

LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS OF ARCADIA.

PART II.—CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER V.—A GALLOP OVER THE ARCADIAN MOUNTAINS.

"XANTHI," said Spiro, speaking for the first time in a low, smothered voice.

"I am here, quite alive," said the poor little bride, who was half bewildered with terror.

"Xanthi mou! we must escape; if we stay here till morning we shall certainly perish."

"Oh, Spiro, thrice beloved! they may kill me, but I will not see you die;" and the young wife threw her poor weak arms around him, as though she could have defended him.

"Better to die trying to escape than wait to be murdered to-morrow. Listen, Xanthi," continued the young man, unclasping her clinging arms from his neck, "do you hear that?"

Xanthi listened, and heard on the opposite side of the wall a sound like that of a horse champing his bit, and pawing the ground from time to time.

"That is Effendi, who is there in his stable," said Spiro, for this was the honourable title with which all the villagers spoke of the Aga's favourite horse; "and look, here is the garden-gate close at hand, half open—nothing could be so easy as to slip in gently, and bring him out here."

"To bring him out here?" echoed Xanthi, wondering.

"Yes," to bring him out, and mount him, and dash through the midst of these Infidel murderers, and perhaps be saved after all, light of my eyes!"

Xanthi heard this bold project with a shriek of terror, which her husband stifled by placing his hand on her lips.

"But they would all pursue us," she murmured, in a more suppressed tone.

"Well, they would all pursue us; but have you never seen with what wings Effendi flies over the plain when the Aga rides him? We shall be mounted before he or his people find out, they are all so occupied with the Bey's reception."

The young peasant already made a movement to put his project in execu-

tion, for it seemed to the bold spirited Mainote not altogether impracticable, to ride at such a pace towards the mountains as should enable them to reach their shelter in safety; but Xanthi clung to his arm—

"Oh, stay, Spiro mou! Think what the Aga will say when he finds we have stolen his horse!"

"Sevseka!" (little fool) said her husband, half laughing, "and where shall we be to care for his anger?"

"True! but then there is always the Panagia! oh, my husband, what will she think of us if we steal?"

"Now, Xanthi," said Spiro, angrily, "I put it to you. When the Panagia has to judge between a vile, unbelieving Turk, and a good Christianos, which of the two is she likely to favour?"

Xanthi bowed her head in silence, for this seemed very conclusive; besides, no Greek wife ever dreams of opposing her husband's authority, and Spiro, rising with determination, though stealthily, said firmly—

"Stay here, and be ready to mount behind me the moment I appear. I do not say it is not a terrible risk, but anything is better than to wait in this hole to be slaughtered."

He left her side as he spoke, and, shivering with dread, she watched him by the light of the rising moon as he crept along beneath the shade of the wall, and disappeared within the garden of the Aga. He had rightly calculated that the noise and confusion, caused by the presence of the illustrious visitor, would enable him to accomplish his bold theft unperceived, and in a few minutes he returned, leading out the beautiful animal, ready bridled, as the Turkish horses always are, day and night. Xanthi instantly stole through the brushwood, and stood by his side; but when they prepared to mount, Effendi began to show his mistrust of their proceedings, by various caperings and boundings, quite sufficiently noisy to attract the attention of the soldiers on the opposite

side of the tower; Spiro instantly threw his arm round the neck of the graceful Arabian, and began to whisper in his ear—that strange and unaccountable method by which all who are acquainted with the secret can tame at once the most fiery horse in eastern countries! It produced its effect instantaneously. Effendi stood quiet as a lamb, and Spiro vaulted lightly on his back; he then held out his hand to Xanthi, who showed her Mainote blood in the flashing eye and glowing cheek, which proved how completely her womanish fears had given way before the excitement of the moment; placing her little foot on that of her husband, with one bound she sprang up behind him, and sat firm as a rock, grasping him round the waist. Effendi tossed his head at the unwonted burden, and showed no disposition to move. Stooping down, Spiro suddenly seized his ear between his teeth, and bit it with considerable violence. At once stung with the pain, the horse bounded into the air, then reared right up, and remained stiff and almost erect, till the young man released his hold, when instantly, with glaring eye and dilated nostril, giving one shake to his glossy mane, the magnificent Arab fairly took the bit between his teeth, and wildly darted from the spot, shooting over the plain with an arrow-like swiftness, which altogether took away the breath of the riders. They made no attempt to guide him, having quite enough to do to keep their seats, and he began by carrying them right through the midst of the soldiers, like a very flash of lightning, trampling some under foot, and bounding over the heads of the others. The amazement of the Turks may be conceived, when this flying vision suddenly passed before their eyes—scarce seen before it was far away, careering on with incredible speed. Those whose horses were at hand mounted in the vain attempt at pursuit. In an instant the air was filled with the flashing of the musketry, and the balls were raining round the young lovers, as, clinging to each other on the back of the winged steed, they sped on and on through the darkness. The tremendous pace at which they were going utterly bewildered them; all things seemed to whirl round with them; they could discern nothing clearly; the stars appeared to rush

madly over their heads; the rocks and the trees fled past them like visions. Soon the voices of their pursuers died utterly away, and the shot ceased to drop around them. They were in the mountains now—the wild, lone mountains; but the child of the desert, drunk with the fresh night air, so far from abating the marvellous swiftness of his mad career, seemed now to redouble his speed, if it were possible, and flew like a shot up the steep hill side, while his feet struck a train of fire behind him! They had no power to avert his reckless course, even had they wished it, nor even to moderate his terrible ardour. On, Mazzeppa-like, they race, panting, breathless on the wings of the wind, over stones and brushwood, and through the wild ravine. The landscape reels around them—the cliffs and the crags whirl past—the trees of the forest seem to melt into air; now they dash through a torrent, blind with the foam; now they rise over a towering rock; now plunge into a cleft in the wild, dark mountain! Once Spiro would have cried out in horror, had he had time or breath, for he saw that they were approaching a terrible precipice, caused by a deep rent in the cliff, that gaped gloomy and wide, with a great river raging beneath, but the desert-born paused but one moment on the brink of the abyss, and gathered his feet together like a cat about to leap on his prey, then, with one bound, he sprang over the terrible gulf, and dashed on through the forest of pine beyond. It seemed to the palpitating, gasping riders, as though their flight lasted for hours, and so in truth it did; but they could take no account of time, thus darting through the air, and when at last Spiro succeeded in abating the speed of the horse, and, finally, arresting him altogether, they found themselves in the very heart of the most savage mountains of Arcadia, where, perhaps, never foot of man had trodden before.

The noble Effendi had done them good service. Many and many a mile behind them lay their native village, now peopled with their enemies! they were free! beyond all thought of danger, and clasped living and uninjured to each other's hearts! Spiro dismounted, staggering on his unsteady feet, after their giddy course; he lifted down his trembling, panting

bride, and the beautiful horse stood quietly beside them, as raising their eyes to heaven, they made the sign of the cross on their breasts and foreheads, in fervent gratitude for their deliverance; then they embraced each other, weeping for very joy; and when these first transports had somewhat subsided, they turned to look on the new world to which Effendi had introduced them.

Never before had the young peasants looked on scenery so solemn in its magnificence as that which now surrounded them. The moon had come forth in her pale loveliness, and was sailing through an ocean of liquid blue, like a glorious ship freighted with innumerable souls for the paradise beyond; the towering mountains, hoary with the ancient snows which even the sun of Greece could never melt, had folded the great shadows round them like a dark robe; the fresh breeze, purer than any they had ever felt before, fled past, bearing on its wings the songs of a thousand rushing torrents; on all sides, mighty rocks and wooded cliffs seemed aiming to the skies, and the whole air was scented with the aromatic perfume of the wild hill plants. The young couple sat down on a stone, still gazing upon this scene, holding each other by the hand, quite overcome with their great happiness. Gradually the little Xanthi crept closer to her husband, and insinuated her hand into his, awed by the vast loneliness of this sublime solitude; and thus they sat for some time resting side by side. At last the same thought began to rise in the minds of both—here they were in the heart of this unknown desert, and what were they to do next? Spiro was the first to answer the simultaneous question; they would stay where they were for the night, because they were both so exhausted; but with the first dawn of light, they would mount once more on the back of their faithful Effendi, and ride away—but where? was the next great question; to this also Spiro gave a ready answer; he was still determined to keep faith with Ipsilanti, and join him at Athens. He would discover by the sun in what direction that queenly city lay, and thither would they travel, pausing only to rest at the villages he was confident they should find in their way. The geographical information of the young Mainote was somewhat too

limited to have taught him that the Arcadian mountains have never yet bartered their loneliness for the degree of civilization which even a peasant hamlet would have brought them; but they were so full of hope and happy ignorance, that gay young pair, that all seemed most easy and promising. Without a care or a fear for the future, they fastened their gallant horse to a tree, and sat down on the green moss, at the foot of a rock. For a long time Xanthi chatted gaily on the wonders of the scene around her, to her so new and strange; entering into all sorts of vague surmises concerning the moon and stars, and every now and then bursting into a joyous laugh, when she described to the exulting Spiro the rage and amazement of the old Aga next morning when he would call his Effendi to come and kiss his hand as usual, and found he had vanished. At last her pretty head began to droop, as though the weight of its long hair were too great a burden for her; finally it sunk altogether on her husband's knees, and Xanthi fell fast asleep. Spiro leant back against the rock, and was not long in following her example, so that all was again still in the great solitude of the Arcadian mountains, and the moon, pursuing her glorious path over head, looked down benignly on these two innocent and fearless beings slumbering so calmly in the desert wild.

The first sunbeam that, stealing from flower to flower, at last lit on the eye-lids of the young Xanthi, awoke her from her quiet sleep, and starting up, her movement soon roused Spiro. Both rubbed their eyes for a minute, and looked round bewildered; then a loud neigh of recognition, with which Effendi greeted them from his bower in an oak tree, recalled them to themselves. They remembered all again, thanked heaven for their miraculous escape, and prepared to start on their journey. Effendi seemed quite ready to set out; he pawed the ground impatiently, and would easily have been induced to consent even to kneel and take them on his back. Once mounted and ready, it became necessary to take measures for shaping their course in the proper direction.

"The sun rises in the east," began Spiro.

"Does it?" inquired Xanthi, innocently.

"It does," said Spiro, dogmatically,

"therefore Athens must be in that quarter," and he pointed far over the mountains that towered around him. "Away, Effendi," he shouted, "over rocks and stones, for we have no paths here;" then lightly shaking the bridle on his neck, the obedient creature sprung forth at a rapid pace, though very unlike the tremendous speed of the night before. For a time they greatly enjoyed their singular journey; they never before had known how bright and fresh is the morning on the lonely mountains, where none may cool their foreheads in its sparkling dew, or meet the wild kiss of its free, rough breeze. The scenery through which they passed, though varied, never changed in its character; the mountains seemed, indeed, to grow wilder and more inaccessible as they penetrated farther into their deep recesses. It was but an interminable succession of dark ravines and towering cliffs, that often closed in so completely round them, that they were quite bewildered as to their course. Often, too, they came to some tremendous precipice, which turned them back, and they had to extricate themselves from many a dangerous pass. Still, however, they travelled on throughout the whole day, only stopping occasionally that Effendi might rest, as well as poor Xanthi, who was little accustomed to such rough riding, and very often they stooped to drink from the clear streams which they met continually on their way. Towards evening Spiro perceived that his Xanthi was becoming very restless, and even now and then gave vent to a gentle sigh: they had paused, or rather Effendi had thought proper to do so, because an enormous rock was rising up right before him, which he did not know well how to surmount, and, perhaps, saw no good reason for attempting. Spiro turned round, and looked into his young wife's eyes.

"Xanthi," he asked, "are you tired?"

"No."

"Are you sleepy, then?"

"Oh, no!"

"If you are thirsty I can get you fresh water in a moment."

"Light of my heart, I am not thirsty."

Spiro paused, hesitated, passed his hand over his eyes, and at last said boldly—

"Xanthi mou, you are very hungry."

At these words she lifted up her soft dark eyes, and said—

"Ipomoni, my husband."

Now, "ipomoni" is the Greek word expressing patience; and in that country they use it on all occasions, as the complete embodiment of perfect resignation: it is, indeed, generally the last word on their lips; for the dying man, or the mother just expiring, often turn to the disconsolate survivors—for whom in the last hour, when they have power to suffer, their heart is breaking, and breathe out their final sigh with the whisper of "ipomoni." A sudden pang of fear shot through the breast of Spiro, as Xanthi uttered this word with a gentle smile; for it was the first time that he had thought of their perilous wandering as anything but a charming adventure. As to attempting to procure any kind of food, were it but a few wild berries, or the acorn of the vallonias oak, the thing was utterly out of the question; for they were now surrounded only by gigantic rocks, more sterile and bleak than anything they had ever beheld before, and devoid of all vegetation, except the sombre hardy pines which clung to their rugged sides. Quite unconsciously throughout the whole day the poor creatures had only been advancing deeper and deeper into the mountain desert, in their vague attempt to follow a direct course; and even Spiro's voice had lost much of its cheerful confidence, as he looked round on the vast inaccessible mountains that hemmed them in on all sides, and proposed to Xanthi that they should not attempt to sleep that night, but hurry on till they reached a village somewhere. Xanthi quietly acquiesced, though less even than himself did she think it likely that they would encounter any human habitation within the range of these terrible hills; but the time was now come when she was to find within herself and use that power of passive, uncomplaining suffering, which every woman possesses unknowingly, perhaps, till it is called forth by circumstance. Once more, then, urging on the patient Effendi, they proceeded in their dangerous and wearisome course. For a time their attention was distracted by the spectacle of the sunset in that majestic scenery; but soon the day perished in its bright-

ness, and the swift night, rushing down from heaven, on its wings of darkness, hung brooding over the vast mountains, like a great vulture over its prey. Very long and dreary were the hours which followed to the wanderers; they spoke but little, and Xanthi's head hung drooping on her husband's shoulder; even Effendi, accustomed as he was religiously to keep the bairam, seemed not altogether pleased with this secular and unusual fast; and besides, the continual fatigue he had undergone for the last four-and-twenty hours had so much damped his usual ardour, that he now plodded on over the slippery rocks, as tamely as any horse of ignoble birth could have done. They soon, however, got into such difficult and dangerous ground that their progress was extremely slow, and they had often to dismount, and lead the horse along the brink of the precipices. The first dawn of light was beginning to mingle with the softer moonbeams, when they came to a precipitous ascent, which it seemed impossible they could surmount. Spiro thought there might be some means of skirting round the base of the cliff, and he desired Xanthi to remain in charge of the horse, while he went to reconnoitre. She sat down on a stone, holding Effendi by the bridle, and he left her to seek a path among the rocks. It was some little time before he returned, and when at last he rejoined her, she was still sitting where he had left her, but, exhausted with hunger and fatigue, she had dropped asleep. Her head had fallen back upon the rock, her hand hung motionless by her side, and Effendi had vanished! With one bound, Spiro darted towards her; he shook her almost roughly by the shoulder, exclaiming—

"In the name of all the saints, Xanthi, where is the horse?"

She started up bewildered and terrified, gave one wild glance all around, and then clasping her hands in utter despair, exclaimed—

"Pai!" ("he is gone!")

He was gone, indeed, and beyond recall; for Spiro, chancing to look down a tremendous ravine that yawned on one side of them, suddenly discerned the gallant horse, like a speck in the distance, bounding over the hills in the joyous freedom he had so cunningly obtained, by softly jerking

his bridle out of the relaxed grasp of the poor little Xanthi, as she sank to sleep. In another instant he had disappeared altogether. This fatal loss seemed, indeed, to be the climax of their fate. If they had failed in reaching any place of refuge with the aid of the swiftest of horses, how were they even to attempt it on foot, amongst these rugged cliffs, wearied and exhausted as they were? Poor Xanthi looked so woefully penitent, as she met her husband's eye, that, so far from reproaching her, he could only throw his arms around her, and bid her be of good cheer, though he spoke with a sinking heart and a quivering lip. They sat down together on the rock; it was now nearly two days and two nights since they had tasted food, and something very like despair began to settle down upon those two young hearts that so lately throbbed with deepest joys. Spiro tried to convince himself that it was the cold grey light of dawn which made Xanthi's cheek seem so pale, and she turned away her head to hide the starting tears, when she saw him tightening the scarf round his waist—a measure often adopted by the hardy mountaineers to allay the pangs of hunger. Then they gradually both sunk to sleep, until the burning rays of the sun, as it ascended in the horizon, forced them to move from the spot.

"Let us go on, Xanthi mou," said Spiro, with a sort of desperation, "it does no good to linger here."

Xanthi obeyed unresisting, and with a feeble and unsteady step they began to wander on through this terrible desert. It seemed to them almost as though they had somehow been banished to a strange world, of which themselves only were the inhabitants, so utter was the silence and solitude all around; they hardly made any attempt now to shape their course, but stumbled on over the stones in a sad hopelessness. Of the two, Spiro suffered perhaps the most; for the extreme hunger only produced a sort of faintness in Xanthi, while in the strong man the intense craving was intolerable. As the interminable day wore on, he suddenly felt his young wife lean more heavily on his arm; then she tottered, and would have fallen had he not supported her. He laid her down gently on the ground, and looking on the sweet face he loved so

fondly, he saw that her eyes were quite closed, and her lips of a deadly white. In a transport of fear he flew to a stream that was rushing near, and returned with some of the water in his cap, with which he bathed her pale forehead and hands. It had only been a passing weakness, for she almost instantly opened her eyes, and, looking up in his face with a faint sad smile, murmured softly, “Ipomoni, my husband!”

Spiro fairly tore his hair at the aspect of this gentle and seemingly unavailing resignation; he sat down beside her, leant his arms on his knees, and buried his face in his hands, while a thousand terrible thoughts careered through his brain. Was there no hope, no means of escape? was he actually destined to see his young wife, his sweet bride of yesterday, dying in his arms of mere starvation? He began

to doubt not only the saints and the Panagia, but heaven itself; when looking up, he suddenly perceived a tacit reproof to his impiety. On the bank of the rivulet that was flowing near, he distinguished a plant of the Asphodel, or silver rod, the root of which, though far from nutritious, especially if eaten raw, is often used by the Greek peasants in cases of great necessity. Dashing to the spot, he tore up the roots with his hands, and succeeded in obtaining a considerable number, with which they satisfied their hunger to a certain degree. This unexpected relief gave them a sort of hope that heaven had not altogether abandoned them; and they lay down to sleep again, in order to recruit their strength, for Xanthi was still far too weak to attempt moving on.

CHAPTER VI.—GREEK BRIGANDS “AT HOME.”

MANY hours elapsed while the wanderers slumbered tranquilly. Spiro was the first to awake, and as he slowly opened his eyes, his glance fell at once on a sight that filled him with a sudden and unspeakable delight. At the distance of but a few yards from the spot where they lay, a thin column of smoke was wreathing itself up into the air, occasionally brightened by a gleam of red light, which was plainly discernable in the darkness (for it was night once more). It seemed to arise from the rock itself, but Spiro at once conjectured that it was produced by a fire lit within some cave, from whence the smoke escaped by an aperture in the roof. But at all events there, where the fire was, there were human beings, and in all probability they were eating and drinking. His exclamation of joy aroused Xanthi, and as her eyes met the gleam of the fire, the very light of life to them, she flung her arms round her husband's neck, and exclaimed—

“Joy of my soul! we are saved. Oh, Panagia, good and true!”

Spiro did not answer her; a moment's reflection seemed somewhat to have damped his first delight. At last he whispered—

“They *may* be shepherds seeking a wandering flock; but at all events keep silent, and we will go near.”

Creeping stealthily along among the

rocks, the young couple advanced, guided by the light, and in a few minutes came almost close upon the mouth of the cave, which was of considerable size, and admitted of their seeing all that was passing within. Crouching down behind a great stone, they looked cautiously in, and instantly grasped one another's hands in utter terror: these were no peaceful shepherds who were lurking in the cave, but some twenty or thirty fierce, bloodthirsty-looking brigands! They were seated in a circle round the fire, over which hung suspended a whole enormous sheep, roasting on a spit, formed by a branch of a tree, which was turned by two of the number. These brigands, who at that time ravaged the whole country, and formed quite a people apart, having a sort of constitutional government of their own, admitted none to their ranks but the most lawless characters; and the swarthy savage countenances that now bent over the red embers, lit up by the glare, certainly indicated that there was not a man among them who, independent of the regular system, would not have relished highly the trade of murderer on his own private account. They were all armed up to the teeth, and the hands of many seemed covered with blood—a circumstance that might well be accounted

for by the occupation of one of the party, who was engaged in emptying a large bag, which he held, of a number of human heads, which he composedly counted, and piled up in a corner. The terror of the poor young couple, on finding that they were likely to meet with dreadful enemies, where they stood so much in need of friends, was heightened, on the part of Spiro at least, almost to agony, when the chief of the party, turning round to the firelight, disclosed his countenance. He had never seen him before, but at a glance he recognized, from the description, the peculiar appearance of the most terrible of all the Klefts, famed for his frightful cruelty, and remarkable even in that country at such a period for his insatiable thirst for blood—a craving so extraordinary that it seemed a positive disease, and causes his memory to live, even to the present day, in the remembrance of the Greeks. He was at this period a man above seventy-six years of age; but time seemed to have rushed unfelt over his head, for there was no appearance of his being at all advanced in life, except in the snowy whiteness of his hair and beard, which contrasted strangely with his menacing face, darkened by the suns of so many summers; his small grey eye glared with an expression of unconquerable ferocity as brightly as ever; the strength of his great bony hand was undiminished, and his gaunt, erect frame had not lost an inch of his height.

"It is Gogos—we are lost!" whispered Spiro, hoarsely.

"It is Gogos—but we are saved!" answered Xanthi; "I know him."

"You know him?"

"Sopa," (hush) they will hear you, Spiro; if you will trust to me we are saved. I must go to them first alone."

"Alone—you, Xanthi!" He clasped her tightly in his arms.

"Listen," said his young wife, calmly; "this is no time for many words. It must be as I say. We will not stay to starve here, with a roast so near us. You know that if you go, they will shoot you dead before you reach the door."

"I know it."

"If they see me alone, they will not kill me." Spiro made no answer, but he held her tight. "Before they can touch me, Gogos himself will be my protec-

tor and yours too," continued Xanthi, coaxingly, but he did not relax his hold. "Spiro, if you see any danger, you can rush in and die with me. It is death you see on all sides; but here is our only chance for life." His fingers began to relax a little, and Xanthi, slipping from his arms, had escaped, and was at the mouth of the cave before he could stop her; then he wished he had died before he let her go. However, there was nothing for it now but to watch her proceedings in an agony of fear. Quietly, as though she were entering her mother's house, Xanthi walked up to the mouth of the cave. As her shadow darkened the threshold, a spontaneous exclamation burst from the lips of the robbers—one and all started to their feet, and instantly a score of muskets were levelled at her breast. "Wait a moment," exclaimed Xanthi, "I am Gogos's friend."

"In the name of the Panagia, who is it?" said the chief, as the klefts, stupified with astonishment, remained motionless.

"A woman, and alone," they answered, amazed.

"A woman alone on the mountains! How can that be? Let us see her," said Gogos.

Xanthi composedly passed through the midst of the menacing troop, and coming forward to the side of the terrible chief, sat down tranquilly at his feet.

"I am your friend," she said, lifting up her gentle eyes to the fierce dark face.

Gogos looked at her for one moment, and then burst into a fit of laughter.

"Child! what are you? Whence do you come?" Then, before she could answer, he had seized her arm with a grasp which had nearly extorted a shriek of pain from the brave girl, and with the other hand, drawing out a long sharp knife, that gleamed bright in the fire-light, he held it close to her throat. "You are a spy, and a brave one too; but your courage shall not save you."

"Hear me speak, before you cut my throat," said Xanthi calmly, though her heart was bounding to her lips. "You can kill me after quite as well as now."

"Panagia kleftrina (holy virgin of the robbers) saw you ever so dauntless

a woman,” exclaimed the old chief, gazing at her without relaxing his hold. “Why the last I killed, deafened me with shrieks till I cut off her head, and that stopt her mouth, when nothing else would. Ha, ha!” and all the klefts laughed in chorus at the brigand-like jest. “Speak, then, my daughter,” he continued, “as you say I can kill you quite as well a little later.”

“Listen, then,” began Xanthi; “but stay, make them all sit down, for I am going to tell you a long story.” Gogos shrugged his shoulders in utter astonishment, but he nodded to his men, who resumed their seats, overwhelmed with amazement at the composure with which their redoubtable chief was braved by a feeble woman. “One fine summer’s night,” began Xanthi, her voice trembling slightly—“it is long ago now—a little Mainote girl came creeping through an olive grove that grew all round a village, towards a lonely chapel that stood in the midst of it. She had been sent to trim the lamp before the Panagia’s picture, and she stole along, trembling and looking back very often, for there was a great sirocco sweeping through the forest, and darkening the sky, and she knew that in every one of the whirling circles of dust it had raised, there danced a demon concealed from her eyes. But the Panagia knew she was going to the chapel, so she protected her, and she got there in safety. The lamp had nearly gone out, but she replenished it with oil; it sprang up in a bright flame, and as she looked round by the light it gave, she screamed out with a terrible fear, and fled to the door. She had seen peering out from behind the altar where he was hid, the dark face of a great fierce kleft, with his eyes glaring at her as though he would devour her, and his hair hanging round him, all dripping with blood; and just as she was flying away, shrieking out in her terror, he called out—

“‘Amaun, I am dying of thirst.’ She stopt, though her knees shook so she could hardly stand, and he said, ‘Amaun, little child! I am perishing with hunger and thirst.’

“So she thought for a moment, and her heart almost failed her; but at last she made the sign of the cross, and said—

“‘I will bring you water and food, oh, terrible kleft!’

“‘But listen,’ then said this kleft, ‘if you dare to whisper you have seen me, I will shoot you through the head. Wherever you may be, I will find you out.’

“And she said, ‘I will not tell. Why should I?’

“So he trusted her just as you trust me now,” continued Xanthi, looking up in the brigand’s face.

“Go on,” exclaimed Gogos, who had been listening with increasing interest.

“The little girl went,” resumed Xanthi, “and soon came back with some bunches of grapes, and her cap full of water. The kleft had been wounded, and he was so weak that he could scarce raise his hand; so she held his head, and gave him to drink, and then she put the grapes into his mouth one by one, and next she washed his wound, and tied it up with her veil.”

“I remember,” murmured Gogos, “oh, noble little girl.”

“The kleft was too ill to move for some days,” continued Xanthi, “and the little girl tended him all that time, and crept through the forest morning and evening to bring him food. One night she was coming to him as usual, when she saw racing over the plain towards the chapel a great troop of horsemen, and she knew they were in search of the kleft, so she ran quickly into his hiding-place, and called out to him to fly; and he fled and concealed himself amongst the brushwood, so that when the soldiers came, the little girl was alone in the chapel. Then they all crowded round her, and bid her tell them where the brigand was.”

“And she would not! brave little girl, I heard it all!” exclaimed Gogos.

“At last, one of them struck her with his sword and nearly cut off her arm,” continued Xanthi.

“He did,” said Gogos; “I remembered it, and killed him next year!”

“So then she fell down, and seemed to be dead, and they all rode away full of rage; but the kleft escaped to the mountains!”

“Or I should not be here to-day, with my pipe in my hand,” said Gogos, exultingly. “It is all quite true, little one; but how do you know it so well?”

Xanthi turned back the loose sleeve of her dress, and showed him a deep scar on her arm, where it had been nearly severed in two. Gogos started,

and seizing hold of her, turned her head towards him, and looked into her face.

"The brave child did not die then!" he exclaimed. "By the beard of St. Spiridion! it is herself—I know the great eyes and the long black hair!"

"So I am your friend, am I not?" said Xanthi, smiling gaily.

"My friend! you are my child—my daughter; ask what you choose and I will do it. Panagia mou! how these children grow—it was not possible I should know you, my bird!—And look you," he continued, addressing the brigands, "this is my daughter, and whoso touches a hair of her head shall not live to repent it."

Xanthi pulled his sleeve impatiently, for she was thinking of Spiro, so hungry outside.

"You do not know how I came here?" she said.

"True!—tell us how it was. You did well to come, whatever brought you."

Xanthi then told him all their adventures from the time of her marriage; and the old brigand made the cave resound with his shouts of merry laughter, when he heard of the theft of the great Effendi, and still more at the manner in which the sly horse had taken his revenge, and escaped from their hands. As soon as she had concluded, finishing off with a brilliant list of her husband's good qualities, Gogos called out loudly—

"Come in, palikar! come in—we are all friends here; you shall be safe and welcome."

Instantly, there was a rush of steps, and Spiro bounded into the cave, half expecting to see his poor little wife lying murdered before him; but the blood flowed back to his heart when he saw her, not only uninjured, but smiling upon him as brightly as ever; and, fairly making up his mind that she was half a witch, he sat down by her side, and began helping her, most unsentimentally, to discuss a huge slice of roast lamb which Gogos set before them. When they had finished their supper—for which, as it may be supposed, they had no common appetite—he bid them lie down to sleep in all peace and safety, trusting to him to see what would be done for them in the morning; and with a heart full of joy and gratitude the little Mainote laid

her head upon her husband's knees, and fell into a tranquil slumber amongst all those fierce and sanguinary klefts.

The morning broke, and one by one the robbers arose, and turned to the pure beams of the morning sun their dark faces, stamped with a wild and horrible expression we rarely see in our own quiet and civilized country, and which is only to be attained where a free licence has for years been given to unbridled passions. But the first object which met the eyes of each one was the little Xanthi seated in the centre of the cave, and looking round with the utmost astonishment on the objects it contained. It is certain that had she been a member of some archaeological society, instead of being only as ignorant and innocent a little peasant as ever breathed, she would have been yet more surprised; for even here, in the midst of the wild mountain desert, the handwriting of the past had left a strange record of the palpable existence, in the faith of men like ourselves, of all the fanciful visions of ancient mythology. This singular cavern—so admirable for the purposes of brigandage, that it was the habitual resort of Gogos while he lived, and has been the habitation of klefts less famous since his death—is commonly called the "Cave of the Nymphs," having been dedicated to them, at their own desire as it would appear, by a certain architect, who gives a somewhat verbose account of the honor they had done him, in various inscriptions still perfectly legible on the walls. He has exhausted his ingenuity in decorating the interior, commencing with an elaborate image of himself, which is ludicrous from the expression of supreme self-complacency stamped on the face, by which the unfortunate artist has irremediably perpetuated his own silly character, and interesting from the details of the costume, which is but slightly dissimilar to that of the present day; but what principally attracted the attention of Xanthi, and seemed almost to terrify her, was a colossal statue of Minerva, headless, as though in honour of the peculiar propensities of the klefts, seated on a sort of throne, with an extreme majesty in the attitude and formation of the neck and bust. This fine piece of sculpture is known among the brigands

by the name of the “Great Lady,” and they seem to regard her with a sort of superstitious reverence.*

As soon as Gogos awoke, Xanthi flew to bring him his pipe and his coffee, insisted on mending an unseemly rent in his sleeve, and paid him so much attention, with such gay good humour, that in the space of a very short time the unsuspecting kleft was thoroughly fascinated by the cunning little Mainote—the fierce and villanous old robber became gentle as a lamb, and found it utterly impossible to refuse any request backed by a pleading glance from her merry black eyes. Xanthi’s object in this coquettish proceeding was to obtain his escort for Spiro and herself as far as Athens. When she told him her wish, he demurred a little, but finally acceded, provided the diviner of his band should ensure their finding a tolerable booty on the way.

The secrets of the future, according to Greek brigands, are to be found carefully noted in the shoulder-blade of a sheep; and, after a due examination of this loquacious bone, by a person who, being a seventh child, had the power of penetrating its mysteries, it was announced to Gogos, that if he accompanied the wanderers, they would, in a few days, meet with a rich prize on their road! This at once decided the old chief on gratifying his bewitching little guest. It was, indeed, a matter of comparative indifference to these brigands in what direction they went to seek their necessary prey. They could no where

descend from their rocky fastnesses without peril, for they were as much the enemies of their countrymen as of the Turks. To these mountain tigers gold was gold, and worthy to be obtained at the price of blood at all times, whether it were wrung from the impoverished hands of their fellow Greeks, or from the overflowing treasure-houses of their common oppressors.

There might have been something exciting and attractive in the wild adventurous life they systematically led; making their home in the caves of the free, fresh mountain, and rushing down to the plains when their provisions were exhausted, to win with the sword their food for the morrow; but that, wherever they went their path was tracked in blood, and themselves seemed, when they adopted the brigand trade, to have actually laid down their humanity, and taken on them the very nature of wolves. Their preparations for a journey were very soon made, each man loaded his gun and pistols, and bound his feet with thongs of leather, to preserve them from the sharp stones. One of the baggage mules, of which they had two or three, was appropriated to Xanthi, and shortly after day-break they were already far on their way from the nymph-haunted cave. The klefts, who were all endowed with a swiftness of foot which could only be attained by long habit, darted over the rocks at a rapid pace, whilst Gogos and Spiro walked more steadily by the Mainote’s side; she herself, exhi-

* INSCRIPTION IN THE CAVERN OF THE NYMPHS.

ΑΡΧΕΔΜΟΣΟΟ
ΗΡΑΙΟΣΟΝΥΜΦ
ΟΛΗΓΤΟΣΦΡΑΔ
ΛΙΣΙΝΝΥΜΦΟΝΤ
ΑΝΤΓΟΝΕΞΗΡΤ
ΑΣΑΤΟ

INSCRIPTION ON TOMB OF REGILLA.

ΑΠΠΙΑΑΝΝΙΑ ΡΗΓΙΛΛΑΗΡΩΔΟΥΓΥΝΗΤΟ
ΦΥΣΤΗΣΟΙΚΙΑΣ
ΠΡΟΣΘΕΩΝΚΑΙΗΡΩΩΝΟΣΤΙΣΕΙΟΕΧΩΝΤΟΝΧΩΡΟΝ
ΜΗΠΟΤΕΜΕΤΑΚΕΙΝΗΣΗΣΤΟΥΤΟΝΤΙΚΑΙΤΑΣΤΟΥ
ΤΟΝΤΟΝΑΓΑΛΜΑΤΟΝΕΙΚΟΝΑΣΚΑΙΤΙΜΑΣΟΣΤΙΣ
ΗΚΑΘΕΛΟΙΗΜΕΤΑΚΕΙΝΟΙΗΤΟΥΤΩΜΗΤΕΓΗΝΚΑΡ.

&c. &c.

lirated by the fresh air and the rapid movement, made the wild echoes answer to the gay music of her songs, as she chanted her favourite ballad of the great palikar, to which, in addition to the original version, she had given a few significant touches, that had completely transformed it into an epic in honour of Spiro. Their journey, which was continued for several days, varied little in its incidents; they bivouacked at night on the hill-side, where they lit a fire and cooked their meal, for they eat but once a-day, and that only after sunset. Xanthi, at first thought it rather amusing to find that they had daily to steal a sheep for their supper, till she discovered that they invariably massacred the keeper of the flock, whether he resisted their depredations or not. At last she innocently asked old Gogos why they always killed the shepherd also, since they could not eat him too? His only answer was, "I would eat him if I had no better food!"

At last, having long since left the Arcadian mountains far behind them, they descended into the vast plain that lies between the hills of Pentelicus and Hymettus, and began to traverse its wide expanse, skirting stealthily along the bank of a little stream, which flows into the Illyssus.

In the most desert portion of this plain, so wild, indeed, that it is rarely visited, there lies, solitary and majestic in his loneliness, a colossal lion of enormous size, formed of the purest white marble. The peculiarities of the sculpture indicate at once that it belongs to the earliest period of art, and consequently its unchanging existence exactly as it now appears, recedes back to a remote antiquity, which baffles all attempts to follow it. This wonderful monument of a time almost utterly unknown to us, is enveloped in the deepest mystery; no record, tradition, or inscription of any kind gives the slightest clue to its origin. The lower portion of the limbs are now firmly fixed in the earth; and this only is certain, that during a lapse of time which our imagination does not easily grasp, that majestic old lion has lain precisely as we now behold him, in his attitude of most supreme repose, whilst the rushing ages have careered over his giant head, and left no deeper trace than the chariot wheels of the long vanished

wrestlers for Olympic fame have marked on the plain around! There is something solemn and mysterious in the gaze which this mute keeper of the secrets of the past has fixed upon the mountain of Hymettus, that rises up before his face. Who shall say how long these unchanging eyes have dwelt in contemplation on that classic hill! before even the forests waved upon its brow, of which tradition speaks, and now, in its sterile bleakness, clothed only with the scented heath; yet still looking on it as though he never, from century to century, could weary of beholding the glory of the sunlight upon it, and watching it by night fade into the rich purple glow which he had witnessed long before it ever flashed in the eyes of that poet of old who has immortalized its fleeting brightness! There is that in the intense gaze of the solemn old lion, which might lead one to suppose that he had been for ever occupied in extracting the bitter wisdom from the experience of each passing century, and gathered up age by age all his knowledge, never to be revealed, within his own marble breast!

It was not until the klefts, and their young companions, had reached this spot, that any trace appeared of the rich prey which their soothsayer had promised them. They had been sleeping during the sultry noon-tide hours, under the shade of some pomegranate trees, and were just preparing again to start, when a troop of Turkish horsemen were seen rapidly advancing towards them; the glitter of their costly arms at once roused the fierce cupidity of the brigands, and they speedily determined on an attack, as the enemies' force was about equal to their own.

Spiro was, of course, abundantly ready to fight the common foe at all times, and Xanthi alone had to be suitably disposed of. This he accomplished, by desiring her peremptorily to crouch down, motionless and silent, behind the great lion, whose gigantic form entirely concealed her. Xanthi obeyed without a word, for she dreaded her husband's frown considerably more than the Turks, and she had not been there five minutes before the loud shouts and cries announced that the skirmish had commenced; nor was it the less deadly, that Spiro had recognized, in two of the number, the Bey

of Corinth and his negro Fehim. The brigands were rapidly gaining the advantage, when suddenly the Moslem war-cry sounded loudly at a little distance, and the main body of Kyamil Bey's troop came galloping up to the rescue. In an instant the order of things was reversed, the brigands fled before them; for this famous, or rather infamous race (which, by the way, is not *altogether* extinct in Greece at the present day), with all their reckless cruelty, have little of that courage which dies before it yields, and lightly as they esteem their neighbours' heads, it is wonderful what a profound respect they have for their own. They fled in the direction of the old lion, and the Turks pursued them beyond it; but these easy-living gentlemen found this rather a heating exercise on so warm a day, so they quietly allowed the robbers to escape, and rode back on the road to Corinth, which was their ultimate destination. As they repassed the colossal lion, Fehim the negro, thought he could distinguish something fluttering between its two fore-paws, as though the stately animal had actually declined so far from his eternal dignity as to catch an unwary prey. In a moment he was at the spot, gazing down with a wild smile of triumph on the shivering, gasping Xanthi, whom his look paralyzed altogether. With a grin which displayed the whole formidable range of his sharp, white teeth, the Nubian plunged down his hand into her place of concealment, and grasping her by the garments, lifted her up as easily as a dog drags out a kitten, and threw her across his powerful horse before him; then, grasping her firmly, he urged his steed to the gallop, and hastened to follow his master. How poor little Xanthi twisted and writhed in the iron grasp of the negro, trying, at the risk of being crushed in the fall, to fling herself from his arms to the ground. She might as well have tried to move the old lion himself! At last Fehim seemed to weary of her restlessness. He suddenly stopped and dismounted; the fact was, he feared lest her cries should attract the attention of the Bey, to whom he must at once have delivered her up, an act of obedience to which he was by no means disposed, as he had decided on selling the pretty Mainote at the slave-market of Corinth, and pocketing the

price. Securing his prize with one hand, with the other he took from the back of his horse an enormous bag, which he seemed to carry with him for the convenient disposal of any casual booty he might chance to obtain, and fairly shook her into it! Then tying it up, so as not altogether to exclude the air, he flung it over the saddle once more, and resumed his course. There was a terrible difference between this very unpleasant ride and the last she had taken with her lost husband on the back of the noble Esfendi. How Xanthi hated herself for having grieved to die by the side of Spiro—how much better than this bitter captivity! It was not, moreover, just the most advantageous position for surveying the scenery, and poor Xanthi, during a journey of four-and-twenty hours, which seemed to her like so many ages, passed quite unconsciously through the fine tract of land which separates Athens from Corinth; nor did she hear, bewildered and exhausted as she was, the loud shout from the Turks, as the tall peak of the Acro Corinthus, detaching itself from the semicircle of beautiful hills, announced their entrance into this, the most crushed and degenerate of all time-honoured cities.

Go where you will now, it is a sad thing to wander over Greece; for it would seem as though man, in his sin and misery, weary of the unsympathizing and eternal smile of that blue sky, had woven, by his own dark deeds and blighting passions, as it were, a sombre veil, spread out over all that land of beauty, of mournful associations, and bitter memories, through which alone you can look down upon her loveliness. Yet it is pleasing, as well as profitable, to linger among her ruins, when they are desolate and lonely as they should ever be; for then you can wrap yourself round in the atmosphere of decay and death which hangs so heavy on them, pondering on the great lessons they teach, and wondering to see how the seekers of earth's ephemeral glory have been justly mocked in the enduring existence of the very handiwork wherein they sought it, while themselves are all forgotten and unknown. And you can lift up your head and look on the unchanging brightness of the heavens, remembering with joy unto your soul, that there *are* works which follow the dead

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voice, trembling, half stifled with unspeakable joy, called out—

“Xanthi!”

Instantly on all sides of her was echoed back with wild delight—

“Xanthi, Xanthi, you are welcome!”

Breathless, bewildered, she pushes back her veil with trembling hands—her knees shake under her, her lips refuse to utter a sound; her eyes instinctively turn first with their terrified gaze upon her purchaser, but he has thrown down the great turban from his head, and torn away the false beard which disguised him. It is Gogos himself who stands exulting and smiling beside her! and, in another instant, Spiro, straining her to his heart, convinces her that it is no dream, and that she is indeed restored

uninjured to her husband and her friends. And the merry brigands, enchanted at the successful expedition of their master, as well as at the rescue of the little Mainote, whom they liked so well, fairly joined hands, and danced round the young couple, half bewildered with so much joy.

We cannot do better than leave Xanthi with the klefts, dancing round her on the bright hill side; for, if the truth must be told, the rest of her career was characterized by a most practical contempt for all the laws of her country! The brigand life had appeared so charming to both her and her husband, that she passed the remainder of her days as the wife of a kleft, dwelling summer and winter in the Cave of the Nymphs.

DUBLIN

UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE.

No. CLXXVI.

AUGUST 1847.

VOL. XXX.

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JAMES McGLASHAN 21 D'OLIER-STREET.

WM. S. ORR, AND CO. 147 STRAND LONDON.

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