their backs under such enormous loads, it seemed that nothing feminine could have been left in those crushed and stunted wrecks of Heaven's handiwork. The Armenian porters of Constantinople stir one's pity sufficiently; to use a woman as *hammal* is too much. It was the only sight of the kind I saw in Greece, and was so un-Greek that I cannot but think of it as a sorrowful remnant of the blighting rule of the Mohammedans. Fourteen miles beyond Trikkala is the village of Kalabaka, at the foot of the southernmost of those strange cliffs and gigantic pillars of brownish-gray conglomerate, on the summits and sides of which the monasteries perch and cling. As we stepped out of the train at the neat little station, a well-built peasant came forward, and presented the card of a friend



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

THE MONASTERY OF ST. BARLAAM.

who had preceded us by two or three days, whereon were a few words assuring us that the bearer, Eustathios Mandáras, was an excellent guide to all we wished to see. As soon as he could fetch a horse for the Kyría and our light baggage, we began the ascent to the monastery of St. Stephen's, which we could see on the edge of the cliff some thirteen hundred feet above our heads. It was a steady climb of an hour and a half, winding about the hill to take the convent in the rear. Finally, rounding a curve, we saw the irregular pile directly before us and at our feet. Not a soul was in sight. A drawbridge spanning a dry moat led to the huge door, iron-plated and bristling with pointed spikes, which was shut fast; the little windows were much higher than the round-arched doorway. These monasteries were built in troublous times, and were a refuge from fierce earthly foes as well as spiritual. St. Stephen's was founded by the emperor John Kantakuzenos about 1350.

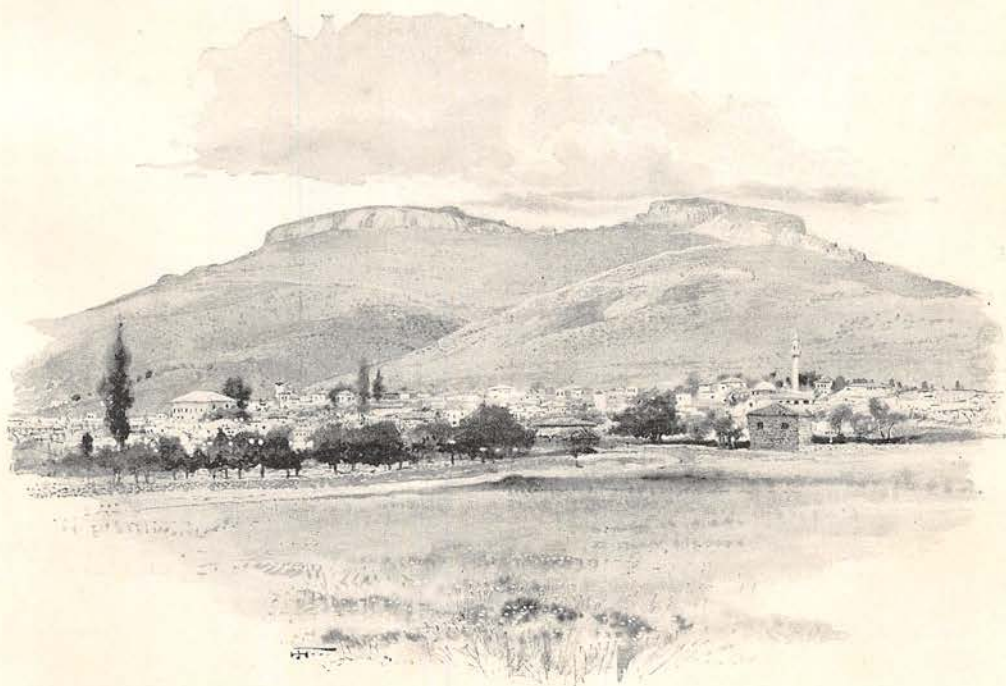
Eustathios shouted lustily twice or thrice; a man-servant showed himself at a window and inquired our business, and after due explanation unbarred the door and conducted us across the irregular and uneven courtyard, through a basement, up a long flight of steps, and into a sort of reception-room, to await the *hegotímenos*, or abbot. A high and narrow divan ran along one side of the room; a huge brazier stood in the center, with glowing coals that radiated a gentle warmth. Windows were rattling, and the chintz curtains were swinging chillily in the stiff breeze. The abbot was old, his fur-bordered black robe was shabby, and his voice was a little cracked; he had been in this monastery since boyhood, and abbot for forty-seven years. A young man, tall and finely built, needing only a thorough bath and clean clothing to make him a splendid specimen physically, brought us first liqueur (*ouzo*), and then black coffee, with material for cigarettes. The abbot's questions were

courteous, betraying none of that eager curiosity to which Greeks of the lower class give way so naïvely. He did not conceal the fact that he receives more visitors than he likes; since the railroad was built undesirable people come in crowds. After an hour or so our dinner was served by our untidy attendant in the same room, and the abbot withdrew, apologizing for the absence of meat, since during Lent they had none. There were eggs and fresh white cheese, with plenty of bread, and a salad of cresses. But what gave distinction to this simple fare was the red wine—pure, fragrant, delicious. It was grown on the monastery land by the monks for home consumption.

Dinner over, we strolled about the holy precincts, and enjoyed the view. Below us lay the village, with wide-spreading vineyards and rows of mulberry-trees; yonder on the right the young Peneios hurries down the pass through which Cæsar came with his army in pursuit of Pompey after the latter found Dyrhachion untenable. The snowy peaks of Pindos are here close at hand across the stream; we were just high enough on our side of the valley to get the full effect of their seven thousand feet of altitude. When it got too dark for further exploration we went to our room, which was no more in-

viting than the Larissæan apartment, except that there were some good rugs on the floor, and an old wrought-iron grille of graceful pattern before the windows. We had a funny time getting water for washing. The attendant, having no use for such a luxury himself, could not comprehend our notion that it was a necessity. At last he produced a tall pewter ewer, old and battered, and proceeded to pour water upon our hands over a basin with a perforated cover fastened just below the rim. It was a prose version of a poetic fashion of hospitality current in earlier days. Before six the next morning the same attendant brought our breakfast—two tiny cups of coffee *à la Turque*. In the chapel two monks were droning a service. Leaving an adequate contribution in the box, we went out over the drawbridge to rejoin Eustathios, who had come up from the village to meet us.

The descent was to be made by another path, which would give us a view of the entire group of monasteries. There were once twenty-four of them; seven alone remain, of which only four are inhabited by a slowly diminishing number of monks. Services are still held at the deserted sites on the days of the saints from whom the foundations were named. Only at St. Stephen's and Holy Trinity is the presence of females allowed even as

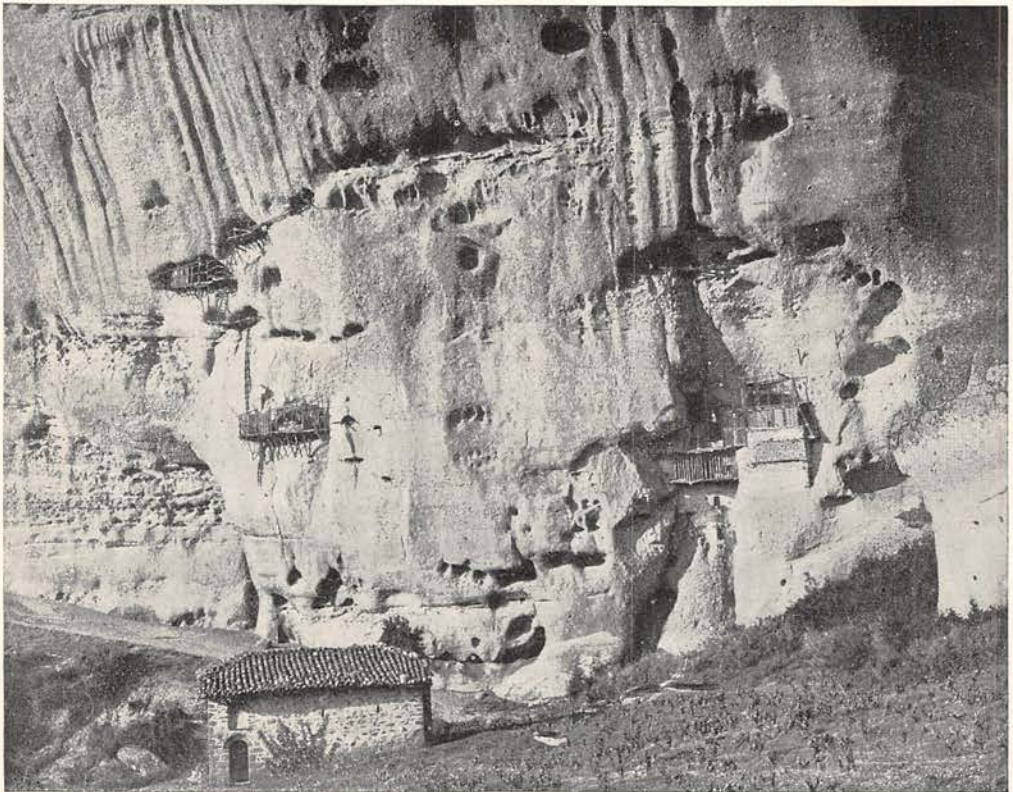


DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

PHARSALOS.

visitors. No other can be entered so easily as St. Stephen's, for the rest are so truly «high in air» that ladders or a rope and net are the sole means of access. The most impossible places were for their purpose the choicest. The entire journey of that morning, winding among the lonely and fantastic heights, passing every few minutes below some new manifestation of man's ingenuity in escaping from the world, remains in my mind as the acme of the simply picturesque. We stopped at St. Barlaam's, one of the largest, and the one to which entrance is most difficult. Length after length of rudely constructed ladder clambered up the vertical rock, and disappeared above at a low opening in a stone hut, itself many feet below the monastery; the lowest two sections of the ladder swung free, and the bottom was pulled up and hung high above our heads by a chain. In response to the shout of our guide, a man appeared, the chain that held the bottom of the ladder was lowered, and Eustathios climbed up the creaking and rickety contrivance. Above the door of a projecting room that was supported by

foundations descending like an inverted tower below the rest of the structure, was a horizontal beam, from the end of which hung a great pulley with a rope passing through it. By this means a big tin pail was let down; a youngish man, neatly dressed in plain European costume, descended the ladder, and took from the pail a tray, liqueur, and a jar of quince jelly, with spoons and glasses of water, which refreshments he politely offered us. Of course the Kyría would not have been admitted to the monastery; and for myself it was a question whether the ladder or the windlass was to be preferred. I chose the former, and had no difficulty; above the seventy rungs were twenty-six steps cut in the rock partly through a cavern-like passage under a part of the building. In the chapel some curious relics were shown—bones from the hand of St. Chrysostom; another saint's tooth, fastened by a silver chain, that no pious thief might remove it; and the skull of yet another saint, inclosed in a rich case of fine silver. Outside, in the sunshine of the courtyard, two monks were placidly whiling away the tedious hours at a game



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE MONASTERY OF ST. ANTONY.

like nine-men's-morris, played with pebbles on a figure chalked out upon the rock. My visit was brief, and we went our way, passing, lower down, several deserted cliff-dwellings where the anchorites had taken possession of holes in the rock, building out curiously framed stagings before them, and connecting these by ladders. St. Antony's was one of the most striking. In the neighborhood of the villages every suitable place in the brooks was occupied by groups of peasant women and girls doing the family washing; for the next day, the feast of Annunciation, was also the Greek Independence Day. On such festivals the poorest peasant is as clean as water can make him.

For fifty miles and more of the journey back toward Velestino the heights of Meteora were distinguishable, the one corner of Thessaly in which the middle ages put antiquity in the background. But by the time we reached

Pharsalos antiquity had fully resumed its sway. The railway probably traverses the edge of the battle-field where Cæsar overtook and annihilated Pompey's army. On the two-peaked acropolis are walls that may date from the Homeric age; and certainly Euripides, when he wrote his «Andromache,» thought this was the home of Achilles, the citadel of Phthia. Olympos and the rest of the Homeric mountains are all in sight, and make all Thessaly seem in truth the land of Achilles.

On reaching Volo, we learned that the best steamer that would be available for several days was to sail that evening. It turned out to be a little better than the one on which we had come, and the next afternoon saw us once more on the beautiful Saronic Gulf. At sunset, the hour when the flush on Hymettos gives anew to Athens her violet crown, we were at home again in the dear city.

Thomas Dwight Goodell.



THE ARGONAUTS.

FROM east and west we gathered in one crew,
 The restless and unruly of the world.
 The stars laughed from the banner we unfurled;
 We were stout hearts, boon spirits, tried and true.
 Then lightly from the mast-thronged port we drew:
 For it was ours, from utmost isles imperaled
 In stormy sea, where wave and tempest swirled,
 To fetch for man a lost and priceless clue.
 And still, for many a day, our mighty bark
 With roaring sail flies onward o'er the deep;
 And we, at dawn, with anxious vision scan
 Each new horizon, lifted from the dark,
 For islands which have Liberty in keep—
 The Golden Fleece which we must win for man.

William Prescott Foster.