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BY
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PROEM

ATHENE—with a cloud upon her brow[1]—
She, who in majesty serene—severe,
We long have seen with blue eyes gleaming clear
In all the calm of Wisdom's strength, and now
Out from the sculptured marble, that below
The earth hath lain for many an untold year—
Casque-crowned, behold! the goddess doth appear
With saddened mien, her helmed head drooping low.

Came there prophetic vision 'fore the eye
Of him, who felt his joy in Art abound,
That stay'd th' exultant chisel lifted high,
And carved unwilling record; seeing around
Fanes desolate, and hearing for resound
Of pæans, an exceeding bitter cry?

[1] Written upon seeing the bas-relief of Athene, lately discovered.

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CHAPTER I

A VILLAGE IN THE PARNESE

In a bynook of one of those Attic passes that wind through the rugged ascent of the Parnese hills, shrouded by the thick pine woods that cover their slopes, and crouching up as it were beneath their shadows, there lay, in the early spring of 1825, a small village of about thirty scattered huts. Four years had passed since the despised Greeks had raised the standard of revolt; four years of a war almost of annihilation; but the waves of destruction that had swept over their miserable homesteads had not brought them to submission; their hearts were still as unsubdued as the rough heights of those

hills that were both a refuge and a source of strength.

From the nature of the country, it would have been quite possible for any body of men who were bent upon keeping the main pass that leads to the ruins of the fort of Phyle, celebrated for the defence of Thrasybulus, to march by this small village without suspecting its existence. Its whereabouts could only be betrayed by their attention being arrested, either by the bell of some lonely sheep or goat, straying along the mountain side, or by a faint wisp of smoke making its feeble exit over the tops of the trees where they were growing more sparsely. Either would announce that there were human habitations at no great distance. These dense woods on the slopes of the Parnes' range still supply Athens with firewood, and give some employment to the charcoal-burners, and it is principally these that furnish the loads of brushwood for the furnaces and ovens, that have so strange an appearance as they move along the public roads; for the piles are usually so large, and cover the animals carrying them so effectually, that hardly any more of an ass so laden is perceptible beyond the tip of its nose and its four legs.

If, at the time in which our story opens, the

existence of a village would be unsuspected by any traveller who was a stranger to the ways of these defiles, the neighbourhood of a church would be equally so; as neither dome, turret, or bell-tower even of the meanest dimensions revealed its position. This village church, which was dedicated to no less a personage than the favourite Greek saint, Elias, was not built upon the highest ground as is the customary mode, but on the very lowest, and seemed to cower and shelter itself by the side of the rugged rock as if it were really in hiding. It was little more than a larger kind of hut, and differed from those in the village only by having a sloping roof, covered with some kind of rude tiles, whilst its four walls, instead of being composed entirely of clay, had here and there imbedded into them portions of stone that, from some almost obliterated marks of sculpture upon them, seemed to be fragments of archaic structures, that the action of time or the hand of man had displaced. Such fragments it was never difficult to find, and transported on the backs of asses or mules, they were ever acceptable to the unscientific builder—who erected temples of worship like that of Saint Elias. It boasted of no bell, and if it had ever had the iron clapper called a *semantron*, that under the Turkish rule performed the same duty

as a bell, it had long since fallen down, or had been forcibly wrested from its place. The whole fabric had an aspect of extreme desolation, and every portion revealed the same sad tale of abject woe. There were no panes of glass in the kind of loopholes that served for windows. In many places these apertures were overhung by a colourless growth of weed that, springing up into a weakly transient life in the rainy season, had soon withered, and, being dried by the sun, hung there still in pathetic semblance of grief, with its dead fibres clinging to the small holding where it had first sprung into feeble being. The porch, which alone bore any signs of an attempt at architecture, was a rude following of the commonest Byzantine type. The door, which was of rough-hewn pine, had an aspect which, if not exactly that of hardy defiance, was at least one of sullen resistance, for just within it was hung a massive iron chain which could be drawn across and fastened by a staple. By this means all the weakly inhabitants of those thirty huts—to wit—the women, the children, the aged, and the sick, could shut themselves up there in the futile belief of it affording them a place of safety; whereas, if an enemy should think it worth while to turn aside to take possession of the village, so impotent a barrier

would not avail for ten seconds to a foe.

Yet there was a brighter side even no[w]
smiles of Nature, that are seldom long
from her face, were doing their very best to clothe the poverty and nakedness of the place with some shreds of beauty; and upon this April day, when vegetation in Greece is more advanced and shows more summerlike than is generally seen in England's leafy June, there were not lacking the flowers that are peculiar to those wilds.

The poets of modern Greece sing of the roses of April, but although the stony ground upon which this village had its site was not the habitat of the rose, it was gay with the glowing fiery poppy, the crimson anemone, and the rock-rose in every shade of colour. These were the smiles of Nature's softer moments; but there were times when the voices of the strong pines, stirred by the healthy mountain breezes that shook down their fragrance into the valley below, spoke with other tones and roused other feelings. Neither of these aspects of Nature imaged forth the deadly conflict, that at this very moment was being waged for the possession of the soil in which these flowers and trees were blossoming and had their roots. It was those forlorn habi-

tations alone, that in mute despair seemed to beseech the solitary traveller, whom chance or curiosity led that way, to pause and consider why amid so much loveliness the human habitations in their silent wretchedness were eloquent of woe.

It was upon this April day, just before the setting of the sun, that two asses heavily laden with firewood in the manner described, and accompanied by their drivers, emerged from the inner depths of the pine woods, and descended by a by-path in the direction of the village.

Although at this time, when men and animals were both alike drained away from peaceful employments and labours in the field to serve the exigencies of war, little corn had been sown, there must in consequence be little corn for the reaping. Scant already was the flour for the leavening, as the cold dark furnaces or ovens of many a lonely village testified. Seldom were now seen the leaping flames, that rising from the ovens, whose fires were usually kindled at eventide, lighted up the darkening sky with a ruddy glow. Yet fuel was needed occasionally. So at least must have thought those two men who were now driving their donkeys towards St. Elias.

As they drew near, it was evident that one of

them was assuming the leadership, for he kept ahead of his companion, and occasionally turning to him, indicated the path he was to follow. This was a man in his full vigour, a period of life that for mind and body may be assumed to be reached at about thirty-five years. He was strongly made and tall, with marked features, and a skin that seemed to have gained its deep furrows from long exposure, which had also burnt it almost black. His companion, although he was apparently the subordinate, and appeared to be entirely ignorant of the road, had nevertheless those sure signs of superiority, which always unwittingly betray their possessor to a close observer of men and manners. He was very much younger, and was slighter in figure, but his limbs were well knit, and his muscular force developed. Although both these men were superior in appearance to the general purveyors of firewood, the younger man was so in a remarkable degree. That he was not born to be a hewer of wood was distinctly evident. The fair crisp curls that clustered close to a brow surmounted by a tasselled fez, were in strong contrast to his deeply embrowned face, that was only a few tints lighter than that of the elder man, whilst the moustache that shaded his upper lip was still fairer than the hair of his

head, and accentuated the darkness of his complexion, albeit such darkness was merely the action of the sun. No suspicion of his nationality would be aroused from the colour of his hair, as light and even red-haired men are not unfrequent in the islands and among the peasantry everywhere. But in his features a Northern rather than a Southern, or still less an Eastern origin was suggested.

The elder man came to a halt.

"We are close to the place, Effendi. Soh!" and he brought his own animal to a stand-still.

"God be praised, Spyridon, for the ways have been precipitous, the underwood especially trying to the legs, and my ass has been as untoward as that quadruped usually is when it despises its master, and has arrived at a knowledge of its own powers. The brute has taken every possible advantage, and has shown not the slightest consideration for me throughout the whole way."

The man smiled grimly. "Anyhow, Effendi, thou'lt not say but that I've been a considerate and a kind master, who has waited for thee at every turn, for I'm thinking thou'dst not be worth thy olives and bread at this kind of work."

"I am bound to say, Spyridon, that as my

master and employer thou hast been most forbearing; and although thou dost not consider that I should be worth my olives and bread as a wood lopper, our two heads have not been imperilled by my awkwardness, as they were when thou wast acting the meek shepherd. Good heavens! another such a quarter of an hour as I had when thou wast fingering thy gun before those sharp-eyed Turks, and I should have become a real imbecile instead of a simulated one, or the eccentric, half-witted Englishman that I was credited to be."

"Effendi," cried the man, and his eyes flashed with a fierce light. "Effendi, my own true gun was in my hands, and Turks were before my eyes, and yet, what would you more, it did not go off—no, it did not go off."

"No, it did not go off, my good Spyridon, because thou hadst pledged thy word to me to hold thyself in restraint, and because of the great issues at stake, which its going off at the wrong moment would have sadly imperilled."

"And because of 'the great issues at stake,' Effendi, I have left the hills to follow you."

"And mayst thou never repent doing so: but now for the pappas. Time admits of no tarrying, let us on."

"Shall I not go before, Effendi, and see how

it goes with the village? Maybe he is not there, and the whole of his people may have taken to the heights; in that case we shall have to return. Anyhow, it will be better to go on first."

"Yes, do so, Spyridon, and take both the donkeys with thee. I've had enough of mine. Umph! I want to guide men, and I cannot guide a donkey." This last observation was not, however, meant for his companion to hear, but was muttered under his breath.

"One man, one ass, Effendi. It will not do for me to make my appearance in the village of St. Elias leading two donkeys, as everyone would know perfectly well that there was another man somewhere, and where and why was he hiding? Who owns two asses now, I should like to know? But I'll just tie his two fore legs, so that he shall not wander far from you, and I'll be back again as soon as I have found out if the way is safe and clear."

Saying this, he stooped down and proceeded to shackle the aforesaid ass, which, having acquired some democratic ideas of freedom through the lenient rule of its late driver, showed itself desirous to roll, despite the enormous load of brushwood that it carried. This disposition being corrected by the forcible administration of a few cuffs, which convinced it that the era of liberty

had not as yet arrived, Spyridon wended his way down a narrow and rather precipitous path, which his own ass, already tired out, strongly but ineffectually resented, on the ground that its fellow companion was to be left behind.

The younger man now flung himself upon the ground and stretched his limbs. "Wood cutting and donkey driving are fatiguing occupations to the uninitiated," he soliloquized, "and yet they have their charms, when they bring you into scenes like those we have traversed lately. Ah! I wonder if this priest of St. Elias will turn out to be such as he is described; if so, he will be a worthy coadjutor. I am weary of waiting for the results of English diplomacy, and any effectual interposition seems as far off as ever; and yet I hoped much from Canning."

He paused, and plucked unconsciously at a tuft of woolly-leaved mullein that was flowering between the stones: "The people at home will not like it, of course; Philip was angry enough before, but when he finds that I have put myself under the tutelage of a Frenchman, a former general of the 'hated Corsican,' he will be frantic. He is one of the most equable of men, when nothing jars against his Toryism, but when that comes about—" The woolly tuft of yellow mullein at which he had been tugging, was at this point left

in his hand, and the bit of loosened stone that had been its support bounded away down the steep incline. The young man watched it with a half smile, as it turned aside from lesser obstructions, and by every such movement got a fresh impetus, until meeting with a larger boulder, that effectually blocked any farther progress, it gave a little swirl, and then settled itself in position, apparently glad at finding what promised a more permanent anchorage. "'Set a stone rolling, you never know where it will stop.' That was the last adage about revolving pebbles that my dear brother-in-law tried to impress me with, after I had failed to see the desirability of squatting in one place for the purpose of accumulating slimy green moss. Aha, my good Philip Warrenne, I've another proverb to match yours! 'Every rolling stone finds level ground at last;' and, like that pebble against that boulder yonder, I have found mine—here in Greece—and Favier, perchance, will be to me as that boulder. I have made the schemes of the great general my own, and I firmly believe that the money I shall be willing to supply will secure a large amount of reliable recruits. How can the poor devils fight without the *τὰ πρὸς ζῆν* (the wherewithal to live), or the means of getting it? Oh, if it could but be! that, whilst the loan is being negotiated in

London, we could strike such a blow that the victory will be won without it!"

He sprang to his feet as he said this, when the ass, startled by this action, more than by the sound of footsteps that were heard approaching, made a desperate attempt to spring forward with its shackled limbs, the result of which was that a considerable diminution in its load was effected, and piles of brushwood toppling over its head and ears, fell to the ground and were scattered far and wide. "I don't know how to lade a donkey with firewood, that's quite certain; Spyridon's load would never come tumbling about in that fashion! Spyridon will be as grandly contemptuous as usual, because of this accident."

The footsteps—the echo of which had helped to agitate the ass out of its usually philosophical demeanour—drew near. "The pappas of St. Elias," said Spyridon reverentially, as he came up, drawing back as his companion, whom he thus introduced, advanced.

The pappas of St. Elias, a handsome man of scarcely more than thirty-eight years of age, whose waving dark brown hair as it fell from beneath his priest's hat showed as yet no silver streaks—hastily approached—and eagerly seizing the hand which the young man extended, was about to raise it to his lips. "No—priest—not so; rather

is such homage your due from me!" and as he said these words he bent low his own head and sought to regain possession of the priest's hand from which he had released his own.

"And I say—not so, also," said the pappas in strong tones. "Our hands shall then meet, Monsieur Gerard Lowe, as patriots, and as patriots only;" and with a firm grip he grasped the more slender fingers of the young man, and wrung them in silence.

"You are one of us—you are our brother," he added, solemnly, as his dark eyes filled with tears; "as in the faith of Christ all the nations upon earth are but as one people, so freedom knows but of one kindred among those who are united against the oppressor. Welcome, Gerard Lowe, welcome, my brother! Friend Spyridon, bring in the other animal, for whatever fodder the village contains shall be theirs. The dumb brutes suffer with us," he said, sadly, "but God forbid that we should not share our meagre portion of food with them. I have been looking for your advent for many, many days, and all that I have is yours. There are no men now among us; some are with the army, others are scattered abroad, having dispersed to seek their own safety. Not all the sons of Greece, alas, are patriots; it takes some time to make patriots

out of slaves," he added, bitterly ; and then, after a moment's pause, "Come, my two daughters will doubtless ere this have spread the meal of which you stand in need. Have you no arms?" he whispered, surveying the attire of the two men.

"We each carry two pistols secretly."

"You will not need to use them, I trust, whilst you are here. We are hidden up in this corner which, if it be known, is despised as being too poor to be of any moment—not worth a consideration either from friend or foe."

There was a shade of bitterness in the voice of Pappas Zacharias, as turning away he descended the same path by which he had come, followed by Gerard Lowe. Spyridon, after having repiled the brushwood on the ass, and released its feet, led the animal by its halter, saying with a shrug, "As we have had the trouble of cutting this fuel, Effendi, it may just as well be made use of for the pappas' ovens as to lie wasting here."

"Then your next journey with the Effendi, friend Spyridon," said the pappas, who had overheard the remark, "must be in the guise of hunters in search of game to roast at it; for a lighted oven and nothing to put into it is a sorry jest for a hungry stomach."

There was nothing to distinguish the dwelling of the pappas from the rest of the cottages, except that it was somewhat larger. It was flat-roofed like the others, and consisted of four compartments, for rooms they could hardly be called, as they suggested no idea of home-like comfort. Some rather emaciated pigeons were stalking about the roof, peering into every crevice with hungry eyes.

"The game is ready for the oven, pappas," cried Spyridon, with a jerk of the cord by which he was leading the ass, and accompanied by a grin full of meaning.

"I hardly think, friend Spyridon, that you would find anything more than skin upon their poor bones. I often wonder how their feathers adhere to them. It might indeed be a mercy to wring their necks, but they are my daughters', who brought them up from the nest, and see how tame they are," and as the priest spoke he held out one of his arms straight from the shoulder, and the pigeons flying down upon his hand, one after another, ran along from wrist to neck, where, fluttering from side to side, they plunged their beaks caressingly into his clustering hair and thickly waved beard.

"I have nothing for you," he said mournfully, "we cannot afford you more than one meal a

day, and that must needs be a scanty one. Poor creatures! They seem to lead a charmed life, Effendi, for none of my people, famishing though they must often be, would harm one feather on their bodies; the pigeons of the daughters of their pappas are as sacred birds. Yet the time must come, for there is a limit to all human forbearance, and some day—perhaps not a far distant one—a despairing mother will demand their lives at my hands to save the life of her starving child, and she must not be denied."

Gerard Lowe remembered that a fragment of bread and some biscuits were harbouring in one of the many pockets of his red leathern belt, and thrusting his hand in, brought out the fragments, when there was an instantaneous skirmish of eager wings, rushing from the priest's shoulder to the ground.

"A good omen," cried Pappas Zacharias, "you come as the forerunner of deliverance, and you are already the dispenser of joy."

"Amen, I accept the omen," answered Gerard gravely.

The homes of fairly prosperous agriculturists in Greece know nothing of those adjuncts that are considered to be the essentials of comfort by an ordinary English mechanic. The word "comfort," however, is a peculiarly English word,

and what it comprises may be said to atone for many deficiencies in climate. Where sunshine abounds, the homestead of the peasant is not so much in need of all that that word represents. The Greek husbandmen live in dimly lighted rooms where the aim is to exclude the too vivid sunrays. There is but little furniture within them; one or two stools, a wooden table, possibly a homely chair, with a pile of rugs in one corner to be utilized for bedding purposes, are about the ordinary amount of upholstery. To these may be added a shelf on the wall for crockery, and a sacred picture or *ikon*, before which hangs a lighted lamp. Only the rugs, which are often excellent in design and rich with the harmonious blending of colour, and the quivering flame of a lamp burning before the ever present *ikon*, redeem the general dinginess of an interior.

As they bent their heads in crossing the threshold at the low doorway, the priest said in a grave voice to the occupants of the room they were about to enter, "This is he whom we have long expected; this is he who has come to rescue Israel from bondage."

Pappas Zacharias as he thus spoke crossed himself, and drew on one side to allow his guest to enter.

CHAPTER II

THE DAUGHTERS OF THE PAPPAS

SUDDENLY emerging from the still brilliant sunlight into the deep shadows of the one sitting-room of the priest's house, the unaccustomed eyes of Gerard Lowe could at first but barely distinguish the outlines of two female forms, apparently youthful, who stood waiting to receive them.

"My two daughters, Irene and Neroula," said the priest, when he saw the hesitation of his guest as he raised his tasselled cap.

Gerard had been long enough among the Greek people to know that a great measure of reserve was required towards the women of the household, and that it would not be thought seemly for a stranger like himself to advance and offer his hand to the two maidens thus introduced to him by name, so he confined himself to a low inclination of the head. This

almost reverential salutation, under which a sudden emotion of surprise was concealed, was addressed chiefly to the taller, and presumably the elder of the daughters, who, as she came forward upon hearing her father's words, at once arrested the attention of the artist.

Frank Harbord, in changing his name to Gerard Lowe, for the better furtherance of his plans towards the achievement of the liberty of Greece, had lost none of his former enthusiasm for art. The young Englishman had not as yet, in the rough passages of life which he had traversed in classic lands, seen aught to remind him of those ideals which the models of a dead past that had filled his studio awakened in him, and now in the obscure hovel of a poor priest, the highest type of beauty which he had once dreamt of arose suddenly before him, vividly pictured in the ray of light from the open door, which invested the girl as with an aureole. Recovering himself quickly, lest his admiration might become apparent, he bowed a second time even more profoundly to the younger sister, but the eyes that rested vaguely upon her whom the pappas called 'Neroula,' were as if their sense was shut.

The low-legged table was already spread as if in anticipation, with dried olives, maize bread,

and fresh butter made from ewe's milk, a lump of the sweetmeat called chalbas, which is ever a delectable addition to a Lenten meal, and a bottle of resinated wine. There were two stools placed by the table, on one of which the priest invited Gerard to be seated, he himself taking the other. Spyridon, after he had unladen the donkeys and left them to wander free, had washed his soiled face and hands at a neglected well, which, in ruins as it was, yet received a constant supply of crystal water, that trickled down the rocks from a spring at some considerable height. Having performed those much-required ablutions, Spyridon, coming in to share the very welcome repast, sat himself cross-legged on the floor at some little distance from the host and took his plate upon his knees. The two girls waited upon the men in silence at the beginning of the repast, but later on, at a sign from the pappas, retired to the farther end of the room, and resumed the occupation which had been interrupted by the arrival of their guest. Their present labours were devoted to working at a very rough, old-fashioned loom, the creaking and squeaking of which as they plied it served to cover up the earnest conversation that was being carried on from time to time between the priest Zacharias and Gerard Lowe.

In this low-toned colloquy Spyridon had no share, but held himself aloof as if he had no part in it, nor proffered one word, save when he was occasionally appealed to.

"The time demands prompt action on our side, reverend father," said Gerard Lowe energetically, after a momentary pause, during which he regarded the face of the pappas with anxious gravity. "I have been with Favier, and he has laid all his schemes before me, and it is his teaching that I am seeking to profit by. He has, for some long time passed, mixed with your people in the disguise of a private citizen and as a traveller, and has frequented the different camps, studying the manners, and making himself acquainted with the characters of your compatriots. It is in vain for men of other nationalities, who live under fairly settled governments, to come among you with any prospect of being able to sway or guide, if they are strangers to the feelings or modes of thought that are rife among you. However capable, however well-wishing to the cause, they will fail again and again. My own countrymen have failed in this respect, and have often appeared to run counter to the Greek patriots in consequence. It is to avoid a similar mistake that General Favier and myself, for he permits me to couple my name

with his, have for a considerable period, during which we have made ourselves familiar with the dialect spoken by the people, been going about in various disguises, acting the part of spies, so to speak, but spies who are so merely the better to act as friends. The result of all our observations has been to prove that much good material in the country is being cruelly wasted. General Favier gives it as his firm opinion, that if such material, as undoubtedly exists, were well drilled and disciplined, certain victory would follow. To insure this end, we must all be content to serve under that noble man, who comes among you with not a spark of self-seeking in his breast, and is content to give himself up to be spent in the cause, but has no idea of spending himself in vain. To accomplish the end we have in view, they, who now aim to be leaders, must submit to be followers, and learn how to obey. Would-be leaders will always be forthcoming. We want men—men who know how to serve and how to obey. For this end I traverse the mountain passes, and go to every obscure hamlet, and to every lonely monastery on the hills, and call not only upon the rustic to leave his oxen and his plough, but upon monk and priest alike, to lay aside stole and serge, and the service of the altar, to leave prayers and supplica-

tions in the desolate churches, and the lighting of tapers before faded ikons, until that day when their walls shall ring with the hosannas of victory and gleam with the torches of triumph!"

The colour deepened on the sunburnt cheek of the priest at this outburst of enthusiasm from the lips of a stranger. He did not make haste to answer the young Englishman, but his eyes wandered up and down the figure before him, as though he were taking measure of his physical strength in conjunction with his strong words. At last he said quietly, "You have the enthusiasm of youth, Kyr Gerard, but I believe that you are not a soldier by profession, or at least you have not been trained to arms." "And therefore am not qualified to judge in these matters? No, pappas, I am not a soldier as yet, but I also intend to go into training under Favier, in order to become one."

"It is a noble intention, and worthy of an Englishman, who can thus put aside private prejudices where great ends are at stake—but yet—I think from what I have heard, that you would serve our cause better in another way." He lowered his voice to a whisper; "You are wealthy, why imperil your life when you can aid us more effectually by not doing so?"

"What I possess will not be withheld,"

answered Gerard, haughtily, "although I give myself also; but as much has been already wasted in useless expenditure, I must see for myself what are the real needs before I squander money to no purpose."

"Do I understand then rightly, that you want us — the priesthood — to abandon our flocks, our altars, our families, and to enrol ourselves to fight side by side under the commands of this French general?" asked the pappas sadly. "Pardon me," said Gerard, laying his hand on the priest's arm, "before I came hither I was given to understand that you were one of those who counted not the cost, that you had long been pledged to the Hetaîrîa, that in fact you had the heart of a soldier as well as that of a patriot beneath your cassock, and that it was only your priestly functions that had hitherto restrained you. If I have been wrongly informed I must not tarry; Spyridon shall reload our asses, and we must carry our fuel to another market."

"You mistake me," answered the priest. Then, as he raised his head, he jerked it with a meaning but sorrowful gesture in the direction of his daughters plying the loom in the far end of the shadowy room. Gerard had forgotten for a while the presence of the two girls, although the monotonous creaking had never ceased. Following

the priest's movement, his eyes took in at a glance the whole of the situation as contained in that jerk of the head. Almost simultaneously the loom stopped working; when the pappas, as though he wished to postpone the further prolongation of the subject of discussion, turned the conversation by remarking on the skill of the Greek women in weaving, and also with their needle. "And I think," he added with some measure of pride, "that there are very few who are more deft than my daughter Irene, who shall show you some of the treasures of her chest;" and saying this he called to her and bade her bring forward some sample for their guest's inspection.

Gerard's eyes rested in an absent and abstracted way upon the girl as she knelt down, and opening a chest, drew from it one of those exquisite specimens of embroidery that may even now be occasionally seen among the aprons and skirts displayed by the dancers on the great festival days of Greece.

"I wish you to send it to Madame Gerard Lowe, Effendi, as the gift of one of the daughters of the poor enslaved country, that already numbers you among the latest champions of her enfranchisement."

"I have neither mother nor wife, pappas, but

a dearly loved little sister of mine, who is herself a skilful needlewoman, will be delighted to accept it."

Irene, drawing near with softly falling footsteps and downcast eyes, laid the piece of broidery before her father, and was about to retire again without a word, when the pappas, placing a hand upon her arm, restrained her from so doing.

"Irene, this is the noble Englishman concerning whom I have spoken to thee of late; this is Kyr Gerard Lowe, who has left his country and his friends, to offer himself and his all for the deliverance of our nation; has come, as you see, in the poor guise of a peasant. What can we give him for so much devotion? something more—something better surely than a portion of needlework is his due! what can we give him that is of more worth than that?" His voice trembled as he thus spoke. Irene paused for a moment—and then raising her eyes—she looked full into the face of their guest.

"Our love."

Only two words—spoken in that beautiful tongue of the people with which Gerard had made himself familiar, before he entered upon his self-imposed mission. Two words only; but as those two words thrilled out vibratingly, they seemed to enter his very soul as they fell upon

his outward ear, in the brief moment that the eyes of the speaker met his. It was only for a moment, for that intent gaze of appeal and sympathy was as quickly veiled by her falling lids; but in that moment Gerard Lowe forgot his mission, the place where he then was, the cottage and its humble surroundings, and the presence both of Spyridon and the priest.

As visionary trance, or waking dream, fade alike at the approach of the actual, so Gerard was roused from his reverie by the quick rustling of garments near him. These sounds were not, however, due to Irene, who had glided away as gently as she had come, and who was already at her loom. It was Neroula now who was busying herself to remove the remnants of the meal. Almost involuntarily, and still with a feeling of abstraction, Gerard's looks followed the younger sister, who, with lightly tripping steps, that were eminently suggestive of pipe and lyre, and the longing of feet eager to dance a measure, passed to and fro, casting the while many a furtive glance at the stranger. And what power there was in the glances of those eyes. Never before had eyes so large and lustrous turned their full dark orbs upon the young Englishman. In the mood to which he had but a little while before surrendered himself at

the utterance merely of two small words and a look of sympathetic meaning, the very brilliancy of those eyes, that flashed their radiance upon him so liberally, had in them somewhat that jarred upon his nervous sense.

"My little Neroula is the housewife, Effendi, and very dexterously she economizes the scanty means at her disposal. She leaves all the patriotism to Irene."

Neroula laughed, and showed her pretty white teeth, as Gerard, bowing, said with grave courtesy:

"I came to your house, pappas, weary and faint, and am much indebted to the careful hospitalities of Mademoiselle Neroula. For, alas!" he added, smiling, "patriots have appetites."

There could hardly be a more commonplace remark, but Neroula smiled and showed her white teeth again, as though she were well pleased with the compliment conveyed in it.

Forthwith, Gerard Lowe, not being able to detach himself from the consideration that Neroula was undoubtedly a very beautiful girl, and that she owed a large portion of her beauty to the possession of the most wonderful eyes that he had ever beheld, asked himself why they repelled rather than attracted him, and came to

the conclusion that their effect was like that of an Eastern sun, which makes one long for clouds. Neroula's well-fringed lids had the refreshing effect of the cloud, but they were so seldom drooped. The girl's approach brought Gerard Lowe back from dreamland, and the true cause of his being in the cottage of Pappas Zacharias. The fond gaze of the priest and father followed her as she carried away an armful of platters, for it never suggested itself to Spyridon to carry them for her, and of course Gerard knew full well that the ex-klepht would have deeply resented it as an insult, had the fitness of such help been hinted at. So, sitting cross-legged on the floor, Spyridon saw the encumbered girl pass half-a-dozen times before him, but would have thought himself degraded had he lifted a finger to relieve her.

"Were they sons instead of daughters," said the priest, after a pause, "you would not see me hesitating thus. Where you are now, doubting of one man, there would then be three soldiers panting to affix the badge upon their breasts."

"I am not doubting you, pappas. I spoke to you awhile since unguardedly. Do I not know that by your exhortations there is not a man left in the village who can carry arms? This is the more reason that you should find a

place of safety for your daughters. Stalwart and brave as you are, you could not, supposing that you were surprised, you could not protect them."

"What of the rest of my flock?"

"They are too wretched to attract attention, but your daughters are young—and——"

"And handsome. I know too well their peril."

"For the present," continued Gerard, after a few moments' silence into which he had subsided after those supplementary words of the father, "for the present there is no need to move. The harvest, if there be any, can be gathered in, and preparations made without the confusion of undue haste. I stay here for a brief space, but shall go elsewhere eventually to make the necessary preliminaries. Favier is now at Nauplia, and does not contemplate going to Attica to raise the levies required until the autumn. Meanwhile we have to make sure that vessels will be forthcoming to take the women and children to Tenos, or some other place of safety."

An expression of sad perplexity overspread the priest's countenance. He relapsed again into silence, and with eyes bent upon the ground, drew forth from beneath the folds of his cassock *a string of amber beads.* This he turned

over and over in his hands, slowly fingering the beads one by one, and dropping each in turn with as much gravity as though it had been a rosary and he was repeating to himself the required *Aves*. Gerard Lowe watched him in silence. He well knew that this habit of twirling a string of amber beads had no religious significance for the Greek, but was merely a habit, and generally resorted to when any matter of moment was under deliberation. The traveller may still see this innocent manipulation in full practice among the islanders, even in the streets and public places. The foreigner who has access to Greek middle-class houses will, if he or she be observant, be sometimes aware of its covert production from its hiding-place. The harmless habit, whether derived from past intercourse with Muhammedans or otherwise, is evidently resorted to as a kind of pabulum to the nerves, and exercises a soothing influence. Such was certainly the case with Pappas Zacharias. As he twisted and twirled his amulet round his fingers, his face relaxed and the shadows of gloom and doubt passed away. Raising his head he turned towards Gerard with his ordinarily calm aspect, saying:

"You are right, Englishman, you are right."

"What is there in those little balls of gum,

that their contact is more persuasive than words?" asked Gerard, smiling.

"I do not know," said the priest with a shrug. "These are not common ones, however—will you look at them?" and he handed them to his guest. They were large, oval beads of the finest opaque amber, and upon some of them the Greek cross with the Christian monograph was engraved, albeit somewhat rudely.

"I never saw any before with these emblems. May I ask if they are your work?"

"Yes. When I was a boy, I was an acolyte of the ever blessed Gregory—the martyred patriarch. He gave them to me because I acquitted myself to his satisfaction. He told me that they had been given to him by an Arab pedlar, a Muhammedan, whom he had rescued from impending starvation. The man was grateful, and besought the patriarch to accept them as an evidence of his gratitude, telling him that they would never work him anything but good, as they had been blessed by a holy fakir, and were bound to subdue all anger and evil passions in the minds of those who handled them, and cause them to give place to gentle and loving emotions. Of course, the most holy Gregory set no value upon the blessing of an accursed fakir," here the pappas crossed himself, "but had them well

exorcised, washed in holy water, and anointed with chrism before he consecrated them and gave them to me. I made an attempt to engrave them, though you see that my skill was very small, but, after having belonged to a fakir, I wanted to give them an outwardly expressed Christian signification."

"There really appears to be some communicable electricity in them," said Gerard, as he turned them over and over. "My fingers seem to thrill and tingle as I handle them. I almost fancy that I might myself contract the habit, were I living here without society and without books."

"It is getting late," said the pappas, as he took back his string of amber beads. "My daughters have spread some rugs for you and friend Spyridon within there. You must need rest. A good dawning to you." As the priest, with this customary phrase, rose, Gerard had no option but to rise also, and Spyridon followed his example, whilst Pappas Zacharias, holding the door, made his obeisance and closed it after them.

CHAPTER III

THE IKON ON THE WALL

ANOTHER faintly-glimmering lamp, hanging before an ikon as faded and dim in its outlines as the one in the room that they had just left, shed the merest semblance of light for a few feet around. The apartment in which they now found themselves, except for this lamp and two rugs spread upon the floor at a little distance from each other, was quite unencumbered by furniture. To Spyridon, who, wrapped in his capote, had often made his couch upon the bare rocks, it had an aspect of comfort, and almost of luxury, whilst Gerard had been sufficiently long accustomed to the methods of Greek hospitality not to expect any more.

"That is for you, Effendi; see, you have a pillow as well as a rug." This was said in a tone of pride, as much as to say—our people know what comfort is, after all. "I shall just

take the liberty, however, of dragging mine before the door, so that no one can come in without passing over my body, if I should happen to sleep so soundly as not to hear it opened."

"But why so, Spyridon, thou canst surely have no fear of any surprise?"

"I like to be prepared, Effendi. Moreover, you are in my charge, and you are valuable. You would be worth something," cried the ex-klepht, laughing, "so here, my children, come forth!" and, saying this, he drew from some mysterious under-garment two pistols, which, after regarding them very tenderly for a few minutes, he laid down at full cock by the side of the rug, which he had already placed cross-wise before the entrance.

"Well, I suppose that I may as well follow the example; but God forbid that our coming should bring harm upon this household."

"Pappas Zacharias can defend himself. For all his fingering of beads, Effendi, he can finger a gun to still better purpose, though he does not care to talk of it now. That daughter of his——"

"Which daughter? There are two."

"Which daughter, Effendi? Why, Neroula, the *mavromata*, the black-eyed one. Don't you

know what the old song says about the *mavromata?*"

"There are so many songs about *mavromata*, Spyridon, and all ringing the same changes, I fancy."

"*Panagia!* but this one tells us why we should not wed with any but a *mavromata*—a nut-brown maid with coal-black eyes! It tells us, Effendi, how everything else fades away and changes with the years, but the black eyes—Effendi—still remain. Hark at what it says: Πάντα μᾶνρα μάτια θἄχη. You hear, Effendi, 'always, always,' the black eyes she will have always."

"Did you follow the song's advice in your own case, Spyridon?"

"Charon comes and steals all alike," answered Spyridon gruffly. "Marigoula's black eyes did not save her from his clutches; and since then —well—since then the smoke and flash of my gun, and the whiz of the ball, have been more pleasant to my eyes and ears than the bright glances and soft words of any *mavromata.*" Spyridon spoke loudly, with a touch of bravado in his voice, as if he were ashamed of a momentary show of feeling, and was desirous to shroud the weakness of sentiment thus suddenly betrayed by this after declaration.

Gerard made no answer, but flung himself down upon the rug designed for him, and laid his head upon the added luxury of a cushion.

Heavy breathing soon showed that Spyridon, through the unwonted comforts of a roof above and a rug beneath, had already succumbed to sleep; but Gerard Lowe, notwithstanding his recent fatigue, seemed to be more wakeful than before he had laid down. He did not even close those lids that a few moments previously had ached with the longing to do so; on the contrary, his eyes were strained to define the shadows that enveloped the four walls around him, and riveted their gaze upon the *ikon*, barely distinguishable in the dim flicker of the lamp that hung before it. When, after the lapse of a few moments, he had made out that the picture was designed for the Panagia, his thoughts went off at a bound to Irene, the elder daughter of Pappas Zacharias, and the highest intensity of wakefulness was attained.

In the place of the ill-drawn figure of the virgin mother, there now stood out in firm, clear outline the noble proportions of the priest's daughter, with her head proudly raised, as when her calm but sad grey eyes had looked wistfully into his face, and in answer to her father's question she had said "Our love."

Gerard plucked the cushion from under his head and cast it on one side. He was feverish, and his forehead was hot and burning, whilst his heart beat with an emotion not foreign to his nature, for Gerard Lowe, although now launched upon a career in which a cool head, and in some respects a cool heart, were almost the essentials for success, had all the quickly aroused feelings that generally accompany the artistic temperament.

The room was close and confined, the large bulk of the ex-klepht lay as a barrier before the door, or he would gladly have essayed to open it in order to obtain more air. As he revolved this possibility, and turned his face towards Spyridon to consider how it could be best effected, the picture, that a few seconds before had filled his mind, was changed, and visions of *mavromata*—the black-eyed damsels of Spyridon's folk song, which Gerard was also familiar with, came trooping before him, coupled with the jingle of the insensate lines that counsel a stranger not to wed with tall or pale, blue-eyed or fair, but only with a black-eyed maiden, because, as Spyridon had quoted, "Black eyes vanish not with age." Then came the figure of Neroula, bending over and looking at him with those marvellous eyes of hers, those bright eyes

that seemed as if they could never look sad, but would always flash with an undimmed light, as if every day was a festival.

Gerard turned again with a restless start. What were the girl's black eyes to him? Here was he in the house of a priest who was a member of the secret society; he had taken this journey to acquire his prompt and active aid, and whilst he himself should be resting and girding up for the struggle to which he was pledged, he was wasting the precious hours of the night in thinking of the priest's daughters. What was it to him if the one had magnificent black eyes, or that the other was a model of the statuesque ideal of beauty?

"If I stay here," he said at last, as a wave of feverish excitement swept over him, "I shall be down with fever by the morning. I must see what a waft of cool night air will do for me."

Very softly he rose at this, and reached the door on tiptoe. There lay Spyridon sleeping soundly right across it with loaded pistols close to his hand.

If he stumbled or made one false step, Spyridon, ever ready, would awake in a moment, and his first act would be to grasp a pistol and fire it off at the figure before him, and Spyridon's shot

never failed its mark, and made no trouble of bringing down a *para*[1] at any time.

Gerard saw the danger, but he remembered that the door fortunately opened outwards, and Spyridon, although the slightest touch would have brought him to his feet, was sleeping heavily.

Gerard was tall and slight. By leaning one arm against the wall, and reaching over the prostrate form, he could, he thought, with the other outstretched to its full extent, manage to open the door quietly. If it squeaked, and Spyridon moved, he would at once let himself drop on to him with his whole force, and would then call him by his name. It was a slow process, and required careful handling; but Gerard set due store upon his life at this juncture, for he knew its worth, and what hung upon it. Almost unexpectedly, the door gave no creak, and Spyridon did not stir, whilst Gerard, from his own length of limb, was enabled to step right over him into the outer chamber which they had left three or four hours before.

This room received its light from one small window, that was sufficient to make the few objects within it completely visible, as the first

[1] A small coin.

faint streaks of dawn were already showing; but what was Gerard's surprise, and almost dismay, when he was hoping to get out into the open air, to see, stretched out to its full length before the outer door, another barrier in the comely form of the priest Zacharias.

At this unexpected sight Gerard could hardly suppress an involuntary cry. The pappas, then, as well as Spyridon, was prepared to lay down his life for the safety of his guest. He was lying alongside the lentil of the door in his cassock and cap, without any rug—possibly he did not possess another—and by his side lay a long old-fashioned gun.

Gerard stood spell-bound. All the old Eastern myths and tales about the worth of hospitality, and the sacredness of guests, crowded to his memory. There lay the priest, in the calm of an unruffled, dreamless sleep, with his wavy brown beard resting on his broad breast, and with his right hand, not on his cross, but on his gun, ready to bar the entrance with his life, for the sake of him—Gerard Lowe.

It was just too much, in the state of highly-wrought feeling to which he had lately surrendered himself. A rush of unwonted tears coming to his eyes relieved the tension of head and heart. He retraced his steps still more

carefully than before, and as he had left the inner door unclosed, he again managed, without the former difficulty, to pass over the prostrate body of Spyridon, and, regaining his rug, to lie down unheard.

All the phantasms that had visited him before were gone. One touch of simple human emotion had come to his rescue. The tears of warm gratitude acted as a febrifuge, and he fell into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER IV

NEROULA WEARS HER FESTAL DRESS

WHEN he awoke it was broad day. A ripple of sunlight showed through the open door, and Spyridon was gone; whilst by his side stood a vessel containing water with a towel lying near. These were as delightful as they were wholly unexpected, and as the adjuncts of a cake of soap and a comb were afforded by one of the multifarious pouches of his belt, Gerard revelled in the means of ablution thus afforded him, scanty though they were. Much refreshed, and with the accumulated dust, both mental and physical, of the previous day brushed off, he bethought him of a duty hitherto unavoidably deferred, and, again resorting to that mysterious reservoir in which a Greek peasant keeps all his available properties, he drew thence materials for writing, and, half reclining upon his rug whilst he placed his paper upon the cushion that

had attracted Spyridon's admiration, he hastily wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, Philip Warrenne, with a postscript for his sister Clara, recounting the way in which he had acquired the piece of embroidery which he intended to inclose.

He had just completed his brief epistle when the murmur of voices and the echoes of an occasional laugh were borne upon his ear. He thereupon folded his letter round the embroidery, and tying them together with a piece of twine that he had stored up for some possible necessity like the present, committed the parcel to the same receptacle whence he had drawn his stores.

The cooing of pigeons was now added to the other noises. The household were evidently astir, and there was no longer any reason why he should not make his appearance among them. He found no one in the outer room, and the door, through which a fresh breeze was blowing, stood wide open. When he had last seen that door, some few hours since, it had been barricaded by the stalwart body of the priest. He was forced to stop awhile and recall that scene of the silent night that had so deeply moved him at the time, and which, remembering now, brought a thrill of tenderness to his heart. From this uprising of grateful feeling he was aroused by a

fresh peal of laughter, and he stepped over the threshold into the outer air. There could hardly be a prettier spectacle than that which was presented to him. Spyridon was there, but it was not Spyridon upon whom Gerard's eyes were immediately riveted, but upon the sprightly figure of Neroula, who, arrayed in the full national costume of a Parnes' girl upon a festival day, in straight skirt and long jacket of creamy homespun, her apron embroidered in divers colours, with floating gauzy veil, glittering coins upon her brow, and silver chains upon her breast, was coquetting with the hungry pigeons, which, flying all around her, alighting now upon her shoulders and now upon her head, took from her parted rosy lips the morsels of bread that she held within her white teeth. They all flew away as Gerard approached, and the girl, turning to him with a smile, wished him a blithe "Good morning."

"Is this a festival, Mademoiselle Neroula?" asked Gerard, with a bow, as he glanced at her apparel with some surprise. "Is this a feast-day, that you are wearing your *armata*?"

"Yes—it is always a festival and a gala day to me whenever a guest crosses our threshold, and this must be a double feast-day when so great an English *milor* as Kyr Ge-rard Lowe comes." A

flush heightened the roses of her cheeks as she said this, and her eyelids drooped a little, which showed her long curved lashes to advantage.

"But the pappas," said Gerard hurriedly, "is he already from home?"

"It is not early," cried Neroula, laughing, and showing her white teeth again. "Our guest was tired, and we would not make any noise to awaken him, so he has slept long. The pappas is in the church," she added, suddenly remembering the question, "the pappas and Irene. Ah, there they are! they have just come out, and are standing in the porch."

"There appears to have been no one else in the church this morning but themselves Do not the villagers go regularly?"

"There are so few to go, Effendi," answered Neroula, waving off the pigeons, who were again returning to see if by any good chance more food was awaiting them. "You see, the men are all away, except the very old, and the women have to do all the work, besides minding the children and the sick."

Gerard had not heard the latter part of her remarks, for his eyes, arrested by the appearance of Irene and her father, fixed their intense gaze upon the two solemn but pathetic figures of the priest and his daughter, who, with their hands

clasped in each other's, seemed to be absorbed in earnest converse.

"Will you not come in, Effendi? I am about to spread the breakfast," asked Neroula softly.

But Gerard had already moved away, and was proffering his morning greetings to the pappas and his elder daughter.

"Child," said the pappas gravely, as, after his guest was seated, he drew his own stool to the table, "child, this is no holiday, there is no dancing now in the market-places to the sound of the pipe, and the song of joy is heard no more. Our country is shedding tears of blood. Why, then, hast thou put on thy gay raiment, Neroula?"

"To show honour to the Effendi under our roof, father."

"Put back thy gauds into their hiding-place until a more fitting season, Neroula. When our hearts are ready to laugh and cry out in excess of gladness for our delivered country, then canst thou deck thyself to thy soul's content. On that day we will all rejoice and sing our songs of gladness together. Hide away thy glittering coins, child, they are a reproach and a grief to me. Hide them away, I repeat, lest I take them from thee to buy bread for our soldiers. I repent me of the weakness that allowed thee to

keep them, when thy sister gave up hers of her own free will. Hide them away, Neroula, they shame us with their glitter!"

The priest spoke sternly, although there was a touch of sorrow in his voice; but his brows were knit, and he raised his hands with a gesture of impatience.

When Neroula had finished placing upon the table a similar repast to that of the preceding evening, she withdrew to obey her father's injunctions.

Pappas Zacharias followed the retreating figure with his eyes.

"That poor child, Effendi, was not born for poverty and gloom. She is like a sunbeam that can only dance under a clear sky. Is it a fault of hers that she cannot feel with us? If we could imprison a sunbeam, would it not long to escape? She sometimes, alas, seems to resent the universal sadness, as though her country was but as a cruel stepmother, who had no maternal claim upon her love, and from whose arms she would gladly flee—as many Greeks have often done in these latter centuries, and built up homes and fortunes in other lands. It is not the freedom of Greece, but the land of the stranger that she hankers after. It is my poor little Neroula, Effendi, that I would especially

commit to your protection as to that of a brother, if I go to this campaign—and do not return."

"Have you revealed our plans to your elder daughter, pappas?"

"I have. I withhold nothing from Irene."

"And she is willing to go for a time to Tenos with her sister?"

"She is willing. Irene is a worthy daughter of Greece."

There was a long pause, during which Spyridon, who had been looking after the asses, entered, but seeing the grave looks of the priest and his guest, made his salaam in silence, and taking a piece of *bobota*, or maize bread, from the table, sat himself down cross-legged upon the floor at a respectful distance to make his breakfast.

"I have left it to Irene to tell her sister," resumed the priest; "she will do it with tenderness and judgment, whilst I might blunder in the telling, and hurt the poor child more than need be. Since last night it seems to me that I have almost cast away the priest and the father, in my impatience to grasp a sword, and to go forth to slay—yes, to slay the oppressors of my people. God forgive me if this be but a delusion of the evil one, but the words of Rhegas are burning in my ears, and there is a fierce

longing in my heart to slay—to slay the enemy that has trodden us under foot so long—so long!" The priest clenched his hands, and his eyes gleamed with a strange light—wandering round the room as if they were seeking a foe lurking in every corner. Suddenly the angry glare was arrested. His eyes had lighted upon the faded ikon of his tutelary saint, upon which the feeble ray of the lamp was flickering.

The priest crossed himself.

"Or be slain," he added in a low voice.

The string of amber beads was again in his fingers.

"Pappas," said Gerard, anxious to divert the subject for a while, "I am inclined to think that there is really some kind of virtue in those particular beads of yours, if in none others. I had them in my hands last evening, as you may remember, and felt, or fancied that I felt, a strange tingling in every finger, and not merely whilst they were in contact with my hands, but afterwards during the night, when, as I was lying awake, there seemed to be still the same conscious thrill as when I was holding them. Surely they have some electric force within them."

"None that I know of; but the beads, as I told you, were blessed by the holy martyr—the patriarch Gregory."

Gerard had gained his point. The excited feelings of the man were subdued into the restraint of the priest.

"Will you come with me and see my church?" said the pappas gently, "we can talk by the way. Friend Spyridon, will you overhaul my old comrade there?" pointing to his gun, "I fear that it is not in very good working order."

This employment, being more congenial to Spyridon than looking over a dilapidated old church, it was joyfully accepted. The door into the daughters' room was ajar as they passed out, and Gerard caught a momentary glimpse of Irene bending over her sister, with a caressing arm laid upon her shoulder. Neroula was sitting upon a chest, with bared head, whence descended two long plaits of dark hair, whilst cast aside upon the floor lay her veil and embroidered apron, whilst the rows of sequins and the other silver ornaments, called *armata* by the Greek women, lay in her lap, and she was weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER V

THE PRIEST OF ST. ELIAS IS WON

"I BETRAYED my lower nature to you a while since," said Pappas Zacharias in a subdued voice, as he led the way, "and it seemed to me that I was deservedly rebuked of the Lord, through the ikon of his servant Elias, who is the patron saint of my church. The words of the blessed David, that 'a man of blood shall not live out half his days,' came to me there and then. This is not a war of vengeance, or of greed, it is a righteous war, its purpose is to set free the ark of God. If prayer alone could achieve the victory, I and my brethren would lie prostrate, with tears of supplication, day and night. O God, have we not prayed—have we not prayed? But your words, that bade me leave the service of the altar and gird on the sword, awoke the evil within me. Your words were the utterances of a free man, and mine was

the response of a slave, who, when he is roused, is cruel — unless restrained by the spirit of God!"

Gerard took the priest by the hand. "Pappas," he said tenderly, "accuse not yourself; I have no fear that you will ever disgrace the stole which will give place for a while to the soldier's coat; but there are others who might do so again, as they have done so already, when the restraining influence of discipline is wanting; discipline, which, whilst it tends to assure victory, makes men use their victory temperately. We want you because you have the gifts that qualify for a soldier. I have seen men at Meteora and the Holy Mount whom it is better to leave in their cells to pray for the success of their brethren's arms, than to put weapons in their hands. Others whom I have taken from their monasteries and enrolled, would, in my opinion, have committed mortal sin by remaining in inaction at such a time of their country's need— such an one is yourself."

Pappas Zacharias was yet not wholly convinced. He still doubted whether the claims of the Church to his entire service were not identical with those of his country at large. His apparent conviction that by nature he was not a man of peace but a man of war, came to him as

he pushed back the wooden portal of the church of St. Elias as a possible suggestion of Satan after all. The pastor was about to flee from his charge, and following his own inclinations, was going to leave a weak and scattered flock without a shepherd, to be the prey of the first hungry wolf that came by. Was it not his duty to abide rather where he was, and if called upon, to die on the floor of his church, to stand before his flock like a faithful shepherd, and pour out his blood in its defence? These thoughts again welled upwards as he stood upon its threshold. The young, ardent, and impulsive Englishman in a few hours had acquired great power over him; he had already pledged himself to join the disciplined forces shortly to be enrolled, and he had agreed to send his daughters to Tenos. All seemed to have been finally arranged between Gerard Lowe and himself, and yet, at the sight of the bald and wretched temple in which he had ministered for sixteen miserable years, he wavered.

There is something either pathetic or repulsive in the appearance of a neglected church; which feeling is to predominate depending on the mind of the onlooker. The first sentiment was the only one present with the priest, whose sense of Art, and the fitness and harmony of

matters in connection with it were wholly undeveloped. He looked at Gerard with saddened eyes, and pointed to the defaced and time-worn screen of the sanctuary, upon which the originally rude pictures, now almost half demolished, had a ghastly if not a grotesque effect. The pappas met with no sympathetic response to his appeal.

"Can you hesitate one moment?" cried Gerard with a lively expression of disgust. "To call such a sty as this sacred, is an insult to religion; for this, if for no other reason, a priest, like yourself, in his own person should seek to build up the holy places—and there is only one way."

He turned away and with steps quickened by indignation strode from the porch.

When the pappas joined him, he said a low voice, "The struggle is over, and you have prevailed."

CHAPTER VI

SPYRIDON DEPARTS WITH THE ASSES

A FEW days after, Spyridon departed from the village with the two donkeys before daybreak.

His ostensible mission was to bring back a supply of food, of which the household was greatly in need. But besides filling the panniers of his asses, Spyridon was intrusted with other transactions of a more responsible character. He was to meet a messenger, who would also attend the markets, whither he, too, was going, ostensibly to buy food, but who was really on his way to Western Europe in behalf of a loan to be negotiated, and upon other secret matters. Gerard took this opportunity for intrusting his letter to Philip Warrenne containing the piece of embroidery to Spyridon's care, who was to deliver it into the hands of the messenger above alluded to. Gerard Lowe undid this packet before he could consent to part with it, merely,

it appeared, to look again upon that little bit of choice needlework. Holding it tenderly in his hands in his bedroom when none was by, he examined with curious diligence every waving line, following up the delicate interwoven complexity of each curve, until he was worked up into a strange admiration of this piece of feminine handiwork, for he actually raised it to his lips and kissed it.

With the absence of Spyridon, the characters of the two men seemed suddenly to change. The priest, having now thoroughly made up his mind, became more cheerful and more disposed for conversation, whilst Gerard, on the other hand, lapsed into a greater taciturnity.

With this apparent alteration in temperament there was a corresponding change in demeanour. Whereas Gerard had succumbed hitherto to the usual treatment of women in Greek households of this class, he now began to address some remarks to the two daughters whenever he could find occasion, but ever with a studied and grave courtesy.

"While Spyridon is absent, pappas," he said, upon the evening of the ex-klepht's departure, it will be more in accordance with my feeling, and our customs at home, if you will allow your daughters to partake of our meals. I did not

venture to propose it when Spyridon was here. You see Spyridon is in all things my companion and equal. He would never have brooked any other treatment from one who, like myself, has never been a captain of klephts, and he would have greatly resented it, like a true pallikar, had I even hinted that he should wait upon himself whilst women were present to wait upon him. With me it is different."

The pappas raised his eyebrows with a curious smile.

"As you wish, Effendi; but when Spyridon returns, which will, I suppose, be within five or six days hence——"

"We shall go on our way forthwith."

"Will you not wait until my own arrangements are completed?"

"No, time presses, and every hour that I stay here now is wasted. I shall take Spyridon to Nauplia with me, and shall immediately provide that a vessel be in readiness to fetch your daughters and the other women, to carry them to Tenos. When they are in a place of safety, I will advertise you to follow with such recruits as you can muster."

It was not an easy matter to prevail upon the girls to sit at the same table with the pappas and his guest. Irene, however, when she saw that

Gerard Lowe remained standing, and upon receiving a sign from her father that he sanctioned the arrangement, seated herself with a quiet dignity, which did not escape the Englishman's notice, whilst Neroula fidgetted and coquetted, with many a glance from eyes whence all traces of tears were gone, and laughing as if what the stranger was asking was the oddest request that could possibly be made. At a second command from the priest she at length took her place, obeying what sounded like a reprimand. "Peace, peace, Neroula, it is the Effendi's wish." The pappas himself seemed more wearied than otherwise by this unusual feminine element thus added to the repast, an addition which in no wise, in his own case, seemed to be provocative of appetite or discourse. The situation was unwonted, and as there was no attendant to serve, it became the cause of some confusion and delay. To Neroula it seemed to be peculiarly irksome, and taking the first opportunity that occurred, she rose and stole quietly away.

"Irene," said the priest, "you have doubtless told the child that Kyr Gerard Lowe advises your retirement to Tenos for a while. He thinks that thy father can better serve the cause by enrolling himself under the great French general, who is here to help us, and to show us how to

fight our battles. All this thou knowest. I told it to thee this morning when thou showedst thyself to be a true daughter of Greece. I heard thee with no small pride, Irene, when thou besoughtest me to let thee go with me to the field, but I could not accept such a sacrifice. Other women have done it, thou saidst; yea, truly, other women have done it, and I honour their patriotism and devotion, but I recoil from my daughters imitating them, except in the direst extremity, the direst extremity. At the sanctuary in Tenos thy prayers can go up daily in supplication for thy country in her peril, and for her sons who are fighting for her deliverance. Leave sword and gun to men; the woman's weapons are her prayers."

Gerard looked at Irene. A faint glow was flushing her pale cheeks, her clear grey eyes were dilated, and her hands that were resting on the table were tightly clasped the one within the other.

"Other women have done so, father, and have not lost their womanhood thereby."

The words came from her slowly and distinctly, but with something of repression in their tone, as if all passion was being firmly reined in.

"The child will require you. Poor little Neroula would pine away in the gloom of Evangelistria, without you by her side."

"If Mademoiselle Irene would so honour us," cried Gerard, "she could aid the cause whilst at Tenos by using her skill with the needle in making a banner for our regiment, as the ladies of Paris have done for Favier's corps. That would be work not unseemly for a maiden of Greece."

"Have the French women made a flag for their countrymen who come to fight for Greece?" asked Irene with kindling eyes.

"So I hear; and I am told that it is very beautiful, and I also hear that it is to be unfolded when the regular corps is ready to commence operations. Ought we not also to have one? Shall we not fight well under a banner made by Mademoiselle Irene, and blessed by the pappas of St. Elias, her father?"

"I will work one for you, Effendi, I will work one for the great captain who has come so far to do battle for us."

"Ah, Mademoiselle Irene, I shall be no captain, either great or small. It is only as a simple soldier that I shall fight in the armies of Greece. As yet I am not even that simple soldier, for I have to learn my drill side by side with the ploughmen of her fields." A shade of disappointment passed over her face.

"I will make it, then, for the troop in which

you serve. It will be doing something, very little, but still something," she said sadly.

"A flag worked by such hands, under such aspirations, must needs precede a victory," said Gerard in a low voice.

A still deeper glow animated her countenance. "Be it so, for victory." As she spoke she held out her hand.

"A pledge—of victory," answered Gerard, and lightly touched the extended fingers.

CHAPTER VII

GERARD LOWE MAKES STUDIES FOR "ATHENE"

ARTISTS are addicted to looking upon the Beautiful from the standpoint of Art, and are therefore apt to regard all its manifestations as subjects.

As a subject for an artist's pencil, the elder daughter of Pappas Zacharias was all that could be desired. It had been a disappointment to Gerard Lowe, on his first arrival in Greece, to find so little beauty in a land in which he expected to find continually *replicas* of his classic models. Irene Notala was the first woman who approached his Greek ideal. Although he wished that her costume had more flowing lines in it, yet this fact, that left something to be desired, only set him to imagine how transcendently majestic the beauty of her form would come out if she were draped as a Caryatid. Under this pretext of "art," he allowed his eyes to rest upon her whenever they could do so without

attracting observation. All the admiration which he openly acknowledged to himself as feeling, he nevertheless averred to be merely that of a student; and, clothed with this fiction, he allowed his thoughts to dwell upon the priest's elder daughter more than was judicious, considering that the purpose for which he had come to Greece was not to study her sculptures, nor to seek for subjects. Finding himself alone on the same day on which the banner had been promised, he drew forth some paper and strove for the first time to do something more than he had hitherto done, and to seek to reproduce the expression of exalted abstraction that was above all prominent in Irene's face when she offered him her hand, and when he had barely touched it, as if she had indeed been the personification of the goddess, and he her worshipper. After a few rapid but strongly defined lines he held it from him, and considered it attentively.

"Ah!" he said half aloud, "this might be worked out for a design of Athene triumphant, but the glory of Irene's face, after all, is its pathos—it is the face of 'Athene sad'—Athene, as one can imagine her now, grieving over the ruin and misery of her beloved city."

As he again recalled a favourite image of his own, Gerard turned the paper, and upon the

other side reproduced the same features to which a moment before he had given a look of triumphant heroism, but which now, under his apt and willing fingers, bore rather the aspect of a proud but chastened and loving woman. It was no longer a design for the face of a goddess, but the portrait of Irene. Gerard regarded it, imperfect sketch though it was, with a smile of supreme content.

"Effendi, we are going this morning to the spring to wash, and my sister wishes to know if the Effendi has anything that we can do for him."

Gerard looked up straight into the eyes of Neroula with blank dismay, for it was she, who, coming suddenly before him, uttered those dreadful words. Those bright eyes of the handsome girl, which, with the healthy complexion and brilliant colouring of the race, were inherited from an Albanian mother, were looking at him, and a smile of something like amusement at the stern gravity with which he heard the above question, flitted over her lips. No Homeric scene, or the possible picturesqueness of this washing-day was conjured up by her words. Nausicaa and her maidens were forgotten in this sudden announcement—that Irene, doubtless with bared feet, was at this moment cleansing the family linen at a pool.

His eyes fell upon the fustanella that he was wearing—that it stood in need of soap and water was but too evident. To what a grotesque situation had he brought himself—he, with his wealth and advantages! What was he doing here in this hut where there were none of the amenities of life? Sudden shiftings of temper are not infrequent in impulsive natures, and whereas, only a very short time ago, he was almost in a divinely epic mood, when any tragic possibility seemed very possible indeed, he was now encouraging a vein of thought in which every poetical excitation appeared foolish.

"Would that Spyridon were back," he exclaimed impatiently. "Once away from this stagnant hole, and with Favier again, I shall be all right. This forced inaction is making an idiot of me!"

It was in this frame of mind that Gerard Lowe stepped over the threshold of the priest's house. With quick and hasty steps he plunged into the thicket towards the place where he had thrown himself down upon the evening of his arrival and began to ascend a path, which, he thought, must lead in the direction of the old fort of Phyle—whence he hoped to get a view of the sacred city in the distance, and drink

anew of the charm which the mere sight of Athens always brought to him.

Gradually, the swiftness of his pace abated. The beauty and the grandeur of nature exercised their usually soothing effects. Tall oleanders, with a wealth of crimson blossoms, grew so thickly on either side, that they bent over and hid the footway, obliging him to part them with both hands. Everywhere up the ravine there was luxuriance and verdure. No other sounds met his ears but the hum of insect life, no other forms but those of tiny and gorgeous butterflies or moths and shiny beetles. Now and then this was varied by the rustle of a huge yellow tortoise, or a harmless snake wriggling over the dry leaves at his feet; and once or twice he startled a small bird which was drinking or bathing itself in one of the many tiny trickling rills that showed like silver threads as they rippled from the heights, making here and there small pools whenever they found level ground. Gerard was not in so great a hurry as when he started, to reach some elevation wherefrom he could behold Athens. The beauty around him was making itself felt, and the fibres of his soul relaxed into something more in unison with the scene. He had left the priest's cottage with a feeling of repulsion that can hardly be accounted for, and with an irrita-

bility that was certainly not justifiable, and which would greatly have perplexed his kind host. Now, in these tangled wilds the very image which he seemed desirous to flee, again asserted its predominancy, and the priest's daughter rose to his mind in all the power of her untaught refinement. Once again carried back into the maze of contending feelings that the presence of Irene had that morning raised within him, he forgot to notice the track that he had been following, and soon found himself where there was no trace of any footpath. He had gone some distance before he realized that he had wandered widely away from any mule way, and was now in the thick wood. Pausing a moment to consider in what direction the village must be situated, he turned sharply round, and pushing through the drooping boughs of the pines, he slowly and carefully considered every footstep which he ought to retrace. What was his surprise when at an unexpected opening, he beheld at no great distance below, a female figure sitting upon a projection of rock, and reading. The strangeness of such an apparition, when he thought that he was far from any human abode, caused at first a start of surprise, to be followed by a still more lively feeling of amazement, when he saw in the form before him, the Irene whom he had just been

associating with the romantic scene around. Irene here—at a place that he supposed to be miles away from the village—here alone—and reading! As he stood still, and almost rooted to the spot, the wonder that possessed him at first gradually abated as the conviction dawned upon him that, going along a circuitous path that was strange to him, he had probably at no time left the priest's home at any great distance behind.

Gerard had just made one step backward with the intention of withdrawing, before, by a turn of her head, his presence might be discovered, when, at the same moment, Irene rose to her feet with uplifted arms and outspread palms. The rich tones of her voice were borne to him where he stood, falling upon his ear in a kind of metrical cadence. Here was a new situation. Irene, whom he had suspected to be almost entirely unlettered, as the majority of Greek girls of her class were at that time, not only knew how to read, but, to judge by the measured sounds, and her attitude, was also capable of declaiming in verse, with all the force and feeling that poetry demands and inspires. Was it possible that she could understand the old tragedians, or was she merely solacing herself with some popular ballad? As these surmises passed rapidly through his mind, she paused, her hands fell to her side, and

as she stooped to pick up the paper or book that she had dropped, she turned.

As it was too late to retire, concealment being no longer possible, Gerard showed that he was aware of her presence, and descended the slope. If, for the moment she had been startled at his sudden appearance, there was no sign of discomposure when he reached her. Only a slight flush over cheek and brow, which Gerard in no way took to himself, but attributed entirely to the merit of the poet whose verses she had lately been reciting. He had seen enough of the pappas' daughter to know how free she was from all the little flutterings and perturbations to which even civilized women are sometimes addicted. In this respect she was queenly.

"I came here to rest," she said quietly, as she folded together some loose sheets of paper.

"And my coming interrupted your reading? I am very sorry."

"I was not reading, I was repeating a poem which I thought I knew, but there were some lines unremembered that obliged me to refer to my copy of it."

"Is it any scene from the grand old dramas?" asked Gerard, glancing at the papers in her hand.

"No. It is our great war song, the 'trumpet

call' of the martyred patriot, Rhegas of Velustino."

The girl spoke rapidly, and not according to her wont, whilst her eyes filled with sudden tears.

"You know it, Effendi, you know it! you are a Philhellene, and therefore you ought to know it."

"Yes, I know it," answered Gerard softly, hushed into reticence by the girl's strange vehemence.

"I never part with these leaves, I carry them always about with me—night and day—night and day."

"Are all the poems of Rhegas there?"

"Yes,—my father had them in one book, but three years ago he thought it better to give it into other keeping—before he did so, I copied them all."

So Irene could not only read but could write also.

"You are fond of reading, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, but we have no books. I have my Horologion—that is all—but perhaps some day I may have a few. I am always looking forward to 'some day.'"

"I suppose the pappas was your schoolmaster, Mademoiselle."

"Yes, my father taught me, and my sister

also. It was very good of him to take so much trouble." A look of deep tenderness passed over her face. "It was very good," she repeated, and her lip quivered.

"You have found me out," she said, after a pause, raising her eyes with a faint smile; "I do not often indulge myself in this way, but after our talk of this morning, I was obliged to come to this quiet spot and outpour myself. I dare not do so except very, very seldom, as it makes me so unhappy."

"Unhappy?"

"Yes, Effendi, unhappy, because I am only a woman, and may not go and fight for my country's freedom. When I think of this I am unhappy, and then my loom stands still, and I weep alone in the silence of the night."

"It is man's part to fight, and woman's to crown the victors."

"Ah! is it man's part to fight and die, and woman's to stand still and look on with wringing hands and breaking hearts?"

"We, who have come to help as brothers, have all sworn to achieve the freedom of Greece. We believe in a final victory—believe in it, too, Irene."

"To the strangers who leave their free and happy countries, as you have done, Effendi, to

help us in this struggle, we can never be too grateful."

"We shall have our reward. Did you not say, upon the first evening of my coming, that 'love' was to be my guerdon? In the love of a grateful people embodied in the two words then uttered, did you not also include—your own?"

Gerard said this in a pleading way, with a slight tremor in his voice, which from a man of the world to an ordinary English girl would have conveyed an impertinence, if not an insult. At the moment of its utterance Gerard leapt to the conclusion that the individual love of this high-souled and beautiful maiden would be of itself reward enough for every sacrifice.

"*Malista.*"

As Irene said that one word '*malista*' (certainly), she looked straight into Gerard's face. There was no heightened colour or tremor of lip or eyelid. Irene had never appeared so perfectly serene as when she uttered that single assenting word that fell with such clear distinctness on Gerard's ear—"*Malista.*"

He did not speak directly.

"Do you doubt me, Effendi?"

"Do not call me 'Effendi,' Irene."

"What, then, am I to call you?"

"Gerard."

She looked at him again in bewilderment, and shrugged her shoulders.

"'Effendi,'" she said gravely, "is a Turkish word, and it will go out in time—that is to say, when we are free; but we are used to it now, and it comes more natural to me than to say Kyr—Ge-rard—Lowe, which is difficult for me to pronounce."

Turning a few paces to the left, and followed by Gerard, who felt himself distinctly snubbed, they came at once upon a level ridge, where a tiny lake, that received the continual contributions of one of the "silver threads" before alluded to, gleamed in the sunlight. Spread upon the stones around was the not very abundant household wash that was now in process of being gathered up and folded by Neroula and a sturdy peasant woman, whose breadth of shoulders and hips seemed not to have suffered through any deficiency of food.

A merry peal of laughter from Neroula greeted them, as she threw down an armful of clothes and ran towards Gerard and her sister. "Ah, Effendi, you have been looking for us, then, and have come to see the washing, after all!"

The gaiety of Neroula, and her allusion to his rejection of their laundry for himself, was in

no wise in accordance with Gerard's present mood, who, self-convicted of unpremeditated insolence, was suffering from a deserved rebuke.

"The pappas will have been anxious at your absence, Effendi; if you take that path," and Irene pointed out one as she spoke, "you will see the church before you in a few minutes."

CHAPTER VIII

A GREEN SPRIG OF THE ALMOND TREE

PAPPAS ZACHARIAS had certainly felt some little anxiety at the prolonged absence of his guest. Although no immediate risk was apparently imminent, yet it was not unlikely that such might arise at any moment. Gerard Lowe's goings and comings as the bearer of moneys and despatches to the revolted Greeks must already be suspected. The possession of his person would even offer a temptation to those lawless men among the Greeks themselves, who, having risen against the Porte for freedom's sake, had now fallen under a second disaffection, and were in revolt against the provisional Greek government.

When Gerard that night regained the solitude of his room, he reviewed his meeting with Irene, and came to a conclusion that was satisfactory to himself in regard to it. No, the subsequent

demeanour of the girl showed that she had in no way apprehended any covert approach to love-making. He felt that he had made a great mistake, but was glad that Irene had not understood him. No doubt she thought that a proverbially proud Englishman disliked the customary "Effendi." That might have occurred to her before, as she had several times addressed him as Kyr—Ge-rard, much to the amusement of Neroula. She had showed no anger when he spoke to her by her name—Irene, and probably she attached no meaning to his request that she would call him Gerard. But yet, with what cold pride had she given him his dismissal. Had it not been for the appearance of Neroula he would have asked her in what way he had offended.

"That girl's eyes are ever upon me," mused Gerard. "Woman's wit is lynx-eyed. May it not be that she can read what my lips will never utter, which it would indeed be madness to utter?"

Nevertheless, following upon this negation, Gerard in a remarkably short time drifted into a train of thought that was the very opposite to that conclusion. He now began to picture to himself a possible future, when a freed Greece would incline him to return to his own country and to those whom he loved there; and in this

picture that now passed before his eyes with all the rose tints of imagination colouring it, he saw the daughter of the humble priest of St. Elias—the Irene' who had won the first love of his heart—carried to England as his bride.

Yet it was also possible that the girl did not love him after all—and in a moment the whole fabric of his dream fell away.

Meanwhile, Spyridon would be back before long in any case, and the letters and messages that he would bring with him from the brotherhood, and from Favier, would determine his movements.

The interim was becoming irksome to him. He had secured the co-operation of the stalwart priest, but, personally, that was an equivocal gain if he had lost his heart to the priest's daughter, and was not beloved by her in return. Should that last surmise become a truth, not even that could forbid his cherishing a memory that would ever fire him to dare all and everything for the salvation of her country. If they ever met again, it would not be until that was accomplished, when that face—eloquent in gratitude, and lighted up with holy joy—would be a fitting reward for every unselfish sacrifice.

When high principles govern a life, it is strange that any trivial wants of our nature should find

an entrance therein. In the midst of a camp with dangers on every side, Gerard would have borne with equanimity the daily privations that now vexed him sorely; but the total absence of any of the accessories of refined living, when conjoined to the monotony of inaction and emphasized by an affection, which to foster at such a time seemed in his more prosaic moments to be little else than folly, depressed him more and more.

In such a mood he cast himself upon his rug on the night of his meeting Irene in the wood. As he raised his hand to the cushion to adjust it to a more convenient position for his weary head, his fingers came across something that was lying upon it. "A bough of green leaves," he murmured, "to keep away insects, I suppose; useful if effective, but it may prove more disagreeable to me than to them," expecting that it might be some shrub of a pungent rather than an odoriferous smell. Raising his head to look at it, and seeing that it was nothing more than a green sprig of the almond tree, and, therefore, without any perfume, either pleasant or otherwise, he threw it on one side.

"To-morrow, probably, Spyridon will be back, and the next day we will take our departure." He had said words to the same effect fifty times

in the last two days. Early on the morrow, and before he was fairly roused, Pappas Zacharias came to him with gloomy brows. "Effendi, here is the old tale again; our men are all returning for the harvest. They had a slight skirmish with the enemy somewhere, and then dispersed, thinking that they had done enough for one time. This is the fruit of months of exhortation. I have been among them, and spoken severely to them as they came straggling into the village by twos and threes at a time, but to no purpose. I asked them how they could hope that the scanty harvest would be blessed to their wives and children when gathered in by hands that had deserted their standards. Vain words! They heard me sullenly, and went on their way. 'We have fought,' they said, 'and have done our share, and have left some of our comrades and neighbours behind, who will never wave sickles more; for Charon has reaped them for himself. 'Twould be hard if none of us could be found to light some yellow candles for them in St. Elias Church, where they were baptized.' They thought that their pappas was hard, and glowered at me."

Gerard sprang to his feet. "See how useless it is," he cried, "to expect anything from such recruits. Naturally enough, each man feels like

an independent worker, free to join and free to disperse, brave enough in the main, but wayward as children, and prone to sudden panics. Do not lose your influence over them, pappas, by undue severity at this crisis. Let us both go and help them to get in the harvest, help them with cheerful words as well as with our hands. I will put off my journey for a while, and Spyridon on his return will gladly give us his aid. When all is garnered in, we will then enlist them as paid troops. As priest, you can speak of the holiness of the cause, but impress it upon them that it is as regulars, who will receive regular pay, that we demand their services. Above all, instruct them concerning that friendly brotherhood which is about to take upon itself the duty of providing for the widows and orphans of those that fall. Who can wonder at these poor fellows who, having ploughed their fields, and sown their seedcorn, and then leaving all that was dear to them to go to fight the battles of their country, should be drawn back to their homes as by a magnet after a transient success or a partial repulse? Let us go to them at once."

These suggestions, immediately acted upon, were almost magical in their effects. The men, who had slunk away with lack-lustre eyes, al-

though with some shame at their hearts, at the stern rebukes of their pappas, lifted up their heads and smote their hands together with joy at the inspiring words of the stranger. Never before in that place had any harvest been pushed forward with so much energy. Whilst some cut the corn, others laid down the threshing floors, and the two oxen, who had grown old in the service, were fetched from a village at some little distance away to tread out the ears. The produce was poor enough, large tracts having been left unsown, as the pappas had told Gerard upon the evening of his arrival; but of this scanty produce nothing was lost by delay. There was no flagging even from fatigue, such a spirit of bright endurance had been imparted by Gerard's helpful words and presence among them.

But where was Spyridon? It was now six days over the time when, if all things had gone well with him, he could have been back. It was the evening of the sixth day, and still the laden asses and their driver were not to be seen the whole length of the pass. Gerard and the priest had gone to an eminence whence they could command a long look down the circuitous mule path, but they saw no sign of man or beast, and no wonder that they both wore faces of anxiety. Spyridon was to be the bearer of

moneys as well as of letters. There were dissensions and civil war among the insurgents, and brigandage had appeared again in the Morea. Spyridon was a marked man, and it was known that he had entered the service of an English philhellene, who was presumably very wealthy. To waylay him and to rob the pack-asses, might very likely present itself to the minds of desperate men. Yet two more days, and no Spyridon.

"I shall tarry until to-morrow evening, pappas," said Gerard, on the night of the eighth day since the ex-klepht had been looked for back, "and then I shall start for Athens alone. One of the villagers must go with me as a guide up to where the paths diverge, so that I do not lose time by taking the wrong one. By quick walking I shall reach Athens before the sun is high. I shall hope to advertise you of all that is going on, and to send you further instructions in less than a week from this time."

Having definitely resolved upon this course, the weight of suspense was in some measure lifted.

The episode of the harvesting had had a healthy influence upon his mind. There was now, however, the leave-taking to go through. That would be a trial indeed. Gerard glanced

round his bare room, that since Spyridon had left seemed more forlorn than ever. Yes, there it was again. Every night a fresh sprig of the almond tree was laid athwart his pillow. He had always tossed it away. It was some absurd remedy, believed in by the people of that part, for keeping away noxious influences, he thought, and worth no more consideration than such remedies usually deserve. But this was his last night there, and on last nights the homeliest things speak with some degree of pathos to him who is about to shoulder his pack on the morrow and be gone.

He held it, therefore, in his hand for some seconds and looked at it. "It looks churlish to fling it away continually—it might have been plucked by Irene herself, and she too might have placed it there." A pang of regret shot through him. Throughout the harvesting they had scarcely exchanged a word. He had seen her gliding to and fro quietly and unweariedly, taking the lead among the women, and directing their labours with never-failing tact and sweet persuasiveness. Neroula had been always the most prominent figure, flitting about like a bird, beaming most winning smiles all around, as if there were nothing in this harvest that marked it out as anything very solemn or different from

preceding ones. With her arms full of ears to be carried to the threshing floor, she made a lovely picture, although the amount of work that she achieved was more in the show than the reality.

But Irene's face, how sadly thoughtful it was!

Whenever she had occasion to address him now, it was always as "Kyr Gerard Lowe," and she was evidently striving to perfect herself in the pronunciation. From any other lips this careful but futile attempt would have provoked a good-humoured smile, but from her mouth it had a pathetic meaning that pained him. How proud and how incomprehensible was this Greek girl! He had dared to call her "Irene," and she was in no whit offended. He had asked her to address him by his own Christian name, and she had at once entrenched herself within a chilling formality that was contrary to her nature. They did not and could not understand each other—there was the difference of race and character that raised an insurmountable barrier between them. Gerard sighed, and then stowed away the green twigs carefully in one of the pouches of his belt.

CHAPTER IX

A ROSE GARDEN IN SHEEN

THE glass doors of a drawing-room, more remarkable for elegance and taste in its design than for anything imposing in its proportions, were standing wide open on a fair June evening, and let in a flood of perfume from the garden beyond.

This garden was so exclusively devoted to the cultivation of roses, that it might almost have claimed the appellation which the Persian poet has immortalized in his Gulistan.

Roses clustering round pillars, roses trained over archways, old-fashioned roses, and new-fashioned roses, roses with a name, and roses without a name, roses that had gained the first prize at the great rose show just initiated, and humble little roses that would never have the temerity to show themselves at any exhibition whatsoever, but that had a sweet smell of their

own, and trusted that that would find them out —all were here in the height of their perfection.

For Mr. Philip Warrenne, a princely merchant of the old-fashioned sort, who was the owner of the place, had just this one hobby, and spent, as people said, a small fortune in this rose garden of his, which was situated somewhere between Richmond and pleasant Sheen, but nearer to the latter. Sheen at that time bore very little resemblance to the Sheen of to-day, which is at the best but a superior Cockney suburb in comparison. The houses were few and far between, and were picturesquely old-fashioned; and Mr. Warrenne, some years before our story opens, had been able to secure the most picturesque of them all. The brother of his future wife had found it for him in one of his sketching rambles, he being an art student at the time, and it was to Frank Harbord alone that he was indebted for all those additions and suggestions that had so considerably increased its attractiveness as a home.

Mr. Philip Warrenne had at first demurred at the low elevation of the rooms, for he was a tall, large man, and his views of life and its surroundings were also large. Nothing narrow or cramped could take up a permanent residence in the broad breast of one of the most generous,

as well as one of the richest merchants in the London city of that day. As political feeling, however, ran somewhat stronger then than now, there were some limits to his forbearance, and it cost him a great effort to admit that to belong to the Whig party did not necessarily imply duplicity or treachery. He had to make some concessions of this kind in behalf of the young man soon to become his brother-in-law, whom he considered to have lately developed ideas that were hardly consistent with good sound English morality. But although he utterly deprecated Frank Harbord's politics, he bowed to his authority whenever there was any question about art. The want of height in the rooms was therefore got over because of the deliciously carved woodwork in mantel-pieces and panelling.

Philip Warrenne's house became, in consequence, what any poet or artist would be well content to live in. It in no way resembled some of the houses built by millionaires in the present day—those massy red brick structures inclosed in miles of walls in the same style, that oppress the unhappy suburban districts in which they are reared. It contained no mighty stable, fit to accommodate half-a-dozen princes and their retinues. Philip Warrenne went and returned to and from the city daily on the box of the mail

coach, which was the only means of progression available for the public, and a very cheery and pleasant mode of travelling he found it, and more to his liking than any other. Three or four horses for riding or driving were sufficient for his own or his wife's needs or pleasures. Clara Harbord had all her brother's appreciation of elegance and simplicity conjoined, and when she became Mrs. Philip Warrenne, this quality, by the side of her husband's clear good sense and genial manners, made their home singularly attractive. They had none of those large gatherings, which are wearisome to hostess and guests alike, but their dinners were limited, after Horace's direction, to half-a-dozen people, where all was well chosen, from the company to the viands and wines placed before them, where discussion on politics or religious topics was carefully eschewed, and where each guest went away in a brighter frame of mind than when he came.

Mr. Philip Warrenne had just returned from the city, and was looking out upon his rose garden from the doors of that drawing-room. He held an open letter in his hand, and was on the point of stepping out to seek for his wife, when he seemed to be suddenly arrested by the beauty of the scene before him, and by the sudden vision of a fair woman, who was absorbed in filling a basket at

her feet with the rich produce of the said rose garden, and, her back being turned to the open door, had not as yet been aware of his presence. Mr. Warrenne had often seen this fair woman about the same hour lingering about the same part, and awaiting his coming, at least ever since the roses had begun to bloom. He generally subdued his feet to a tiptoe endeavour, and went very softly, on these occasions, for it was still a treat to him after five or six hours in the city, to attempt to surprise his young wife, and to see her fling down her flowers to bound to him with all the unrestrained freedom of frank girlhood, which no conventionalism had crippled or spoilt. To-day Mr. Warrenne was in an unwonted mood. He had a face of as grave an aspect as that which he usually wore in the city, and he did not hasten to her on tiptoe with a futile attempt to surprise her. His steps, on the contrary, were slow and deliberate. He had taken from his pocket the paper which he now held in his hand, and unfolding it, had glanced up and down its contents with knitted brows. As he was preparing to descend the few steps that led from the drawing-room doors into the garden, he stopped. The outlook awoke a current of feelings that were never long absent from his mind. Yes, he was a happy and a prosperous man—and why? If

this were a question that demanded an answer from himself, Mr. Warrenne must have given a very decided one upon the moment, for he closed his lips firmly, and sealed his conviction with a nod of affirmation. Crushing up the paper he held, he thrust it back into his pocket whence he had drawn it a few moments before.

"I shall not give Clara this dose until after dinner. It might excite her too much, as it is certainly not appetizing in the reading for any one who is in his or her sober senses—his, perhaps I ought only to say—for one cannot always depend upon womenkind. Poor Frank; and I really did like him very much."

At this moment the young wife turned a beaming face to her husband, who was going towards her.

"And I never heard you—Oh, mind the thorns, Philip. You see, I wanted some deep crimson rosebuds to wear to-night with my grey gown—and to think that I was thinking more of my rosebuds than of you—Ah mind, mind! they have the longest and sharpest thorns of any rose-tree in the garden."

But Philip's arm, disregarding the danger of thorns from roses, was already round her waist.

"Let us go in, Clara. You have only just time

to arrange your roses in your grey dress, a very important business."

"Ah, that is just like you, as if you were quite indifferent to my garments! but it is all pretence; you will not fail to look at me critically when I have donned my grey gown and rosebuds. But how grave you look!" and she lifted a hand to each of his shoulders, one hand being full of rosebuds.

"Grave? Well, I have some cause to look 'grave,' for see how close your bunch of thorny rosebuds is to my face. Oh, do not look so frightened, sweetheart—I am not hurt as yet."

As Philip Warrenne laughingly kissed his wife's crimsoned cheeks, the first bell rang.

CHAPTER X

MR. WARRENNE READS A LETTER

COFFEE was served, and they were alone; and Mr. Warrenne's equanimity being fully regained, he thought that there was no better time than the present for producing the letter, which, under a sudden impulse, he had hastily hidden away.

"It concerns Clara more than myself," he mused, "for she is very fond of this irresponsible brother of hers, and has been very anxious about him for a very long while."

Although Mr. Warrenne considered that the letter that he had that morning received from his brother-in-law contained much serious matter, and although he liked to keep serious matters outside his wife's ken, in this case it was not possible to do so. So although he had put his hand into the tail of his evening coat, the moment that they were alone, with the intention of producing it—he hesitated. "It was altogether such an un-

pleasant affair, and it cannot fail to worry her," he thought; but as his fingers were groping in the recesses of the said pocket, they came across a packet that had accompanied the letter, and with a true estimate of his wife's feminine instinct, he judged that to produce this would be a good preliminary, and might serve to soften the painful facts that the reading of the letter would disclose.

"My dear Philip, what are you fumbling after? I have been dying with curiosity for the last five minutes to know what you were about to unearth from that unhappy coat—what have you there?" and she stretched out her hands to catch a small roll of something soft, that her husband playfully tossed to her. Eastern embroideries were scarce in those days, and no specimen of the Greek woman's skill with the needle had ever before greeted Clara's eyes until this example, which, worked by the hands of the daughter of the priest of St. Elias, had been sent to her as a gift. As Mrs. Warrenne turned it over and over with fingers careful in their tender handling of it, the artist's sister recognized to the full its exceeding beauty.

"It is all handwork, and both sides are alike."

"Of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for them that take the spoil," cried Philip, laughing.

Clara let fall the broidery. "What do you mean, Philip; where did it come from?"

"What was there in my rather inapt quotation to send all the colour from your cheeks? It is pretty enough, is it not, to warrant such an allusion?"

"It is very beautiful, but how did you come by it? You did not buy it, I think."

"No, I did not buy it; it was sent to you through me."

"Then you have heard of Frank; you have had a letter from dear, dear Frank!"

"Yes, I have had a letter from dear, dear Frank."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"Oh! do not tease. Is he well? Is he coming home soon? Is he—but give me his letter, Philip, and then I shall see for myself."

"The letter is addressed to me, wifie, but I will read it to you myself. You must prepare yourself for the worst."

"For the worst—for the worst? He is dying, then."

"No, no, no, no! only he has got into an awful scrape; but if you will promise not to interrupt, I will read it straight through from beginning to end, and then I think you will say

that he has made a great fool of himself. Nay, do not say a word until you hear what he has to say, darling. You will not, will you?"

"I will not."

"Then I will begin at once," and he opened and unfolded anew the letter written by Clara's brother, from the house of the pappas, on the morning after his arrival at St. Elias, which letter had been intrusted to Spyridon to deliver into certain trusty hands for safe convoy to London.

This letter, which Mr. Warrenne now read aloud to his wife, began by a brief review of the somewhat critical adventures which the writer, Frank Harbord, otherwise Gerard Lowe, had encountered in his progress through some parts of the Morea, in consequence of his having taken into his keeping as guide one Spyridon, a brave, strong fellow, and honest enough withal, who, having been a klepht, *anglicè* brigand, all his life among its rocky fastnesses, knew the passes well. In the position of guide, however, he was supposed to have been a harmless shepherd, who had been robbed of everything by the klephts, and who consequently held them in great detestation; for had they not taken away not only his milch-goat, and the milking-pail also, but even the lamb with the long silky fleece that he was going to sell at Easter! Frank

Harbord went on to describe with some pleasantry that, as "Spyridon" looked *the klepht* so thoroughly, he had upon many occasions found him rather a troublesome possession; his own life having been more than once imperilled thereby, and having only been saved by his apparently impervious imbecility. Turks always look upon idiots as being under the especial protection of Allah; and when, falling among Turkish outposts, they had been put under examination, though Spyridon was ever an object of suspicion, yet his master, who was wandering aimlessly in a foreign and disturbed country, of whose language he was ignorant, with no other object than to draw rocks badly, could be only one of that favoured class.

Following upon this were other lively details of manners and customs, but Gerard alluded only slightly to the insurrection, and the part he was playing in it, and glanced very succinctly upon his connections with General Favier. Passing rapidly over these subjects, he dwelt at greater length upon his present surroundings at the house of Pappas Zacharias, and as introductory to the gift of embroidery, entered into a figurative description of the two daughters, likening Irene to the calm waters of a crystal lake, whose depths he had not as yet sounded; but

Neroula to a rather shallow brook, whose waters loved to reflect the sunlight; and after those metaphors, saying in words more understandable, that Irene the elder had the face and form that would inspire the worst of painters, and that Neroula had the most aggravating black eyes. To this epistle the signature of "Gerard Lowe" was affixed, with a postscript, announcing that by this name would the writer be known henceforth, and asking as a favour that Mr. Warrenne would not identify that name in any wise as one with Frank Harbord.

Mr. Warrenne had finished its perusal.

"Well, now, Clara, what do you think of that? Is it not stark, staring madness from beginning to end?"

His wife did not answer, for the tears had come into her eyes.

"It's a great deal too bad," cried the husband angrily; and then, seeing the shadows gathering on her brows, added the moment after, in a coaxing tone, "but it might have been worse, it might have been worse, Clary, he is safe so far."

"So far, yes, so far; but it seems to me that as yet poor Frank has hardly entered into the fray."

"We must be thankful, anyhow, for this, so far; but to abjure his name, to make himself an alien

as it were. You see, he wishes to be called 'Gerard Lowe,' if you please."

Mrs. Warrenne made no reply, she was looking at the piece of embroidery.

"I call it nothing but a conspiracy on his part, a base conspiracy." Mr. Warrenne was waxing wrathful again, "and if the Porte gets hold of him, it will be quite justified in hanging him up there and then. Don't look at me like that, Clara, for that's the plain and solemn truth; he is playing the part of a miserable conspirator, and nothing short of it, going about and stirring up a foreign people to rebel against their lawful sovereign, a sovereign, too, with whom his own country has always been upon most excellent terms; actually aiding and abetting a rebellion! There's no other name for it, and it's simply abominable, and he'll have to take the consequences."

There was a long pause.

"Frank told me a good deal about it at different times," said the wife, looking up. "The people seem to have been horribly oppressed."

"I am much obliged to Frank—to Mr. Gerard Lowe, rather, for introducing such disagreeable topics to my wife. I suppose that other governments nearer home than Turkey would hardly

tolerate a set of bloodthirsty robbers in their midst."

"Oh! if you mean the klephts, Philip, they were not like common robbers; they fought for freedom, they were patriots."

Philip Warrenne regarded his wife's flushed cheeks steadily, and with a look more of amusement than irritation.

"Whew! We will not discuss robbers, whether common or uncommon—no, nor 'patriots' either, who, as a very good authority has observed, are all 'scoundrels'—just at this moment. Our immediate concern is with your brother, who is very dear to me, notwithstanding all his wrong-headedness. To go and mix himself up in any way in this wretched business was bad enough, but to go and take service as a private soldier under a Frenchman, in order to learn drill and discipline, is one of the most preposterous things, —the most preposterous thing—that I ever heard of! What can come of it but ruin, utter ruin! As an Englishman he has disgraced himself!" And Mr. Warrenne's hand came down with a heavy thump upon the open letter that lay on the table in front of him.

"Who is Captain or General Favier, Philip? I do not remember to have heard his name before."

"How should you have heard his name before? This Captain or General Favier is some petti-fogging officer, who, it seems, was with one Marmont, a general who fought in the wars of that consummate villain, Napoleon! If your brother must needs go on this mad game, why on earth did he not join himself to Hastings or Stanhope, who, although cracked on this point, were nevertheless respectable men, or, better still, he should have gone out with the mad lord."

"Did the letter come through the ordinary post?" asked Clara, gently, being desirous to avoid any discussions upon the merits or demerits of the poet, whose untimely death not long since, at Mesolonghi, had sent a thrill through Europe.

"No, it was brought me by a most mysterious personage, with the darkest of eyes and the oiliest of tongues; a fellow-conspirator, I presume, and a member of the secret society, who seemed able to discourse glibly in every language under the sun."

"He was an educated man, then, and a gentleman?"

"He was an educated man, certainly, but no abettor of rebellion can be a gentleman."

"Poor Frank!" sighed Clara; the needlework was still in her hands. "This is very

beautiful, Philip. Irene is a pretty name. Frank seems to admire that girl."

"Yes—the name is pretty enough—but for myself—" and Philip Warrenne laughed, "for myself I prefer that of 'Neroula'—Neroula with the aggravating eyes. It will be another complication if—eh!—Mr.—Gerard—Lowe ends by falling in love with either of the sisters."

The work fell from his wife's hands. "That would be dreadful, Philip, but it's too absurd to be thought of for a moment."

"Not so dreadful as being killed, surely; and as for its absurdity, well, the whole thing is absurd—except just this, which I think is the only sensible part of the affair, than which nothing is more likely to happen."

CHAPTER XI

THE PRIEST OF ST. ELIAS SEES A VISION

THE suns that had called forth the roses of June in the pleasant English garden at Sheen had withered all the verdure and blossoms of the Parnes' slopes, and a brownish yellow was now the prevailing colour of the fields round the village of St. Elias. Whilst the letter mentioned in the last chapter was on its way, Gerard Lowe was still in the house of the Pappas Zacharias, although very impatient to be gone, and already determining to leave on the morrow.

In the face of the projected journey, he rose early, and made his scanty preparations before leaving his chamber.

"Brother!"

The priest Zacharias was standing on the threshold of his cottage, and as Gerard went towards him, he sprang forward, and seizing the

hand that was held out to him in greeting in both his own, grasped it with nervous energy.

"Brother, I have waited thee since the sun began to climb the hills."

He had never before addressed Gerard as "brother," nor used the second person in speaking to him, and his voice had a strange ring in it as he did so now. His head was uncovered, and the fresh morning breeze lifted the waved hair from his broad brow, across which care had prematurely ploughed its furrows. The sunglow was on his face, and his eyes shone with unusual light.

"What is it, my brother?" asked Gerard, letting his hand remain in the man's warm grip. "Hast thou heard aught?"

"I have been in travail for days—for many days. Thou knewest nothing of it, brother, but darkness and cloud o'ershadowed me—heart and soul were again beset with doubts and fears, as thick as the wax is surrounded by bees. It is over, brother, it is over. Long before daybreak I went to the sanctuary to seek counsel, and I cried aloud in my anguish: 'Master, give me a token for good! Master, give me a token for good!' Then I cast myself on the ground, and waited in silence. I spake no more. How long I lay there, I know not, but as I lay, there

came before me a vision of the bodiless ones—ever passing along—ever passing along. A great dread came upon me, and my heart was as a molten taper. I buried my face in my hands—and still they were passing—passing—ever passing, and their going was like the breath of the North wind, full of refreshment—and at last there came to me a voice: 'Look up, servant Zacharias!' and I looked up and saw, as in a looking-glass, the face of him at whose altar I had served—the face of the ever blessed Gregory; and as I beheld him and trembled, the reflection of his radiance fell upon me: 'Rise, servant Zacharias, and go forth—a mighty host of the bodiless ones will be with thee—the hour is at hand—the triumph is near—follow thou them,' and he raised his hand in blessing, when I saw and heard no more."

Gerard laid his open palm upon the priest's shoulder. The exaltation of spirit in the man touched him. "Amen, brother, I, too, will accept this thy vision as a token for good."

"The token of good for thee is that Spyridon is near at hand. Something speaks to me that says he is already within the pass. I have suffered, too, because of Spyridon, that he came not. I feared for the day of past things, lest

under temptation, it might have been too strong for him."

"I have had fears *for* Spyridon, pappas, but not *of* him."

"Come, then, let us go at once together to yonder height, and look out for the laden asses and their driver. Verily, I seem even now to hear the sound of their hoofs buzzing in my ears."

Gerard smiled. "May it be so."

They walked along in silence, for each man was immersed in thoughts which the other could not share.

As they passed the extreme corner of the priest's small garden, which abutted upon the beginning of the ascent, Gerard's eyes fell suddenly upon a stunted almond tree. The leaves were already sere, and the branches showed bare with a sickly growth from the absence of any luxuriant foliage. From this cause a scar in a bough that stretched a little way beyond its fellows, from whence a spray had been recently torn, was plainly visible.

"What are the peculiar merits of the *amygdala* beyond its nuts?" asked Gerard suddenly. "Is it obnoxious to insects, or a specific against fever?"

The priest, who was still absorbed in his vision of the day-dawn, glanced at it carelessly.

"It has none that I know of, and truly that scrubby one of mine hath none, for it never produces any fruit, and only cumbereth the ground."

He lapsed into silence again, when, after walking a few paces on, a thought seemed to strike him on the moment, and he turned to his companion with some vivacity.

"Ah, Kyr Gerard! I suppose that you, like other travellers, are fond of storing up the sayings and silly tales of the people whom you go amongst. I just remember that the youths and maidens formerly used it in these parts as a way of confessing their loves. I think it has almost died out, however, because I always set myself strongly against those practises as being foolish, not to say light minded, and also as being subversive of the authority of parents, whose sole duty it is to arrange the marriages of their children. In these troublous times there is no likelihood of love messages by flowers. If I knew of any such, I should rebuke the offender."

"Do you remember what the message would be in this case?"

"Well, let me see. Yes, the *amygdala* has two. A green twig simply means, 'I love thee dearly;' but the sending of one of its flowers is a direct offer of marriage—'I wish to marry thee.'

It saves trouble, if it were not unseemly," and the priest laughed.

"*I love thee dearly.*"

As those words fell upon his ears, a strange thrill, in which delight and pain were as the two strands of a closely entwined cord, ran through Gerard's frame. Irene loved him, and the green almond bough, which some hand for many successive nights had placed upon his pillow, was her declaration to that effect. Irene, who bore herself so coldly and so proudly, loved him, and had chosen this mode of confessing it.

"Look, brother, look!" cried the priest excitedly, as he pointed to some moving objects in the defile, "did I not tell thee so?"

Gerard, rudely roused from the reverie to which he had abandoned himself, turned his eyes listlessly in the direction of the pappas hand. Far down, moving slowly and toilsomely along the steep stony path, there were to be seen without any doubt, two laden asses, the one behind the other, and a man with a staff following them. Priest Zacharias, whose head and heart were still dominated by the vision, repeated the *Trisagion* in perfect faith, that Spyridon was coming as the bearer of good news—the bringer of tidings of joy. He was ready—in a welling up of thankfulness—to fall

upon Gerard's neck and kiss him, and only restrained himself with difficulty.

Gerard did not speak for some minutes: when he did so, his voice did not echo the priest's exultant tones.

"The man yonder is not Spyridon, though the asses are ours. I fear me evil news awaits us."

"Not after the assurance of good, brother." But Gerard had hastened on, and being lithe and active, leaped down from boulder to boulder, shouting aloud to the ass-driver in his impatience.

The man, whom a nearer view showed by his costume to bear resemblance to the peasants of Bœotia, stopped and drew up the asses.

"Whither come you, and who are you? You are not he whom I have been expecting for weeks," cried Gerard breathlessly.

The rather stolid-looking young peasant was not to be ruffled out of his lesson. He had a message to deliver, and he was bent upon delivering it as he had learnt it.

"I am sent by one Spyridon, a native of Kalamata, who has now gone to join the army of the Peloponnesus, to the pappas of St. Elias, and to an English Effendi sojourning with the pappas for a time."

"You have found us opportunely."

"And thy message is for good," interposed the priest, who had now come up.

"I have a packet of letters for the English Effendi," said the man rather doubtfully, as he looked from one to the other.

"This is he," cried the pappas; "I see that thou carriest no gun. Are the ways so safe, my son?"

The peasant shrugged his shoulders, as he took a sealed packet from his breast and gave it to Gerard.

"The paths round about here are safe enough just now, pappas, and I bided my time."

"But tell me, my good fellow," said Gerard gravely, "as you purpose to come from Spyridon and bring me papers of which he was to be the bearer, what of himself? Has Spyridon given you no message, no special words for myself apart from this packet?"

The peasant was slow in speech, and he again looked from one to the other before he answered.

"I was to tell the English Effendi," he said at last, "that Spyridon was not false to the Effendi when he left him to go with the *old man of the Morea*;[1] He could not step on one side when

[1] Theodoros Kolokotronês.

his own country was in such dire peril, but must needs follow his old chief. I was to tell this to the English Effendi."

The man had nearly come to the end of his message, and looked relieved.

"What has happened afresh?" asked Gerard gloomily, knitting his brows.

"*Ibrahim and his Egyptians are ravaging the Morea.*"

"Pappas, there is not a shadow of blame to fall upon Spyridon. The poor fellow was in his right to go to defend his rocky homestead, but the case is grave, very grave. Perhaps I may find in some of these letters other news of a more hopeful tendency, that will serve to lighten the blow that has fallen upon the Peloponnesus. I will hasten home to read them in private."

Gerard walked rapidly back to the village, leaving the priest to confer with the countryman, whose heavily burdened animals could move but slowly up the ascent, and to his infinite content regained the house and his own room without encountering anyone by the way. Tearing open the packet, he run his eyes rapidly over the many letters it contained from friends of the cause—whether Germans, French, or English—as well as from members of the Greek provisional government.

All these letters confirmed his fears that the time was very critical. Ibrahim Pasha was wasting and burning in the Peloponnesus, whilst the second siege of Mesolonghi, that was begun in the early spring, was being pushed on vigorously, the Turkish leader being animated to redoubled exertions by the lively alternative conveyed to him by the Sultan, "Mesolonghi or your head."

On the other hand there were rays of light glimmering through the darkness, inasmuch as the disaffected chiefs, and the government, moved by the common danger, had consented to be reconciled, and had sworn in the church at Nauplia to unite for the defence of their country.

The English philhellene, Hamilton, had also anchored his ships off Nauplia, having previously sent the laconic message in writing, that was characteristic of the man, "I am coming."

A letter from General Favier confirmed a report that he had been made commander of the regular forces, that he should remain at Nauplia for a time, and should then proceed to Athens, where the president of the provisional government himself and all the leading men had promised to put themselves under his teaching.

The summing up of all was to the effect that the presence of Gerard Lowe was not immediately required.

Whilst reading the report of the monetary agent, he felt a glow of satisfaction at finding that Spyridon had loyally disbursed all his aids sent to the different committees and brotherhoods. After this hurried perusal he was wishful to impart what few grains of comfort he had extracted from it to the pappas, whose bright expectations of glorious news had been so cruelly disappointed.

The laden asses had by this time arrived, accompanied by the driver and the priest. Their coming was a great excitement, and a crowd of women and children, with wistful faces, had assembled round the outer door to see the unpacking. Neroula was there, and was holding out her arms to receive the different packages as they were delivered to her by the driver, with as beaming a face as if they were literally the first-fruits of an era of peace and plenty.

The letters which he had received, and their serious import, had put to flight the conflict of emotions that the priest's explanation of the meaning of a green bough of the almond tree had awakened in Gerard's mind. With the appearance of Neroula, who, with a deftness which

was natural to her, helped to unload the hampers, and was tripping backwards and forwards with her arms piled with the sundries they contained, his thoughts flew back with a bound to the revelation which the pappas had so unwittingly made. Irene loved him.

He felt greatly relieved that she was not there and aiding her sister at this moment. He almost shrank from meeting her. At any rate he would avoid it as long as possible. He would not, by any action of his own, hasten it on. He could not meet her to-day with the same feelings as those which occupied him yesterday. Irene loved him. She had repelled his half-hinted confession of love on the hill-side with apparent resentment, but had answered in a way that had long been a custom in the village. The mode which she had chosen was not in accordance with his own ideas. There was some show of poetry in it, as among unlettered girls and boys who rebelled in spirit against the restrictions imposed by the parental yoke, and naturally enough longed for a little private love-making of their own. But Gerard Lowe had a good deal of the conventional Englishman's formality, notwithstanding the life that he was at present leading. Moreover, beside his own innate pride, his love for the priest's daughter was so reverential, as to

cause this tacit avowal, coming direct from her, to jar upon every sensitive nerve of his body. Irene loved him. Did he love her less because of that avowal?

"Thou art in deep thought, brother," said the full voice of the priest. "Thou art thinking of our friend Spyridon. I feared, but still I thought that he was too brave a man to fail in the trust placed in him, in whatever great straits he might find himself. The young man who came with the asses offers himself in service to the Effendi in the place of Spyridon."

"I require no servant, pappas. If the young man stays, it must be that he becomes one of my recruits."

"That is his desire."

Notwithstanding that the news brought did not in the slightest degree justify the highly wrought anticipations of pappas Zacharias, he did not appear to be overshadowed by any sense of failure. He had seen a vision, and had heard a voice from the unseen world, promising victory; that was sufficient for him.

"Be not cast down, brother. What I saw, what I heard, was no delusion of the evil one, it was no lie for the betrayal of souls. Did I not hear the words in the voice of the blessed Gregory as I knew him in the life, 'The hour is

at hand. Go forth, servant Zacharias, go forth.' Yea, it has been given me to hear the promises, to see the promised land, but it may be that I myself shall not go over Jordan."

Whenever the priest became excited his language was figurative, almost Scriptural in its metaphors.

"We have very much to discuss, pappas. Come in with me and I will read you my letters. It is not absolutely necessary now that I leave you to-morrow. On the contrary, it is better to postpone doing so, as it will give us time to work out together, and in detail, our future operations. We will therefore devote what remains of the day to a careful consideration of our duties."

In this way Gerard thought that he might put off the inevitable meeting with the woman he loved until to-morrow.

CHAPTER XII

IRENE MAKES A BANNER

IT was more than natural that Gerard should look for a sprig of the *amygdala* upon his pillow that night; and it was more than natural that he should feel surprise bordering upon disappointment not to find it there as usual. He turned the cushion over and over, he tossed back the rug, he looked all over the room. It might have been let fall on the floor, he surmised; for Irene might have heard approaching footfalls as she was about to lay it there, and fled by the other door before she could place it. The bough was not on the floor. It had annoyed him night after night when he had found it there, and he had flung it away continually with some little show of petulance, until the previous evening, when he had gathered it up and put it away in his pouch, more because he was going away, and did not like in the last hours to do anything that

might seem churlish, than with any idea of keeping it beyond the time of his departure. It was meaningless before, at least to him, and he was annoyed. It was full of meaning now, but the unveiling of its meaning had not come to him with anything like an unmixed pleasure. His pride was hurt to find himself the object of feminine love advances. At the very moment of its discovery he was conscious of a shock that had dimmed the delight of knowing that Irene loved him. There was no deception in the change of feeling with which he now contemplated her. She was very charming, but his ideal had stepped from her pedestal, and he regretted it. That there should be anything to regret in the behaviour of a woman whom he had thought of as a possible wife, was something galling, because he certainly did love her after all.

Many times in the after part of the day whilst he was in deep converse with her father upon all the pressing matters of the hour, he had caught passing glimpses of her as she moved softly to and fro; but they had not spoken with each other. Once she had lowered her stately head in answer to his obeisance, which was studiedly deeper and graver than usual, but that was all. She held herself as erect, her eyes when they met his, were as calm, and her cheek was as pale as

ever. She was still in appearance the sad Athene of his waking dreams. What an incongruity it was to connect that cold-looking nymph-like form, with the sending voluntary signals of love, couched though they might be in silent unconscious emblems. But the incongruity was there, and he must reconcile himself to it, or banish her image from his breast for ever.

Although Gerard persevered in holding himself in guarded restraint the whole of that day, yet, when the evening was well on, and Irene sat herself down as usual at the end of the room, and seemed to be occupied in unravelling some skeins of coloured silks, his eyes travelled in that direction oftener than he was aware of, and dwelt unwittingly upon that bending form that seemed like the embodiment of some Sibylline mystery, whilst he was apparently listening to the discourse of the pappas, who showed some disposition to wander away from practical affairs into things visionary.

It was no wonder that after a time, the priest Zacharias, in one of the frequent lapses in their conversation, took note of it. "Irene is now hoping to finish the banner before your departure. She is working at it night and day."

"The banner—your daughter has not then forgotten her promise."

"Irene never forgets. It is only our little Neroula who forgets. We should not get a banner from her at until the war is over." These last words were added apparently for the ears of Neroula herself, who at that moment was entering from the outer door, and to whom the father turned with fond affection in his glance, for it was Neroula, who recalled to him the image of his light-hearted Albanian wife.

Neroula laughed. "I have my dowry to make ready, my father; but our Irene, who is to be a nun, can afford to turn all her silk aprons into flags."

"Hush, giddy one, who has told thee that our Irene will be a nun?"

"Why, my father, if Irene may not don capote and gun, be sure she'll take up with cross and serge."

Irene from the far end heard the flippant words of her younger sister. A crimson flush dyed cheeks and brow, and the tangled silks fell from her hands.

"Neroula!" and her lips quivered with emotion—"Neroula! when did I open my heart to thee, that thou wouldst shame me before a stranger?"

Neroula shrugged her pretty shoulders. "Nay, now, there is no shaming here!" She ran to her

sister coaxingly. "Why take everything so gravely, or if thou must needs be always grave, why grudge me a little mirth?" and she stooped and picked up the fallen silks.

"Was that thy mirth, Neroula?" said Irene, with a faint attempt to smile as she took the skeins from her sister's hands. "The times are grave enough, surely, to excuse my being like them."

"Bring thy banner here, child, and let us see how thou'rt getting on. Kyr Gerard did not know thou hadst begun it. Let Neroula fetch it."

"Not to-night, my father. As Kyr Gerard will remain with us a little longer, it will be better worth the seeing a few days hence."

And after this scene it was still more than natural that Gerard should look that night for the almond bough upon his pillow; but, as we have seen—he found none.

CHAPTER XIII

NEROULA PREFERS SILK APRONS TO SILK FLAGS

FROM this day forward the village began to show signs of a general movement. Gerard had organized it into a centre to which they of the surrounding districts were gathered.

He had resumed what the Greeks called his Frankish dress, and he and the pappas Zacharias made frequent journeys together, being absent only for a few days at a time, and never returning unaccompanied; albeit they, whom they brought back as recruits, might well be termed the "raw material."

It was rather a motley crowd that met at nightfall within the walls of the church to listen to the earnest exhortations of the priest, and to the equally enthusiastic addresses of Gerard, before they were solemnly enrolled, and the linen cross affixed to them as their badge. This badge was afterwards given exclusively to the body of re-

gular cavalry called the "Crusaders," who wore it on their breasts, but for the time being it was granted by Gerard Lowe to the infantry, which he was enlisting also for General Favier.

Besides the agriculturists, who greatly predominated, there were some young monks, and a few priests who, like Pappas Zacharias, were widowers, or had no family ties. The chief feature of this section of the brotherhood was, that there was no blinking of the awful obligations under which they were enrolled. There was to be no absolving them from the oaths they took, except by that which absolves from every earthly duty.

The Englishman's earnestness, his handsome face, and his youth were strong factors towards winning the hearts of an impressionable people, and it was with as bright a brow as though it was the eve of a holiday, that each fervently wrung the hand that was extended to him. There was no inconsiderable inducement to join, in the fact that these levies were not to be sent out in hunger and wretchedness. They were to be paid troops, and through the instrumentality of Gerard Lowe, their pay began at the self-same hour when the linen cross was affixed to their breasts.

It was quite like a foretaste of the expected

triumph, when, a few weeks later, a blue silk banner, with a cross embroidered upon it in white, the work upon which Irene had expended much time and care, was carried into the church of St. Elias to be duly consecrated.

The pappas had fixed upon the festival of St. John the Forerunner as an appropriate day for this service. The Hetairia, the secret society of the Greek insurgents had, early in the first year of their rising, issued a form of prayer for the use of the revolted. These litanies and prayers, printed at the Greek printing-office at Jassy, had been distributed to all priests to be added to their daily liturgies, and one of these now extremely rare books was possessed by the priest of St. Elias, who, for precaution sake, had used it but sparingly in public, reserving it principally for his own private use.

The little church could not hold one tithe of the people assembled, who clustered round the exterior like bees swarming about a hive. Loud "Amens" at the close of each supplication burst from the motley crowd of worshippers in default of any choir, with more force than sonorousness, until at length, overcome by his increasing emotion, Pappas Zacharias, no longer repeating the supplications in silence, threw up his arms, and his voice rang through the building.

"That He may deliver our Christ-loving army from our enemies, and from all their schemes, machinations, and devilish devices, let us supplicate of the Lord."

"That His angel will pursue them and trample them down, let us supplicate of the Lord."

"We supplicate of the Lord," was shouted in loud discordant voices by the whole crowd, mingled with wild objurations from some of the men, and shrill wails from the women.

"We supplicate of the Lord," again rung through the little building, and was carried and repeated again and again from without.

Pappas Zacharias saw his error, and lifted up his hand to enjoin silence, and as soon as a hushed calm succeeded the brief storm of excitement, concluded the service according to rule.

As the worshippers dispersed, each more or less radiant with newly-born hopes, Neroula, emerging from the crowd with a more pensive expression than was usual to her, walked slowly back to the cottage.

One over-mastering regret filled her soul as she dwelt upon the fact that the flag which she had just seen consecrated, would have made twelve beautiful aprons at the very least.

CHAPTER XIV

"MALISTA"

THERE was nothing now to wait for, nothing to detain him one day longer at St. Elias; and moreover, a message had been transmitted to him to proceed to Athens forthwith, taking with him what levies he had mustered. This message had arrived three days since, and yet Gerard Lowe, to whom it was especially addressed as being urgent, still lingered.

"There is nothing now to wait for," he had said upon the eve of the consecration of the banner, and the pappas had answered 'Nothing,' and yet he lingered. He repeated these words to himself with something like impatience several times a day, "There is nothing now to wait for," but those words were false as to himself, for there was something for which he was waiting, still waiting, and that something was a sign that his love for the priest's daughter was returned.

Some six weeks ago he had become possessed of a sign couched in a symbolic but almost obsolete language, and it had not pleased him. The sign, which had been many times repeated, was suddenly withdrawn, and he was less pleased. Every night since, during the whole of these six weeks, he had looked upon his cushion, hoping to see again a bough of *amygdala* laid athwart it with its sweet message, "I love thee dearly."

The sign was withdrawn—it had never been given him since he knew its meaning—and now the last hours were come, and he was called away.

On the eve of the dedication of the banner, he had had an opportunity of exchanging a few words with the woman whom he loved, and who seemed to elude and to frustrate any opportunity for a declaration on his part.

Irene was standing at the open door of the cottage, awaiting her father and sister who had gone to the church to make some preparations for the ceremony of the morrow. Gerard, who had been engaged for some hours in writing public and private letters, coming out of his room, and seeing her there, hastened to speak to her. He thanked her warmly for the beautiful gift to his corps, and with stammering lips, repeated words similar to those that he had

uttered when the making of a banner had been first suggested, and which upon that occasion had called up the look of exaltation that led to his design of "Athene victorious." To-day she heard similar phrases of congratulation, and prophesied triumph, if not with indifference, certainly with an unmoved calm, and in silence.

Gerard, with an effort to gulp down his disappointment, and fearing that a moment so opportune ought not to be allowed to glide away without any fruition, made another attempt at conversation, but it was an awkward one.

"I came hither for a few days, Mademoiselle Irene, and I have stayed over two months."

"They would have been wearisome months to you, Kyr Gerard," she answered quietly, "if you had not been sustained by so lofty a purpose. Your stay here has not been unproductive—you have not failed."

"No, I have not failed—at least, I——"

"No, you have not failed," repeated Irene, with more animation, and her cheeks slightly flushed, "you came for a certain purpose, and you have achieved it; you came to secure the active services of the pappas, and you have secured them."

Although there was no trace of bitterness or

regret in the tone in which she uttered those words, they stung him.

"Mademoiselle Irene, will you forgive me for taking away your father?" Gerard's voice betrayed his inner emotion.

She did not answer directly. The transient colour fled, and left her cheeks paler than before, and her eyes travelled over the horizon with a vague look of seeking in their expression. It was only momentary; "I am glad—I must needs be glad."

Gerard felt that he was making no progress, and that the opportunity, which, when it was first presented to him, made his heart leap for joy, was indeed fast gliding away without any fruition. The pappas and Neroula would soon be returning. It was at this moment that a sudden memory of the almond bough rushed unbidden to his mind, in the very face of this Greek girl—whom he so much admired and loved—but who was a very perplexing duality, wrapping herself round with an outer garment of frigid self-suppression while she laid love-tokens on his pillow.

He blurted out with unconsidered abruptness—

"You will think of me sometimes, Irene, when I am gone!"

Did she take him for the typical mad English-

man after all, that she looked at him for a few seconds exactly in the same calm way as she had looked at him upon the hill-side, and with a slight raising of her eyebrows, and the same half smile—uttered once more the simple word, "*malista.*"

And here was the end of the opportunity, for the pappas and Neroula were just seen coming out of the church porch.

CHAPTER XV

BETROTHAL AND DEPARTURE

"IRENE," said the pappas upon the night before the departure of Gerard Lowe and his levies, after they had partaken of a very silent meal, "Irene, my daughter, repeat to us one of the songs of Rhegas; thou knowest them all, and it may be the last time that I shall listen to thee—at least," he added after a pause, "for some long while."

A sudden flash lighted up the girl's clear eyes.

"Does Kyr Gerard Lowe wish to hear one?"

"Can you ask me, Mademoiselle Irene?"

"We are all too much cast down this night, my daughter; cast down, when we ought to be full of gladness. The 'Trumpet Call' of the great patriot will give us strength in this hour of separation."

Irene rose without another word, and removing the gauze veil with which her hair was covered, left her noble head exposed to view. She stood

for some minutes in silence, erect, with her arms hanging loosely before her, but with her hands tightly clasped within each other.

Slowly—slowly—and pleadingly, yet with an intensity of feeling none the less deep because there was a hushed suppression of the power within, in tones full low and sweet, she began the opening lines:

"How long will ye, O pallikars."[1]

As she proceeded, the volume of sound swelled until the very air seemed to vibrate in sympathy.

The pappas and Gerard Lowe hardly dared to breathe.

At last, as if the restraint could no longer be borne, she unlocked her fingers, and threw her arms forward, raising them above her head at the words

"So now, with both our arms upraised."

Her ringing voice, the glowing enthusiasm that lit up her whole form was contagious. The two men sprang to their feet, and grasping each other's hands, joined in the oath that follows.

No one spoke when the last solemn words came to a close. Gerard, who had been carried

[1] See "Trumpet Call," end of volume.

out of himself by conflicting emotions as he gazed spell-bound at the inspired girl, did not care to offer the bald words of commonplace thanks, and in the silence that followed, Irene resumed her veil and quietly left the room.

Neroula, who had listened to the recitation, with her elbows resting upon the table, and her chin upon her palms, glanced from her father to Gerard, and from Gerard to the pappas. Gerard, who had now recovered from his late excitation, thought that it would be only courteous to say something—

"Will not Mademoiselle Neroula give us a patriotic song?"

"I—I—Effendi? Oh, no—they make me shudder," and simulating the gesture, Neroula rose hastily, and followed her sister.

The two men were still standing, and Gerard, grasping the priest's hand anew, was the first to speak.

"Let us go and walk a little, pappas; there is something I would say to thee."

"Canst thou not say it here, brother?"

"No—it is hot within—let us go into the fresh air—I shall not detain thee long, but I must say it before I go to rest."

The priest had taken out his string of amber beads at the moment when Irene began her

recitation, and held them in his hands the while, but they had fallen to the ground when he had sprung to his feet, and had lain there ever since. He now stooped to pick them up.

"Yes, bring those with thee," said Gerard, with a smile, "thou mayst want them."

The last sun-rays had left a halo of glory around the highest peak of the Parnese hills, and the western slopes were wrapped in an ever-changing robe of colour which faded away rapidly into more sombre tints; for in Greece the dark mantle of night is thrown over the landscape very quickly.

The eyes of both men gave a hasty glance at the beauty of a scene, which, viewed however often, is always fresh and new, and instead of walking on, stood still. The first to speak now was the pappas.

"We had better be moving, brother. The day has been hot, and the night air will be chill."

Gerard turned right round.

"We will go this way, then, and meet the shadows rather than be overtaken by them. What I have to say will not take long in the saying. Pappas——"

They had gone on for a few paces, and had reached the end of the priest's garden. The

poor stunted almond-tree had but a few dried and withered leaves hanging upon its deformed branches. Gerard was not heeding the *amygdala* now, and all its wretchedness was lost upon him.

"Pappas, wilt thou give me thy daughter to wife?"

The priest made no answer, but caught Gerard by the arm, and looked him searchingly in the face.

"Wilt thou give me Irene to be my wife?" repeated Gerard. "Take thy time to answer if it comes upon thee suddenly. See—thou hast dropped thy beads.—Now, look thee, pappas, were I in England, and wert thou an Englishman, I should first have assured myself that I had won the maiden's love; after which I should have come to thee with a formal request that thou wouldst allow me to pay my addresses to her—which is the usual phrase on such occasions with us; but English ways of courtship are not current here—therefore I ask thee again—If Irene will accept the love I proffer, wilt thou give her to me in marriage?"

"Kyr Gerard, this is hardly the time to marry and to be given in marriage."

"I am not asking, pappas, to marry off-hand. I am asking for a promise for future fulfilment—

only when the war comes to a victorious conclusion."

The darkness was enveloping them, but Gerard was conscious that the priest was crossing himself rapidly.

"Brother," he said, at last, and his voice trembled, "thou hast said aright: it hath come upon me suddenly—very suddenly. I am a very poor man, a humble but zealous priest of the holy Orthodox Church, and high though that calling be, it is naught, and less than naught, in the eyes of the world. What is Irene Notala that thou, a wealthy and noble Englishman, shouldst desire to take her for thy wife?"

"That is no answer, pappas. I love Irene—I shall never love any other woman. One word only—Wilt thou speak to her on my behalf—yea, or nay?"

"Yea, yea; verily, yea."

"And to-night?"

"To-night! Hadst thou not better sleep upon it, brother?—the martyr's song has excited thee."

"Have I not slept upon it for many nights, pappas? For the sake of the Cause, but still more for the friendship and love, that binds our hearts in one, speak for me to Irene this night."

"And if, brother, if Irene—she is not like other girls—if Irene——"

"If Irene, thou wouldst say, does not—cannot love me—my dream is over, that is all.—Here, thou hast left thy amber beads in my hands, and they seem to have scorched them."

The room was vacant, and the loom was still. The flame of the lamp hanging before the ikon flickered through the wafting of the opening door.

"Blessed St. Elias! Is this thy sending, and is it for trouble or for joy?" murmured the priest, as he crossed himself, and sought his daughters' room.

Gerard remained in the open. He was not so prudently mistrustful of the evening chills that often follow upon hot days in Greece, as was the more experienced pappas. What would be Irene's answer?

"Although she is of the grandest type of woman," thought Gerard, as he paced hurriedly before the pappas' low-roofed cottage, "yet she is very woman—thank God for that, if she is to become my wife; but, in any emergency, in any crisis which demanded it, or might seem to demand it, the sublime and the heroic within her will take precedence of the woman. Perhaps I have chosen the very worst time to prefer my suit. She may still be under the influence of

the patriot's poem. Alas! as Athene victorious, she would not descend from her pedestal to take anyone less than a Theseus for her husband; but as Athene sad, with her crown of violets crushed and faded, the Irene of the sad eyes and drooping brow, it might be different. The pappas was right; I should have waited until the morning."

At this moment he heard the soft closing of an inner door, followed by the quickened footsteps of the priest across the house-room. The summer stars which had now risen, were shining full upon the face of Pappas Zacharias, as he pushed back the half-open outer door, and stood before Gerard, and that face bore the traces of recent tears.

"My dream is over, then," said Gerard, gloomily, "and thy daughter does not love me." But the strong arms of the stalwart priest were flung around him before he was aware, and the Englishman's cheeks were being covered by the unwonted kisses of a bearded man.

"Irene doth love thee, brother."

Gerard extricated himself as gently as he could from the masculine embrace.

"I must hear it from her own lips—Irene must tell me so herself."

"Irene cannot see thee to-night. She is

agitated and somewhat overcome by her emotions; by to-morrow she will be more herself."

"To-morrow I shall have but little time to speak half-a-dozen words to my betrothed wife—as henceforth I shall esteem her. To-morrow, I shall have to say 'farewell,' before many witnesses. I must see her to-night, pappas, if only to take her hand and claim her as my future wife."

The priest Zacharias shrugged his shoulders. "Well, if thou wilt have it so, no one has the right to gainsay thee. I will go and bring her to thee."

It was but a few seconds, but it seemed hours to Gerard when the further door re-opened and the father came out, leading his daughter by the hand. Irene had hastily wound a kerchief round her head, but the loosened hair of her plaits escaped from beneath it and fell in luxuriant disorder over her shoulders. She almost clutched her father's hand, as if without it she might have fallen.

Pappas Zacharias led his daughter straight up to him.

"Kyr Gerard Lowe has asked for thee in marriage, Irene—when we come back victorious from the war. Place thy hand in his if thy heart is consenting to this compact."

Irene held out her one free hand, and raised eyes that were heavy with tears to her lover.

"Irene, is it really true? Canst thou love me? Art thou willing to be my wife?" And, holding the hand she had given him in both those that trembled more than the one that lay passively within them, Gerard looked full into her face and gasped hoarsely, "Is it indeed true?"

"Yes—it is true."

The father, as if in ratification of this utterance, crossed himself with his one free hand, for he had never released his daughter's, and essayed to lead her away.

"Stay, pappas," cried Gerard, "thou hast given me the kiss of a father-in-law—thou canst not deny me one to my betrothed."

Had Gerard succumbed to the priest's suggestion to defer an interview with Irene until the morning, he would not have had an opportunity for even so brief an interchange of feeling as the above. As it was, the pappas thought that his privileges as a lover had been most ample, and beyond those that are generally accorded to Greek suitors.

The two men spent some time far into the night, talking over future plans and future possibilities. Irene had said to her father, "Not

whilst my country is enslaved will I wear the crowns of marriage. I will wait patiently in the convent of Evangelistria, and will pray that the arms of my promised husband may be victorious —but until then, I dare not—I must not see him again, it would be more than I could bear."

Gerard was strangely moved at these words of Irene as told him by her father. He had imagined that behind the heroic nature, which was the more apparent, the impassioned soul of a true woman might be possible, even before the incident of the almond bough had brought him some annoyance; that incident which he slightly recalled at this moment, as merely showing the girlish simplicity that underlaid her entire nature.

"This night ought to nerve me into action if anything were wanting to do so," reflected Gerard.

"Thou wilt be a brother to poor little Neroula if it be foredoomed that my life is to be given up for my country?"

"Yes, I will be a brother to her always, but why speak thus, pappas? We shall fight side by side, and if thou art doomed to fall we shall fall together."

"Not so—not so. Thou wast not called for that, brother. The words that came to me in the vision were for me alone—they said, 'Go

forth,' as to a sower to sow his seed—but it was not said, 'and thou shalt return in joy with thine arms bearing the full-eared sheaves.'"

"Pappas, thou hast left thine amber beads lying upon the table."

The new levies, whose total number were somewhere between five and six hundred men, were assembled in the village long before day-break. Strange groups of monks in serge, and peasants in fustanella, crowded before the priest's house asking for his blessing. The majority were fine sturdy men in the prime of life, but there were some who had scarcely got beyond boyhood.

"Favier writes me," said Gerard, "that 'all men prefer clean paper to write upon, and so do I.' Well, I trust that when these blank sheets of paper before me, to which my chief likens the raw recruits, are written upon, we shall present a very different appearance."

The pappas had forbidden any gatherings of women and children to witness to their departure, and had insisted that all leave-takings and farewells should take place at home. Neither Irene nor Neroula appeared at the early meal, but when Gerard, after some little difficulty, had got his men to form in what were approximately straight lines,

Irene came to the door, looking as calmly dignified as if the scene of the previous evening had never taken place. One hasty "Adieu," one hurried clasp of the proffered hand as he raised it to his lips, was all that Gerard dared trust himself to. A wring of the pappas' broad palm, with a hoarsely muttered "*Ora kalè*," "Farewell," and he flung himself into the saddle of the sure-footed, but not brilliant-looking, mount that had been sent for his use a few days previously. Not once did he look back as he galloped after his recruits as fast as the nature of the path they were to follow permitted him to do.

As the last curve of the road which shut him out from further view was reached, Irene flung herself on to her father's breast, and, throwing her arms round his neck, laid her head upon his shoulder.

"Ah, my father! pray for me, if it be a sin to feel this great joy at my heart, whilst my country is in tears."

But where was Neroula?

CHAPTER XVI

AT THE SELF-SAME HOUR

WHILST a world-historic people were struggling to tear away the iron shackles that had bound them for four hundred years, and were fighting against enormous numerical odds, as well as against veteran and skilled troops; the great nation, that had looked on hitherto with indifference, was at last roused to take action.

The persistent heroism on the one side, which made the motto inscribed upon its banners—"Liberty or Death"—no mere empty vaunt, but a stern reality; and the equally persistent efforts towards subjugation or annihilation on the other side had brought about this awakening.

A new era in politics had begun. George Canning, who had succeeded to Castlereagh as foreign secretary, made use of his powers immediately in the progressive course which William Pitt in his earlier days, and before he was swept

along by the current of mad, unreasoning public opinion, had inaugurated. England, in 1825, under the liberal guidance of that statesman, emancipated those of her own subjects whom a narrow religious bigotry had for some years held in bondage, and whilst exerting herself to free her own children from the hindrances to prosperity caused by restricted commerce, turned at last a sympathetic eye upon the anguish of a determined people.

The cup of sorrow was, however, to be drained to the very dregs, before the rescue of Greece could be accomplished; and months had dragged on in a weary length of unproductive warfare and bloodshedding.

Summer, autumn, and winter had gone, and the flowery spring had come again, since the village of St. Elias had been left deserted of priest and people.

The garden at Sheen which we last saw full of roses, and which had long shown through the mists of an English winter, the bare skeletons of leafless trees, was now again throbbing with the pulsations of new life, and many a pretty messenger was unfolding its green leaves beneath the casual snows of March. Just a few caresses of morning sunshine, and the blossoms would leap forth from the inclosing stalks, out of the

melting snows, with a laugh of greeting, caring nothing for their recent chills and hardships, like all brave things in Nature.

At eventide, on this fourteenth day of March, in the year 1826, the rich crimson velvet curtains fell in ample folds across those glass doors opening on to the lawn whence on a June day in the previous year had been wafted a smell of summer roses. A bright fire blazed cheerily on the hearth, while the numerous wax candles, reflected in many a mirror, shed their multiplied light upon two lovely women, whose delicately-slippered feet were crossed upon the fender rim.

Clara Warrenne was, if possible, still more comely than when we saw her gathering roses on the lawn. Her friend was a beauty of the brunette type, and slighter in form. She had only become a bride a few months since, and wore her wedding-gown upon this occasion of a first visit to her friend's house in her new character of matron. They were both examining the contents of a portfolio of drawings that lay opened out upon Mrs. Warrenne's knees. There was a measure of recently acquired haughtiness in Lady Worster that had not been observed in the Emily Granville of earlier days, and, notwithstanding the interest which she evinced in the drawings passed to her, anyone

who had known her in those earlier days would have been able to detect that with all the outward show of appreciation, there was mingled some latent sense of vexation.

"Have you a portrait of that girl anywhere among them, Clara?" she asked in the languid drawl into which she had glided since her marriage.

"What girl, dear?" asked Clara, pausing as she poised in her fingers a sketch of some foreign groups in their national costumes.

"Oh, some peasant girl that you told me of. I think your brother had her to sit to him as a model."

"Do you mean Irene Notala?" asked Clara, her face becoming scarlet on the sudden. "Did I not tell you, Emily, that Frank had engaged himself to her?"

"Did you? Well, perhaps so, but I had forgotten it. What a dreadful thing for you, Clara."

"If it could only be the means of bringing Frank back to us, I should no longer think it the dreadful thing I did at first."

"It is better that he should not come over if he brings her with him. You could never get over it, dear; but perhaps Frank would be more considerate than to do so. He would, I am

sure, be desirous to spare you all he could; so, if he does marry her, he can very easily leave her behind when he comes over—people like that are not very sensitive, and when they drag men in a higher position of life into their toils, must not expect to be on the same footing as ladies. I am very sorry for you all. Frank ought to have known better than to go those lengths."

"Don't talk in that way, Emily. I was certainly very much put out when Frank wrote and told me what he had done. No one can understand that better than you, dear, because I had hopes—well, don't toss your head, dear—that's all past long ago. However, after a sleepless night and lots of tears, that made poor Philip very miserable, I got up my heart to a more generous point, and sent a letter off straightway to tell Frank that I should be very glad to welcome Irene as a sister. Oh, if I only had the opportunity of doing so, I would indeed welcome her most heartily; but there seems to be no hope of doing so—no hope."

As her eyes were filling with tears, Clara rose hastily to conceal her emotion and went towards a side table, saying: "Here is a sketch of Irene Notala, which Frank sent to me with the letter announcing his engagement. It is not a finished drawing, as it was only taken by stealth. My

brother would not ask Irene to sit to him, because he knew that she would be indignant at such a request."

"But I thought she was his model."

"Oh dear no! it was only secretly that he was able to snatch a likeness."

"How absurd—what ignorance!" cried Lady Worster, whose picture by the then fashionable portrait painter was destined to appear on the walls of the coming Royal Academy exhibition, and she glanced at herself appreciatively in an opposite mirror.

"Have you it there?" she asked carelessly, turning her head as the said mirror also reflected the figure of Clara, looking intently upon something which she held in her hand.

"Why, Clara, whatever is the matter? are you crying, dear?" and Lady Worster, thrown back upon the really good nature that was being gradually encrusted with fashionable deposits, sprang from her seat, letting fall her fan and her smelling-salts bottle, and, heedless of the exigencies of a court train, ran to her friend and slid an arm round her waist.

"I cannot help it," said Clara as she dried her tears with a morsel of laced cambric. "Her face is so beautiful and yet so sad."

The two women looked at the drawing in

silence. Clara, out of pure sisterly love, had inclosed it in a velvet and gilt-clasped case.

Lady Worster was the first to speak.

"There is something written under the name in pencil—it is in your brother's handwriting too, but it is rather rubbed out. What is it?"

"'Athene sad.' I suppose that he meant it as something symbolic; but is she not beautiful, Emmy darling?"

Clara said this in her most winning way, for she felt that it was asking a great deal from the generosity of one who was herself the acknowledged beauty of the season, and whom Clara had actually in her own heart destined for her brother, and who, in a way, had been supplanted by this humble Greek girl.

"She is very beautiful—yes, she is very beautiful," answered Lady Worster, in a tone of lofty condescension. As she held the case in her hand, earnestly contemplating the drawing within it, she considered whether the costume would not be admirably suited as a design for a fancy dress ball that was coming on late in the season, when she could appear in this character; and whether it would not be possible for Frank Harbord to procure for her some of the charming silver ornaments that were worn by Greek girls at festivals, that were absent from this one

in particular, but which appeared in some of the other sketches.

Meanwhile, the two husbands over their wine were disposing of the politics of the day.

"What do you think of our new man, Warrenne? As a city man, I expect that you consider these last measures of his are more to be deplored than even his Catholic Relief Bill. I happen to have some relations who have married papists, so that I am not so much opposed to that now as I was formerly. Individually, I hardly suppose that I shall suffer much, if at all, by that second measure. His foreign policy, however, touches me more nearly, yet what could be expected from one who has emerged almost from the lower ranks? How can a George Canning, without descent or birth, guide our relations with dignity in respect to foreign courts? Our *prestige* as a nation is at once put in jeopardy when the reins of government are handed over to such as he. The first thing that a democrat upstart like himself must do as of necessity is to break adrift from the Holy Alliance, and thus throw everything into confusion again."

"Poor Frank used to call it the 'Unholy Alliance,'" remarked Mr. Warrenne taking advantage of a moment's pause.

"Umph, your brother-in-law has utterly lost himself—utterly lost himself! a pity, for he is a cleverish kind of fellow and had good prospects. But, as I said before, we shall have a muddle all round again very soon. Things have no sooner been put upon a good footing, when in comes this Canning to upset everything again, sending troops to help Portugal against Spain, recognizing the paltry governments of South America and Mexico as independent states, and then these wretched Greeks, it will not be long before he is in the saddle about them."

"Well, Worster, I have had a tremendous shaking up lately in regard to 'these wretched Greeks!' I say very little before Clara, because, poor girl, she is in a continual state of worry and anxiety about Frank, from whom she has not received one line for six months. Solely upon her account, and because of the liking I myself have for that hare-brained fellow, I was induced to follow events as they cropped up from time to time in the papers and from different sources, with more interest than formerly. Well, when anything tangible is planted straight before your eyes you are bound to see it, unless you turn doggedly round and walk away with the express purpose of not seeing. Walking away and not facing a disagreeable object was never in my

line, so I have been tackling this Greek business lately. I have looked at the matter from both sides; some statements may be garbled, some exaggerated, some facts suppressed, but by George, Worster, when I recall the bravery, heroism, and devotion of those poor devils at Mesolonghi and elsewhere, I succumb, and am fain to think that they have earned their freedom, and ought to have it."

Lord Worster drew a long breath—"Whew! Established governments, upon every principle of justice and right, ought to be supported, if solely in the interests of peace, mind you, in the interests of peace and of humanity. The Turks are our natural allies, and if we could but turn out this Canning, and bring in the great warrior who has saved us once, and if we go on in our present imbecile ways may have to save us again, save us from ourselves, in point of fact, he would surely counsel us to help these natural allies to crush their revolted subjects once and for all, and restore the now again threatened peace of Europe."

"The one thing," resumed Mr. Warrenne musingly after a short silence, "the one thing that has all through intensified my dislike to Frank's taking any part in this rising is, that he has chosen to ally himself with a French officer."

"Maison, I suppose," interrupted Lord Worster, as if he knew all about the concerted plan of action.

"No, Favier; I suppose one man is the counterpart of the other. I saw the name of Maison mentioned in one of the papers as being there also."

"They'll be meeting some of their friends on the other side without an invitation," said Lord Worster with a laugh, as if he had uttered something pleasant to hear. "The Turks are officered by many Frenchmen."

"Now, that I call odious. I can understand Frenchmen going to help people who revolt, in the name of liberty, but I recoil from those Frenchmen who fight on the side of Turkey. It is against their traditions—at least, since their own great revolt. When they were fighting to uphold a military tyranny, they still deluded themselves with the idea that they were in arms against all tyrannies. No such delusion can blind anyone who buckles on his sword to uphold the Turkish empire."

"We were not discussing tyrannies, but rights."

"I am afraid that with Turkey the words are synonymous; but come, we will join the ladies, Worster. I never care to talk about politics at

home, or after dinner; I'll get Clara to show you a sketch of the Greek girl who has helped to turn poor Frank's head."

"If it were not turned before," said Lord Worster.

Philip Warrenne and his guest entered the drawing-room at the moment when Lady Worster was mentally contrasting what the effect might be if she herself were to adopt the costume in which Irene Notala was depicted in the drawing before her, and had almost arrived at a satisfactory conclusion.

"Ah! I was just speaking about that drawing that Clara is crazy about. Now, look here, Worster, let us know your opinion about it—you are a judge of beauty, as all the world knows. Allow me," but as Mr. Warrenne took it from the hands of the wife to pass it to her husband, he said to her: "But let us hear what you think of it first."

"Why, Mr. Warrenne, since you ask me, I must say that the face is perfect, from an artist's point of view, but you may depend upon it that she has no complexion at all—most likely deplorably sallow, as most of these foreigners are——"

Lady Worster was about to add something more when her attention was suddenly arrested

by a series of "By Jove's," which, not being intended for the ears of anyone present, resembled the attempted suppression of some muscular irritability of the larynx.

"By Jove!"

Lord Worster had never taken his eyes off the portrait.

"Have you been sitting in a draught, Edward? Have you taken cold?"

There was more of indignant remonstrance than anxiety in Lady Worster's tone of voice as she said this.

"Oh no—oh no, my dear, at least, I don't think so," and Lord Worster, closing the case, laid it on the table.

"What do you think of that face, Worster?" said Mr. Warrenne, quite *sotto voce*, however.

Lord Worster did not dare to utter an intelligible answer after his wife's rebuke, so he limited himself to giving a series of movements with his head that might be taken to signify either high appreciation, or distinctly the reverse.

"I am very sorry for those girls," said Mr. Warrenne, in a low voice, "very sorry."

"Is there more than one of them, then?" asked Lord Worster meditatively.

"There is a younger sister, with a very pretty name, who has very fine black eyes,

which seem to have annoyed Frank by their brilliancy. I cannot understand that, can you, Worster?"

"Yes, I can, if they are glittering black eyes like those of gipsies."

"I quite agree with Edward, there," said Lady Worster languidly. "I think the quickly moving black eyes that gipsies have are quite hideous—so are all very black eyes."

Her own orbs were dark hazel, and as soft and velvety as those of a gazelle.

"What is that other girl's name—the black-eyed one's that you think so pretty, Warrenne?"

"Neroula."

"Well, that is a pretty name, certainly," answered his friend more briskly, availing himself of an opportunity; "but why do you pity the two girls, Warrenne?"

"Because *Gerard Lowe*—I use this name now, speaking of him and his doings, as a thing apart from Frank Harbord—has persuaded their father, who is a priest, to enlist with him and become a soldier. The two poor girls in consequence have to be sent off to a nunnery. I think it was very wrong to carry off the father; but that was Gerard Lowe's doing. I find that name very convenient when I want to air my condemnatory feelings, as it saves them from

falling with all their force upon Frank Harbord."

"Let us have some music," said Clara, who wisely thought that her friend and guest had heard quite enough about the daughters of Pappas Zacharias Notala.

"A very good suggestion, Clara. Worster, let us have that delightful song that you gave us the other night at Dampier's, from 'Acis and Galatea,' 'Would You Win the Charming Creature.'"

"Do you think the ladies would approve, Warrenne?"

"Let us have it, Worster; we are old married people, and we have both won the charming creatures."

"We will have it—we will have it," cried Clara gaily; "it is a lovely air, and will suit your voice admirably, Lord Worster. Emily, will you accompany, or shall I?"

"Edward is more accustomed to me, dear," said her friend, rising and going to the piano.

At the self-same hour when the well-trained tenor voice of Lord Worster was delighting his hearers in the luxurious drawing-room at Sheen with the seducingly sweet cadences of Handel's above-named air, Captain Zacharias Notala of

the "Crusaders" cavalry, and the ex-priest of St. Elias, lay in the arms of Captain Gerard Lowe of the same force, in the Greek intrenchments near Karystos in Eubœa, wounded to the death.

A body of Greek regulars, horse and foot, had been laying siege to the fort of Karystos, endeavouring to take it by storm. The unexpected arrival, however, of a great force of Turkish reinforcements, which were safely landed upon the island, rendered all the skill and bravery of the French general commanding totally unavailing. A large body of the Turkish horse had surrounded the Greek cavalry, the latter consisting only of 100 men. Favier, perceiving their danger, dashed precipitately to the spot, and succeeded with consummate ability in piercing the enemy's cavalry. This brilliant exploit encouraged the "Crusaders," and a fierce hand-to-hand conflict took place, but since they were far outnumbered, the general ordered a retreat, and by his dexterous handling led them safely off.

Twenty, however, lay dead on the field, and the two banners fell into the hands of the enemy, the one that had been worked by the Parisian ladies, and the other that was the gift of Irene Notala.

"Back, back to your intrenchments, all of

you, back!" cried Favier, who saw that a body of the enemy were making for the Greek camp with the intention of surrounding it with palisades. "Lowe, we cannot carry off the wounded. Who have you there?"

"Captain Zacharias."

"Ah, the brave soldier-priest! He is past all human aid, I fear."

"He breathes." Gerard, who had dismounted, had lifted the priest, who had apparently fainted, and was binding him to his saddle.

The intrenchments were gained.

"It is of no use, brother," gasped Pappas Zacharias, whom some restorative had brought back to momentary life. "I go to join—the army of the bodiless ones. I did not tarry when I was called of them—I come—I come! Hellas—my country—I have given thee my life. Kiss me, brother—farewell—take care of my daughters—Irene—wife—and—and—" Gerard stooped his ears to catch the last sound. "And —little—Neroula."

"Come away, Lowe," said his general. "Let us give him a soldier's grave within our intrenchments. You loved him, but you can do no more for him. I, alas! have seen too much to weep for those who die on the field of battle."

Before the body of the good priest and the

good soldier was lowered into the quickly-made grave, Gerard took from his late comrade's breast the *string of amber beads*, that was now stained and wet by drops of the priest's life-blood, and thrust it into his own bosom.

CHAPTER XVII

NEWS IS BROUGHT TO THE CONVENT

THE island of Tenos is the most flourishing as well as the most beautiful of the Cyclades' group. It also derives an interest apart from natural advantages from the religious character that invests it, as it is supposed to be under the especial protection of the blessed Virgin—the Panagia. Upon this account crowds of pilgrims and visitors flock to it annually upon the feast of the Annunciation. As the national festival of the Declaration of Independence also occurs upon the same day, the attraction thither for the yearly holiday is greatly intensified thereby. At the commencement of the revolt the Aga and the three janissaries that represented the Turkish government had been withdrawn, for the island was considered to be of too little importance to be worth any attention at a moment when Turkey had so much to occupy her elsewhere.

The Teniotes are a light-hearted people, and

the pleasure-loving character of the inhabitants seems to be in no way interfered with by the religious aspect of the island above alluded to, albeit to every twelfth house or so there will be found a church.

Tenos was therefore considered to be a perfectly safe place of refuge, and numerous families of opulence fled there during the war, and remained there throughout the struggle. It was to the convent of the Evangelistria in this earthly paradise, that the two daughters of Pappas Zacharias were sent when their father followed Gerard Lowe for the purpose of joining the regular forces assembled under the command of General Favier.

All outward demonstration of grief was restrained by the father and his elder daughter. Irene lay upon his breast in silence, clasped by his strong nervous arms, but neither spoke one word to relieve the pent-up agony of their parting. "Little Neroula" as her father loved to call her, gave way, on the contrary, to a passionate bewailing that was probably as much the result of a dreaded seclusion for a lengthy period within the four walls of a convent as to any lasting sorrow at separation from the pappas. The plenteous tears, which had subsided as the vessel pushed off from the shores, when her eyes drank

in with eager gaze the unwonted spectacle before her, gushed out with increased violence when, having reached Evangelistria, the abbess conducted the two sisters to the separate cells that she had allotted to them, and upon the first night Neroula literally sobbed herself to sleep. With the morning, however, came some solace, when it was found that the good lady superior did not contemplate treating the two daughters of Pappas Zacharias as recluses.

As the island had long been utilized for the reception of wounded or sick patriots, Irene at once entered upon the duty of assisting those who were ministering to the relief of the sufferers, with the energy and zeal possible to her strong and unselfish soul. Although such an employment would not have been chosen by Neroula under other circumstances, she, too, entered with alacrity into the service of the devoted women, whether laic or religious, who banded themselves together to attend to the necessities of the soldiers, who were dispersed among various households in the island, as well as in the conventual establishments. Eagerly did Irene drink in from parched and pallid lips, every gasping utterance of details of the war in which the sufferer had been personally engaged, quivering with tightened fingers at every tale of defeat and

loss, whilst her eye kindled and her cheek flushed at the lingering echoes of some short-lived triumph. To those whose wounds were already healed, and who were awaiting vessels to bear them back again to the scene of conflict, she murmured: "You are happy—you, who are going to fight for your country!"

As often as any incoming vessels touched upon the island, the affection of the daughter overpassed for a time her patriotic longings. "Is Captain Notala of the Crusaders, well?" was the first question. "Has victory followed my banner?" was the second. That second question, ofttimes tremblingly repeated, was the nearest reference she made to the man to whom she was betrothed. It was Neroula who never failed to ask openly, "What news do you bring us from Captain Gerard Lowe?"

The two sisters occupied separate cells, and only four grey walls witnessed to the agonized vigils of the elder, when no assurances of any triumphs achieved came as answers to her eager questionings. The loneliness of the girl, with no kindred heart near her, which could share her feelings, intensified a doubt, that had long since, even at the very moment when she lay upon her father's breast as her lover bade them farewell, struck out a fibrous little root in her soul. "Is

it not a selfish thing to nourish a love like this at such a time?" this thought then whispered very feebly, had taken root, and it grew.

Irene was a *replica* of her father, and her spirit was an echo of his own. She waited expectant for events to come as answers to her inward questionings, and she also looked for signs. The pappas of St. Elias had seen visions. Why should not such manifestations be vouchsafed to his daughter? so the hours of repose became for Irene hours of watching, and her cheek grew paler day by day.

Neroula sought in vain to make her sister converse about her betrothed; sometimes with apparent interest, asking what would be the ceremonies in a mixed marriage, at others venturing a laughing jest as to the crowning of a bridegroom who wore the Frankish dress. To all of which Irene made no response, nor could any effort of her lively sister bring any show or betrayal of feeling.

One evening as they stood side by side, watching a white sail that quivered on the blue sea, and appeared to be making for the island, Neroula exclaimed suddenly, "Surely now, thou must be thinking that Captain Gerard is on board that ship, that thou dost look at it so wistfully."

Irene did not reply, and Neroula with a little laugh repeated the remark.

"Neroula, dost thou know what thou sayest? if our father, or if Captain Gerard Lowe is in that ship, would it not mean that either one or the other is wounded?"

"I said naught of the pappas, I spoke only of Captain Gerard Lowe?"

"Captain Gerard Lowe has given his word that he will not seek me until our country is freed. I do not expect—I do not hope—that Captain Gerard is on board that ship. Of that be assured."

"Irene—thou dost not love him, or thou wouldst be glad of wounds—or defeat—anything —anything that could bring him to thee! and as for him—ah, if he had loved thee, he would never have made such a vow."

"Speak no more of Captain Gerard, Neroula. Thou dost not comprehend either his love or mine."

"Oh! are there then two or three different sorts of love?" cried Neroula with a little shrug. "I suppose thou know'st best, for thou art wiser than I. I only comprehend one."

Not merely were the eyes of Irene intently watching for the approach of the vessel, but the rocky shores were lined with anxious spectators who were impatient to get the first news.

"Do you come laden with good reports this time, or are you bringing us another cargo of sick and wounded?" was shouted out before any landing could be effected.

"We are not too much over-cargoed with good reports, but we bring you no bales of sick or wounded this time," was the rejoinder from the vessel.

Among those who landed, bearing official papers from the conditional government to the prefect of Tenos, was one elderly man, who had been deputed by Gerard to convey the news of the death of the priest of St. Elias to the abbess of Evangelistria, who was in turn to instruct the daughters of the sad event. The messenger was also intrusted with a letter to Irene. It was the first time that Gerard had broken through the reticence imposed upon him by his betrothed, but at such a time of bereavement as the present he felt himself justified in doing so; therefore he wrote.

The abbess, having accorded to the messenger the audience for which he asked, was deeply grieved to receive his communication; but such news was of too frequent occurrence at that time to occasion any surprise. The abbess of Evangelistria hardly understood Irene, and her first thought of commiseration and sym-

pathy was for Neroula. "Poor little orphaned maiden!" she ejaculated, as if there had been but one daughter. The Neroulas, whose smiles and tears are for all to see, will ever find the most sympathizers. What did the abbess know of the tears that nightly bedewed the floor of the cell of Irene?

The messenger was an ex-priest, and had also been a comrade in the same corps as that of ex-Pappas Zacharias.

"I also bear a letter from Captain Gerard Lowe to the *papadopoula*, Irene Notala, the elder daughter of the late pappas of St. Elias."

"And who is Captain Gerard Lowe, that he sends a letter to the *papadopoula* Irene?" asked the abbess stiffly.

"Captain Gerard Lowe is he whom the blessed Zacharias Notala himself betrothed to the *papadopoula* Irene!" was the equally measured answer.

"Give me the letter, I will give it to the maiden myself."

"Pardon me, reverend mother, but my orders are to give it only into the hands of the said maiden myself."

"Are you a soldier or a priest?" she asked, with a scrutinizing look.

"I am a soldier, abbess, but I have worn the serge."

"Evil times—evil times when the serge and the cross of the monk give place to sword and scarf. The Pappas Zacharias might have been alive now, had he not forsaken the altar to go to the camp."

"We put off our cassocks, abbess, to fight for the honour and safety of the convent of Evangelistria and other holy houses, that they be not overrun and despoiled," answered the ex-priest quickly.

"The convent of Evangelistria is under the direct protection of the Panagia, but we thank you," said the abbess, who, rising, summoned one of the sisters, and bade her fetch the *papadopoula*[1] Irene.

"This stranger is the bearer of news for thee."

With a haste never before witnessed by the abbess, Irene sprang forward and caught the messenger by the arm.

"Tell me, tell me quickly. Thou bring'st me news of victory."

The ex-priest was startled out of all composure by the sudden, eager question, by the searching light of the clear eyes that sought his.

[1] Priest's daughter.

"The victory is not yet come. This letter will tell you all, *papadopoula.*"

He held out that of which he was the bearer.

"Hast thou no letter from the pappas—from Captain Notala—from my father?"

"None, *papadopoula.*"

Irene looked at him fixedly. "Has there been a battle between the 'Crusaders' and the enemy?"

"There has not been a regular engagement, but they have met," he replied slowly.

"With the result that the 'Crusaders' were defeated?" she asked, breathing hard.

"The regular troops were compelled to evacuate a position that they had taken up."

There was silence. The messenger, brave man and good priest as he had proved himself in both capacities, quailed before the intensity of her gaze. The abbess, who was an active little woman, with no lack of readiness on ordinary occasions, had no trite words to fit the present moment.

"Where was Captain Zacharias?" asked Irene at last in hollow tones.

"Captain Zacharias was second in command. Captain Gerard——"

"Answer me; did Captain Zacharias fall whilst in command?"

"He did."

"And Captain Zacharias was my father."

For a moment the girl cast a bewildered look round the four walls of the room as if she were looking for some familiar face, then with that strange power of recall which she held over herself, she tooked the proffered letter which she had hitherto waved impatiently aside.

"I thank thee very much," she said softly.

She turned to leave the room. "I must pray the reverend mother to break this news to my sister Neroula."

The instincts of abbess and ex-priest alike told them that any words of attempted consolation would be unavailing here, and so they allowed that mournfully proud figure to pass without any verbal show of sympathy; but the priest bent low his head, and the abbess arose from her seat. This silent homage to the majesty of self-contained grief was spontaneous.

Irene's footsteps slowly and almost mechanically took their way to the small piece of walled garden, which at that hour was most likely to afford her an undisturbed retreat. The letter that she had received from Gerard still lay unopened, crushed up in her hand. The one great blow that had fallen upon her, admitted no ministrations but those which her own thoughts

could give her. No human being could help her in those first moments of grief. Her heart gave out no outspoken wish of longing love, "Oh, that my betrothed, that Gerard were here!" for the one idea that dominated over all others was, "Had Gerard Lowe not come to our village, my father had not died." That idea, however, was totally unmixed with any feeling of resentment towards Gerard as the indirect cause of the pappas' death. She felt something akin to a proud joy in the midst of her sense of desolation, that her father had fallen as "Captain Notala," in arms against the Turk. That he had fallen thus, and had not died by disease, was the only consolation that she found to cling to in those dark moments. But why should he have fallen thus? why had not some saint of the church thrown an ægis before him, and saved so valuable a life for his country? Had she not prayed enough when she had asked for this with nightly tears? Why had he been suffered to fall? Why? Because she, his daughter, had allowed a stranger to take possession of a heart and soul which, before he had crossed her father's threshold, she had vowed should be devoted only to the service of her country.

The way in which Irene paved the way for arriving at this conclusion was full of unreason,

and a mind less richly endowed by nature would have had no such perplexities. She had at so early an age been initiated into the patriotic and soldierly longings that dominated the priest in her father; she had at so early an age comprehended how a son would have been able to fill up that unsatisfied longing, that she gave herself up to supply, as far as possible, that gap in his life; and she had had the solace of knowing that the flame of enthusiasm had not died out in her father's breast, chiefly because of her ardent, ever-living sympathy. Following upon this cherished idea, and fostered by the isolation of her life, arose the doubt whether she had not sinned against the cause she had vowed herself alone to serve, in taking to her heart a stranger to her country and religion, and allowing a passionate earthly love to harbour in her soul. Tears of repentance, however, and many prayers might atone, and if victory came, it would come as an answer that her vigils had been accepted. The answer had come.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LETTER FROM THE CAMP

DURING the next three or four days the whole of Tenos was astir. Two vessels had arrived bringing orders from the provisional government to the effect that all men, whether belonging to the regular or irregular troops who had been invalided but were now able to serve again, should embark on those vessels. Orders for their several destinations would be delivered later on. Necessary equipments were sent to supply any deficiencies in arms and clothing. Irene, to the surprise of the abbess and the nuns, instead of exhibiting that prostration of grief that precludes all activity of mind or body, took an energetic part in the general movement. At the first coming of the government vessels a new spirit seemed to be infused into her. It was Neroula who seemed to be overwhelmed with sorrow, and who, therefore, needed the greater sym-

pathy, and it was upon Neroula, as heretofore, that the greater sympathy and soothing caresses were bestowed.

Neroula, who had heard that a letter had come from the English captain who was betrothed to her sister, had been besieged by the nuns, who had not lost their feminine interest in such a matter, with manly questions; but Neroula was unable to gratify the lively curiosity that they evinced, for Irene had told her nothing concerning the contents of that letter. Only once, as if in pity to the tearful, wistful young face that looked up to her, and in answer to a sudden impulse, she drew the girl to her breast, and said tenderly, "Take comfort, my poor Neroula, our father died the death of a patriot and a hero."

"But Captain Gerard—is Captain Gerard unhurt?"

"Our father died in his arms."

Neroula's tears burst out afresh as Irene releasing her, kissed her brow, and turned away.

It was by the dim light that hung before the ikon in her cell that Irene Notala, upon the evening of the fourth day that had elapsed since the letter from Gerard had reached her, smoothed out the crumpled paper that she had carried

about with her all that time, unopened, and broke the seal. She held it a long while with eyes fixed upon it, as if some haze hung over the paper and obscured its words, and the leaves fluttered between her fingers; and then she read it through without once pausing during the perusal.

"THE CAMP, AT NAUPLIA.

"MY OWN BETROTHED LOVE,

"Nothing but my solemnly pledged word could keep me from thee in this dark hour, and although I also swore at the same moment that I would not approach thee, even by letter, until I could announce that the cause had so far triumphed as to justify my claiming thy promise to be my wife; yet surely this, our present mutual sorrow, justifies me for breaking silence. Alas, that my first message to thee should be one of defeat and death. Thy father, my dearest Irene, was a born hero; but we were surprised, and we were outnumbered, and no amount of heroism could be of any avail. As he breathed out his last in my arms, for I myself had the privilege of bearing him from the field back into our intrenchments, the words on his dying lips commended his daughters to my care. We laid him in his grave with due honours, the general

himself being present. I will not dwell long upon this terrible loss, although I loved thy father as much as I revered him, and it is indeed very terrible. It may be a consoling thought, however, now and for ever, to know that there was so strong an affection between us. Dearest, noblest Irene, let not thy heart droop because of the failure of this expedition, from which we hoped so much. There is heavy work before us, and many hindrances to overcome, but we shall succeed eventually. The general has hitherto had great difficulties to encounter in combining with the irregulars. It seems almost impossible to coalesce with them. This is much to be deplored. The general is a great tactician, and is, moreover, so much of a disciplinarian as to be almost entirely uncomprehended by the brave men who fight without such knowledge and experience. He may be too unyielding, he may too openly show his contempt for their guerilla kind of warfare, and he demands an obedience to orders that hitherto has been almost a thing unknown among the Greeks. If he were commander-in-chief of the whole forces, instead of being only the general of a section, things would go on better. I still hope, however, and more than hope, I believe. The divergence of opinion between the Greek comman-

der of the irregulars, and the French general, accentuated by their equally warm temperaments, will delay, but it will not obliterate. There is some prospect that England, roused by the fate of Mesolonghi, will take an active part before long, and the more heavily weighted counsels of our graver nation may moderate the fiery elements in such avowedly great soldiers as Favier and Karaiskaki. I have myself had a most assuring interview with Lord Cochrane, who, although blunt and uncompromising, is a true and straightforward man. I do not apologize, my dearest Irene, for writing to you in this strain. I write to you as to one, who, though a woman, can follow these details with intelligent interest as well as interested feeling. I see in thee the hero and the patriot, the true daughter of thy ever-dear father, as I set down these words. Ah, when I hear of cowardice and desertion among our troops, I am reminded how unequally some of the gifts of Providence are bestowed. Here I have seen men to whom nature has given robust forms and physical strength, who flee at the first sound of the enemy's guns, whilst a young girl, a lovely woman, as my own Irene, has the soul of a hero given to her in vain. No, not in vain, unworthy thought! for when I think of thee, thou noblest

as well as fairest of thy sex, I am ever inspired with new courage, with fresh hopes!

"We are upon the eve of a greater struggle than ever—I say greater, because, since Mesolonghi fell, Kioutahi contemplates advancing into Attica, and threatens to march upon Athens with overwhelming forces. Pray for us—pray for the success of our arms in repelling the foe from the sacred city—pray with the added force of thy dear father's sacred memory!

"My dearest, dearest Irene, it seems hard for me to close this my first letter to thee with no outpouring of the deep love that I bear to thee. Alas, that I must limit myself to the dry details of a cruel war, and say nothing of that holy trust in thy devotion to me, that in every sorrow, in every disappointment, in all the weary life in a camp during hours of inaction, acts as a beacon light. Irene, my beloved, I do not ask thee not to forget me—I will not insult thee so much. Our love is eternal. Forgive me for writing even so much.

"Thine—and thy country's—
"From life till death,
"GERARD LOWE."

The flush that had risen to her cheek when she had first broken the seal, never paled away

as she read and re-read the above, but once or twice a smile flickered upon her lips, and her eyes kindled with transient light. For the fourth time she again perused it, lingering over it as if she were spelling out each word and was loth to leave the one for the next that followed. But the end was again reached. Kissing the senseless paper as if it were an authentic manuscript of Holy Writ, she folded it and refolded it tenderly and carefully, and then holding it with steady hand over the flame of the little lamp, she watched it till it was reduced to ashes.

The hour for the service of "After Vespers" had come, and some faint echoes of chanting were borne upon her ears as she stood. She recognized it to be a form that was in daily use in the convent, having been specially written for times of trouble and affliction by the monk Theocritus. Irene raised her bowed head and listened. As she caught the distant words of the ode—she lifted up her hands on high and repeated aloud the strophe. "Israel journeyed on foot through the deep as upon dry land, and seeing the Egyptians their pursuers overwhelmed, 'Let us sing a hymn of victory to God,' they cried."

As Irene had never before absented herself from "After Vespers," Neroula, at the con-

clusion of the office, repaired to her sister's cell, to see what might be the cause of her absence.

The cell was apparently vacated.

A dim sense of undefined fear thrilled through the young girl as she looked around. Upon the floor beneath the ikon, lay a heap of burnt paper, and in the far corner, not at first distinguishable in the dim shadowy light, she saw what appeared to be a bundle of clothing.

"Irene!" shrieked Neroula, in an agony of dread, "Irene—dear Irene!"

Wrapped round by an embroidered head-kerchief the hands of the trembling girl drew forth two long thick coils of wavy chestnut-coloured hair, that had evidently been cut off quite close to the head. Irene herself was gone.

CHAPTER XIX

A VISITOR AT THE CAMP AT ELEUSIS

KIOUTAHI, the general of the Sultan's forces, was not slow in following up his intentions in respect to an invasion of Attica, which Gerard Lowe had alluded to in his letter to Irene. Leaving a sufficient garrison in Mesolonghi, he marched towards Athens in June, 1826, with 10,000 men, horse and foot, and with plentiful artillery, and swept over Bœotia without opposition, whilst Omer Pasha with a like force inundated Attica to the Peiræus, burning the standing sheaves of corn, and carrying off the flocks. The insufficient force of the Greeks that was then stationed at Eleusis, was quite unavailing to meet such a foe, and there was nothing left for the President Goura but to shut himself up in the Akropolis.

Many of the Athenians, at the reported approach of the enemy, had fled to Salamis, but

there still remained in the city of Athens and the Akropolis together, eleven hundred men capable of bearing arms, besides women and children, in all about fourteen hundred souls. During this interval Gerard Lowe remained at the camp at Eleusis, awaiting a summons from Favier. His messenger to Irene had long since returned, but had brought with him neither written word or spoken message, nor could he learn anything more than that the *papadopoula*, Irene Notala, was of a haughty spirit that scorned to show its grief before the world. That was a fact that had been long well known to Gerard, but yet he had fondly hoped that at a time of such deep affliction, she would have sent him some small token, some little greeting. Was the poor girl, in spite of her pride, heart-broken, and beyond the help of sympathetic interchange of words? What would he have given to be able to snatch her to himself away from the dreary convent life, for which her unbending temper so eminently unfitted her, and where there could be no one to whom she could confide her aspirations. It would be hazardous, possibly, to take her to his side at this juncture, to expose her to the dangers that were lowering in every direction; but yet, he intuitively thought, it would accord better with the character of Irene

than to remain much longer at Evangelistria. There were many other noble women who were encouraging their husbands by their cheerful companionship, and displaying incomparable patience and absence of anything like fear, at this very moment. Yes, that was true, but a sigh was wrung from his bosom as he reflected that it was owing to his persuasions that the father had gone from his village home to be slain. Must his selfishness run the risk of what might be a still greater sacrifice? Might he not be summoned at any moment to take the field at some greater distance—whither a wife could not possibly accompany him? No, it could not be. He threw himself on to a stool in his tent and rested his arms upon the rough table therein. Ah, if Irene had only sent him three little words—"I love thee"—that he could wear as a talisman at his heart; but not one—not one.

He was at this moment aroused from his melancholy reverie by the entrance of a soldier belonging to Vasso's corps.

"The advance guard, Captain Lowe, has stopped a priest and a woman who had come to the camp to seek you. As it refused to let them go forward until your orders were received, the woman, who appears to be young, gave into my

hands this packet, which she said would explain all." Thus saying, he laid the said packet upon the rude table at which Gerard was sitting. He motioned the man to withdraw. A feeling of dread was suddenly awakened in his mind lest the vague wish, the thoughtless, the selfish desire of a few minutes previous, was about to be realized. The hand that had lifted the packet held it for a while in a lax grasp, and unopened. When he at last tore asunder the paper that enveloped it, there fell upon the ground a green twig of Amygdala.

Gerard sprang to his feet. Irene at the camp, and as a token of her presence the old sign with its message, "I love thee dearly!" A moment before he had longed for three little words only. Here were the words he had longed for, and behind them was Irene herself. The gladness, that at the mere idea of such an advent had flittered through his heart for one moment a short time since, vanished before the reality. Irene, the proud Irene, to come thus unbidden to the camp, with no other escort than a priest!

Gerard called the man who was awaiting his orders, who immediately reappeared.

"Gianni," he said gravely, "the lady is the daughter of late Captain Zacharias Notala, and my affianced wife. Go forward with an escort

of three or four horse, and conduct hither both the lady and the priest who is with her." He felt that this open declaration, though repugnant to his own feelings, was imperatively demanded by the occasion.

"My poor Irene," he exclaimed aloud, half-pityingly, when the cavalry escort that he had asked for had departed, "my poor Irene!" He strode to and fro the narrow limits of his tent, as he said these words, with precipitation. "Madness though it be, Irene Notala must become my wife this very night. The priest comes with her very opportunely. Good heavens! is the poor girl's mind so much unhinged by the loss of her father that she has broken through all decorum, unknowing what she is doing?"

The impatience of a lover awaiting his mistress is proverbial, but no such impatience made the minutes seem hours to Gerard in his present chafed mood. The agitation and surprise into which he had been thrown had almost reached the point when those sensations develop anger, when the tramp of horses' hoofs announced the return of the escort. As these sounds broke upon his ear a sudden revulsion of feeling took possession of him. After all it was Irene who had come—Irene who would soon be clasped within his arms. His unquiet pacing was arrested and

he stood still, drawing himself up to receive her with formal courtesy.

As the curtain of the tent was drawn aside, he advanced and bent down to kiss the hand of the shrouded and cloaked figure that entered—led by an elderly priest. "A few minutes alone, reverend father." The priest withdrew. "Irene, my dear Irene!" With trembling fingers Gerard essayed to undo the wraps that enveloped the beloved form, but the mantle was tightly clutched, and held before the face and drooping head.

"How long has my Irene learnt the arts of coquetry?" he said gently; "nay then, my beloved, I must risk the rending of thy drapery;" and plucking back the thick veil with a stronger hand—not Irene—but Neroula stood before him.

The drapery fell from his hand, and he started back.

"What foolery is this, Neroula?" he gasped. The girl made no answer, but put her hands before the face which he had but a moment before uncovered; "What foolery, I say, is this, Neroula?" and he laid a hand upon each of her shoulders, "Speak—what means this?"

Neroula began to weep, but her hands were held tightly before her face.

Gerard Lowe was now really angry, and in the

concentration of his wrath he shook the shoulders he held with his hands ever so slightly.

"Speak, Neroula, if thou canst! say, what does this mean?"

"It means," sobbed the girl, "that I love thee!" Gerard recoiled, and his hands dropped from her shoulders.

"Art thou mad?"

"It means that I love thee, Gerard Lowe, that *I love thee dearly.*"

"Ha—what is this! darest thou come to me, girl, to me, the betrothed of thy sister, professing a foolish love—and using a symbol that belongs to her of right?"

"If thou mean'st the almond bough, Gerard Lowe," she answered moodily, "that was my own message of love to thee always, and Irene had no part in it."

She let fall her hands from her face and looked at him.

"Then, they were not the hands of Irene that nightly laid boughs of Amygdala upon my cushion?" Gerard said this in a low voice, as if he were soliloquizing rather than addressing Neroula.

"No—it was I. I, who loved thee more than she did!"

"Unthinking child! when did I ever strive to

gain thy love? when did I ever give thee any encouragement?"

"When thou took'st the twigs of Amygdala and hid'st them in thy belt."

"It was by myself alone, then, that I was befooled. I ought to have known that Irene would never have stooped to such devices," he muttered. "Neroula," he continued in a gentler tone, after a short pause, "Neroula—thou hast imagined a grievous wrong to thy sister, and hast committed a most imprudent act in coming here; but thou art but a child, and thou shalt not suffer for thy rashness. What thou hast spoken shall be forgotten by me as the mere words of a thoughtless child. There remains nothing for me, then, to do, but to send thee under safe convoy back to thy sister, and Evangelistria, with all possible speed."

"Thou may'st kill me, if it please thee, Kyr Lowe," cried Neroula, defiantly, "but thou shalt not force me back to Evangelistria, now that my sister is no longer there."

"Your sister—no longer at Evangelistria," exclaimed Gerard; "whither, then, has Irene gone?"

"If Irene had been living, and at Evangelistria, I suppose I could not have come to thee!"

"What words are those, Neroula—where is Irene?" and he caught her by the arm.

"No one knows," she answered sullenly, "it is thought that she is dead."

"Dead!" For a moment Gerard stood as if transfixed with horror, and then, as Neroula seemed bent upon being stubbornly uncommunicative, it was his turn to plead. He had not as yet asked her to be seated, he now drew her to a seat. "Thou must be weary, and full of sorrow, poor child, and I have hurt thee in my unreasoning anger. 'Irene thought to be dead!' what do those words, falling from thy mouth, really mean, Neroula?" It was only by tender and caressing words, as an elder brother uses to a young and wayward sister, that Gerard at last wrung from Neroula the strange disappearance of Irene, and the general belief at the convent that her mind had become unhinged; and that in a sudden paroxysm of grief she had cast herself into the sea.

The greatest of all sorrows are borne in stillness of heart. Gerard, who a few moments since was loud in anger, was now crushed into silence by the magnitude of his grief; and his voice was low as if in the very presence of death.

"Was it well," he said at last, "was it well to make such haste to come to me—if this sad tale be true—was it well?"

"I love thee, Gerard, and I have always loved

thee; Irene never loved thee so well, and Irene is dead."

"And Irene being dead, thou couldst think that my love might pass on the moment from her to thee—unhappy girl—thou must return to Evangelistria, and that directly."

Before he could prevent her, Neroula had flung herself before him, and clasped his knees.

"Send me not away from thee, Gerard, let me stay with thee. If thou lov'st me not, for Irene, for my father's sake, drive me not away."

In a gesture of impatience Gerard had thrust one hand into his breast, a habit that had come to him of late, and his fingers touched *the string of amber beads* that had belonged to Neroula's dead father. "My poor child," he said, stooping down and raising her with both hands, "thou art in complete ignorance of what a soldier's life means, and of the surroundings of a camp. Were I ever so willing, thou couldst not live with me here as with a brother; but thou shalt not be sent back to Evangelistria. I will care for thee in some other way." He remained in deep thought a few moments.

"Thou hast come, my poor, unhappy girl, into the thickest of the fray, and the only place that I can think of now as promising a safe, and, I pray God, an abiding shelter, is the Akropolis

of Athens. I will write forthwith, and commend thee to the care of a most excellent and patriotic woman, the wife of Goura. Weeping is in vain at this juncture, Neroula, and I thank God that no action of mine has brought this about. I can do no better for thee; but I will watch over thee, my poor Neroula, so long as life lasts, for the sake of the father to whom but now thou madest appeal."

He sat down at the table and wrote a short note, and then going to the door of the tent gave orders that an armed escort should be got ready to attend upon a daughter of the late Captain Zacharias to the Akropolis with a letter to Madame Goura.

"I must ask that you, holy father, will also accompany the maiden, and upon her safe arrival, and when you have placed her in the charge of Madame Goura, the escort can see you on the road whithersoever you wish to go."

"I will go to the monastery of Petrakion," answered the priest.

"I fear that monastery will not long be a safe shelter for you. If the enemy succeed in marching upon Athens, Petrakion will be the first place that will fall into their hands. I shall accompany the escort, Neroula," he continued, turning to the weeping girl, "for some distance

along the road, until I have ascertained that the ways to the Akropolis are clear and open, and present no impediments, or show of possible perils to be encountered."

Gerard spoke in a tone of such decision that Neroula offered no further resistance, and suffered herself to be placed upon her mule without another word.

Gerard rode by her side, occasionally proffering some little attention, but for the most part preserving a profound silence. The fresh mules that had been obtained for her and the priest went at a good pace, and although the sun was rapidly sinking, it might be possible to reach Athens before night had completely set in. Gerard had insured that all respect should be paid to Neroula, but he had taken care to rectify the mistake in his first announcement, and the word was passed rapidly along, that it was not the elder but the younger daughter of the patriot, Captain Zacharias Notala, who was proceeding to the Akropolis to be placed under the charge of the President Goura's wife.

They rode on in profound silence, past the remains of the Eleusinian Akropolis, where the ruins of a temple of wondrous beauty lay piled, column upon column, in endless confusion; which had been decaying age after age, through-

out the wars and desolating conquests of heathen times, throughout the shuddering contempt of Christian rule, and throughout the long enslavement of the Turks. They rode past the silent windmills, whose gaunt arms stretched out in the gathering shadows with an aspect of imploring. On, on, along the winding curves of the road, till at a sudden bend, a wide expanse of sea appeared in sight, the curling rippling of whose waves sighed a mournful cadence to the evening breeze; on, still on, until the group of huts and a small inn, that together signified Daphne, was reached. On a roadside wall, a small Christian shrine, inclosing an almost undistinguishable ikon, was dimly indicated by a taper that some pious hand had placed there not long before, and which, in the face of a rising wind, showed signs of impending extinction. The priest turned his mule aside, and dismounting, stopped behind for a few moments to tend it and to murmur a prayer. Only a few minutes later, and the monastery of Daphne was reached. The decaying walls of the Christian sanctuary that had succeeded to the Pagan one formerly occupying the same site, cast dreary lengths of shadows around. Within those walls, however, there was the picture of the favourite Greek saint, Elias. The escort was composed only of Greeks from Karais-

kaki's army, and were as piously disposed as their great commander; so at this point they all drew rein, crossed themselves, and invoked the saint. In that interim how could Gerard refrain from a silent ejaculation for divine counsel, borne back as he was in memory to a humble fane with a like dedication, that had played its part in that strange drama that had opened itself out there, and now seemed to have reached its tragic close. In that interim Gerard heard again the now almost inaudible sobs of Neroula, whose whole attitude betokened a compelled resignation.

They were again in motion, and the monastery being left behind, the sacred way was now entered. With the rising slopes of fir-clad hills on either side, were dotted here and there many a votive shrine of old Greece.

They had met no one, and the whole route as far as the eye could reach, seemed to be perfectly open.

Gerard gave the word to halt.

"The way appears to be perfectly safe, so that you will probably reach Athens without meeting with any obstacle. Make no delay, however, but hasten upon your journey. I go no further. May God protect thee, Neroula. Farewell."

Gerard did not wait for a reply, but set spurs

to his horse, and began to gallop furiously back to the camp; but gradually, with slackened rein, he let his horse fall into a foot pace unchecked.

The murmuring of the pines, the deserted altars, the outlines of the dreary monastery, and the distant wailing of the sea, all whispered, all spoke one name. By a sudden impulse he pulled up his horse when he reached the wayside shrine, as if he also would fain trim the feeble taper, but despite the care of the priest, all was dark, and its light was quenched.

No greater mystery had old Eleusis ever sought to unravel than why the gods allowed noble lives to die out in clouds of mist ere their aims were fulfilled. Such was the course taken by Gerard's thoughts.

"Irene dead!"

CHAPTER XX

AMMUNITION TAKEN TO THE AKROPOLIS

WITHIN a very few days the Turkish general, Kioutahi, moving forward with rapid strides, left Thebes to march upon Athens. The monastery of Petrakion, which lay in his path, was, as Gerard had foreseen, quickly taken and occupied, and his whole power was brought to bear upon the Akropolis. A thrill of alarm went through the civilized world. They, who had borne with resignation the carrying away the daughters of Greece into ignoble slavery, shuddered at the bare surmise of a possibility of the august Parthenon suffering outrage.

The brave and impetuous Lord Cochrane felt his soul stirred to its very depths, and, with his hand on his sword, swore fealty to the Greek provisional government, solemnly declaring upon his nomination as Lord High Admiral, that he would spend his blood in the cause of Greece.

At the instance of the government, which had been transferred to Egina, the allied forces of the regulars under General Favier, joined with the national army and the irregulars commanded by Karaiskaki, all fired alike by the desire to save the Akropolis and to drive the Turks out of Attica. A reinforcement of seventy philhellenes had arrived at Methen from Paris, bringing with them a large sum of money that had been supplied by the different brotherhoods for the purchase of war material, and in the beginning of August, the two armies, coalescing, marched to Athens.

The two able men in command, equal in authority, and to a certain extent independent of each other, found themselves at the very outset unable to act with that perfect co-operation which was required to insure success. Favier possessed cavalry, and his soldiers were well drilled, but the army of Karaiskaki was composed of irregular infantry, of men who had no experience in fighting pitched battles on plains, and against horse.

The loss of the battle of Haidari within a few miles of Athens was due to this unfortunate difference in the troops. The Greeks and their auxiliaries had mustered all their available strength. Among the Greeks there were many names which have written themselves in history

as "the bravest of the brave." Of the French commander and of those acting with him there is no need to speak, but ability and valour, whether found in Greek or philhellene, could not stem a disaster consequent upon opposing elements attempting to work in unison.

With this defeat, all hopes of any immediate relief of the Akropolis was abandoned. It was supposed to be victualled for a year; but by the arrival of a reinforcement of three hundred men, who under the masterly management of their leader effected a safe entrance, the food supplies of the besieged were necessarily reduced. Nevertheless, the garrison in the Akropolis was resolute in rejecting all terms of capitulation. It had no fear that it could be surprised, or taken by storm. Those in command knew that they could only be starved out, and they had made up their minds.

General Goura had been killed by a chance shot. His noble wife, to whose care Gerard had intrusted Neroula, was of Spartan simplicity of character. At her husband's funeral she upbraided the soldiers for weeping, adding, "Do you wish to kill me?" And she, too, was dead, buried under the ruins of a falling column of the Erechtheum, which Goura had utilized as a home for her and his family. Earthworks had been

thrown up for its better protection, and the foundations being thereby loosened, a bomb from the enemy had caused the fall of a portion.

A blank horror seized upon Gerard when the news of this catastrophe reached him at Methen, whither he had retired with Favier after the defeat at Haidari. Neroula, then, was dead also—the last and the youngest child of the priest Zacharias—who with his dying breath had besought him to take care of "little Neroula."

A profound melancholy possessed him, and it was in vain that Favier, who had contracted a great affection for him, strove to arouse him out of the stupor into which he had fallen.

"I am thinking, Lowe, and it is what I have thought for a long time, that nothing will do for you but a few weeks' absence in Western Europe. I have been brought up among scenes of this kind, but until you came here you were a man of peace. It is telling upon you. You are looking ten years older than you did a few months since."

"Inaction is not good for me, any more than it is for yourself, General. I shall not leave for England until the cause in which I have embarked is either carried through or hopelessly lost. Not now, certainly less than ever, is it

possible for me to think only of my own welfare."

Favier shot a keen look at him, but said no more.

It was necessarily a time of gloom for both of them. News was continually brought to them of brilliant but profitless successes of the Greeks, in all of which the daring of the brave Karaiskaki was conspicuous. Kioutahi would have paid a high price to win over the true-hearted soldier—to whom the Sultan through his general offered a captaincy.

Favier sighed on hearing these things, feeling that, notwithstanding his admiration of the man, he could not work with him side by side.

He was in this frame of mind when he gladly received a message from the government, asking him whether he would accept the perilous task of taking a supply of ammunition to the Akropolis. At the mere mention of it, Gerard's heart leapt within him, and a light came to his eyes. If the expedition were successful, he would be able to ascertain whether Neroula might not have escaped in the catastrophe of the Erechtheum. Were she yet alive, there would be left to him an opportunity of rescuing from death or captivity the favourite daughter of the pappas, and of redeeming the promise made

to the father. If he could get the girl safely out of the Akropolis, he would send her away from the seat of war, to Corfu for example, where he had influential friends.

The brilliant exploit of General Favier and a picked body of philhellenes in carrying war material into the besieged Akropolis right in the very teeth of the besieging host needs not to be told here. It has been told with all the fervour of the national historian. It sufficeth to say that they got in under a heavy fire, carrying the several loads that had been apportioned to each man, whether officer or private.

Great was the joy with which the incomers were welcomed by the besieged, who were overflowing with gratitude and enthusiasm. It was not, however, the intention of Favier to remain, nor to yield to the loud clamours that besought him to abide and take upon himself the defence.

"You will not fall for lack of men, but for lack of food," was his reply; and he considered how he could best insure a safe exit for himself and his followers.

Gerard's eyes sought everywhere for Neroula among the women who crowded around them weeping and blessing; and his heart sank when he saw her not; but when the first exuberance of joy was abated, and he was able to make in-

quiries, he was rejoiced to hear that the daughter of the late Captain Notala had escaped with her life, although her health had suffered much from the shock. It now only remained to seek her out, and to take her back with them in company with some other women who were longing to flee.

"Why, Lowe!" exclaimed Favier with astonishment, "our going away is watched for hourly by the forewarned and vigilant Turks. If we can get away by ourselves we shall be fortunate, but encumbered with women the thing is an impossibility. I would rather carry back those bags of powder than a charge of women. There would be less risk."

Every day and every hour proved that to get out either with women or without was no longer to be thought of.

"We shall have to stay here after all, Lowe, and take our chance; there is no help for it. So we must begin at once to economize our provisions. The fifth month of the siege is already gone, and it may be many months before we are relieved.

"I am sorry for your young friend, Notala's daughter," he added with a smile, "but all that you can do for her now is to reserve her a daily pinch out of your own rations."

CHAPTER XXI

THE AKROPOLIS CAPITULATES

WEEK succeeded to week and month to month, until the term for which it had been stated that the Akropolis could hold out was nearly reached; but they who held the command did not waver. They wished to send away the regulars and the women and children by some ship if one could be sent, and to be left to fight it out alone; thinking it possible that the besiegers would become weary and raise the siege. All proposals for capitulation were rejected with scorn. Every effort to relieve them both by sea and land had been ineffectual. The attack on the army of the besiegers by Lord Cochrane, who had been warned against it by Karaiskaki, although it was conducted with skill, signally failed; when the admiral, who felt an intense interest in the fate of the besieged as well as in the Akropolis itself, entered into negotiations

with the Turkish general for the capitulation of the fortress. Favier was written to, but, as he was not in command, he declined to treat. It was at this juncture that the Austrian and French admirals, whose ships were riding in the Peiræus, offered their mediation.

The defenders would listen to nothing but going out with full military honours, and Kioutahi, longing to be master of the Akropolis, and dreading the casualties of a still longer and protracted siege of a place that could only be starved into a surrender, granted the required terms. The admirals provided against any perfidity or outrage by a stipulated number of Turkish hostages.

Gerard Lowe's voice faltered with compassion as he assisted the trembling Neroula on board the vessel that was in readiness to convey the women and children to Salamis. The youthful beauties of the younger daughter of the pappas of St. Elias had entirely faded during those many months of privation and terror. Her once rosy cheeks were wan and hollow, and her lips were colourless and parched. Large circles had dug themselves around her once lustrous eyes—those eyes whose hard brilliancy had repelled the refined taste of the artist. That dazzling hardness had now given place to a pathetic and

appealing look, akin to what has been observed in a stricken deer, and was shadowed into greater depths by the dark fringes of her drooping lids.

"Neroula, hast thou forgiven me?"

"For what, Effendi?"

The word "Effendi" bore him back two years to that morning on the slopes of St. Elias, and to his unexpected meeting with Irene.

"For sending thee hither, child," he answered sadly after a pause.

"But thou comest thyself to save me—to take me away," she said piteously, raising her eyes timidly to his face.

Gerard met that wistful gaze with one of tender pity. He had called her "child" involuntarily, as the helplessness of her nature had been made manifest to him through her sufferings; and that kind of loving compassion which the sight of anything beautiful, be it butterfly or flower, crushed or hurt, awakens in every sympathetic mind, welled to his heart as he looked down at her. There seemed such a gap of years between them. The fair-haired artist of two or three summers since, was a man prematurely aged. The crisped hair had fallen from brow and temples, and silvery streaks showed here and there, whilst deep lines were graven on

forehead and cheeks. He had not spared himself in any conflict with the enemy, but far deeper than any flesh wounds that he had received in battle, lay that hidden one that was festering at his heart's core.

What was he thinking of as he held Neroula's thin little hand, and regarded her with such sorrowful kindness? She did not withdraw her hand. Her lips quivered, and a tear glistened on her dark lashes.

"Thou dost not hate me, then, or thou would'st have left me here to die alone and uncared for."

"Hate thee, Neroula! thee—the daughter of Pappas Zacharias—thee—the sister of Irene!" his hand closed tightly over hers, "hate thee, God forbid."

"Ah!" a long-drawn sigh escaped her as she essayed to draw away her hand, "better that I had died under the walls of the Erechtheum."

"No, Neroula, no! better far for me that thou hast not died; better far for both. I swore to thy dying father that I would be a brother to thee; in the whole sense of the word as understood by thy countrymen. From this day forth thy life and happiness—as far as happiness be possible—shall be mine to care for. Thou art young—and thou mayst still be happy. Neroula, listen. I shall not leave thee in Salamis, but

shall take ship there, and will myself escort thee to Corfu, where I hope to place thee with an English lady whom I have long known and esteemed."

The gathered tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Will the Effendi come and see me sometimes?"

Again Gerard gave her the pitying glance of that something akin to affection, that is given to a wayward but suffering child. A species of affection that all weak, helpless things take as their right.

"Of course, Neroula, I shall go to see thee, and look after thy welfare as often as it is possible."

Gerard had written to his friend in Corfu, Lady A——, apprising her of his wish, if she were willing to undertake so onerous a charge, to give into her keeping a Greek orphaned girl, whose father had been his dear friend and comrade; and the letter had reached her. It was not the first time that this benevolent English woman had stretched out a rescuing hand; but she had never before been asked to take a Greek maiden, in however sore a strait, into the bosom of her family. To refuse anything to Gerard, at once so loved and respected, although she deemed

him the most impulsive of her countrymen whom she had ever met, was not to be thought of.

Captain Lowe was not long before he availed himself of the permission to take Neroula to her, and in his interview with Lady A—— he explained to her that, as Neroula would be always in the position of a sister, and might eventually have to live in England among his own people, he desired that no expense should be spared in educating her for such a probability; and, at any rate, she should be made conversant with both the English and French languages. "I do not for any flimsy accomplishments, however; and as to her wardrobe, I leave that also to your judgment. I do not think that she will be long before she will doff her national costume. Neroula Notala is not very patriotic," he added gravely. Lady A—— smiled. "I thought that she scanned my gown with great interest. She is rather nice looking."

"She was once very beautiful after a certain type," answered Gerard, "but it is a type that soon loses the bright tints that go so far to make up its beauty."

"Her eyes are very good," said Lady A—— with the air of a connoisseur.

Gerard made no reply; but the observation

brought to his mind Spyridon's remark, that "black eyes last for ever."

From Corfu Gerard went straight to Tenos. The gnawing at his heart demanded that he should at least make some effort to pierce the thick veil that hung before any explanation of Irene's disappearance.

As General Favier in the mean time had excited the unreasoning disfavour of the Greek populace at large, on account of the surrender of the Akropolis, his corps had broken up, and the bond between himself and the French officer was therefore for the present annulled.

The interview which he sought was readily granted to him by the Abbess of Evangelistria, but it in no wise lightened his heavily burdened heart. It was but a recapitulation of what he had heard from Neroula, and in regard to the supposed suicide, unduly emphasized, as it seemed to him.

The abbess dwelt so long upon the evidences of a deranged mind, that Gerard felt a strange sickening shudder run through him. She told him how the nurses at their dedication had their hair cut off, and that these severed tresses, that were a sign of their renunciation of the world, were all cast into one place, which if he chose he could see through a grating; there were

hundreds of such plainly visible, of all shades of colour. It was quite clear to the voluble abbess that the *papadopoula*, Irene Notala, being distraught, might deem herself to be under a vow of dedication, and had cut off her hair herself as a token.

Would he like to see the cell that she had occupied, she could show him the very spot where the severed plaits had lain?

Gerard shook his head mournfully, and took his leave. His visit to Tenos had only intensified his hidden pain.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DEATH OF A YOUNG PALLIKAR

GERARD LOWE, whose physical health had been greatly tried during the long defence of the Akropolis, made all haste to leave Tenos and its sad memories, and, feeling himself quite unfitted for active service, retired to Egina for the purpose of recruiting his strength. It was in Egina, when Athens was laid low, that all the principal families found a refuge—the government being transferred to this island upon the arrival of Kioutahi.

Here were gathered together all the most intellectual of the leaders of the revolution, with their wives and families. Foremost among the many refined and noble women, who were as conspicuous for their virtues and intelligence as for their beauty, Artemis, the wife of the learned George Gennadios, who at the outset of the war threw aside his books to take up the sword,

deserves a passing mention. Restless, and brooding over his secret grief, Gerard Lowe was saved from sinking into hopeless apathy by the friendship of this eminent lady; and, recalled by her wise counsels, he remembered that private sorrows should not overwhelm public duties. Her suggestions were occupying him one evening with redoubled force, as, sitting upon a small promontory overlooking the Ægean, he looked over her purple waves to where the Parthenon reared its bold, clear outlines against the clear sky.

"Undefiled from the conflict, it shall yet be free. Even now it stands out as a perpetual promise of victory to be won," he murmured.

If the occasional half hours with Madame Gennadios were inspiriting, he also derived no small solace from the reappearance of his old friend Spyridon, who considered that, having done a good share of service for the *Old One* in the Morea, he was at liberty to shift his quarters; and seeking out his former "Effendi," was heartily welcomed by him.

Spyridon was just the same as ever. He had been wounded over and over again, but, like his redoubtable chief, he seemed to bear a charmed life, and his wounds always healed.

He could scarcely comprehend, and was a

whit chagrined to find, that the "Effendi" was not enthusiastic over his many unsavoury details of bloodshedding whilst he was out with the *Old One*. Weary although Gerard often was, at the long drawn out accounts of hill fighting, upon which Spyridon loved to expand, it was those recitals which roused him from ever brooding upon the fate of Irene Notala. Moreover, Spyridon, in his frequent absences from the island, for he was free to go and free to come, learnt what was going on, and brought news from the mainland that would hardly have reached him otherwise.

On the morning that succeeded to the evening when he was gazing and musing upon the probable future of the distant Parthenon—at that moment in the grip of Turkish soldiers—the first object that he saw when he awoke was the figure of Spyridon, who was sitting cross-legged upon the ground watching him with great intentness.

Spyridon had been absent for several days.

"The Effendi has slept long, I would not awaken him."

"Thank you, my good Spyridon. I have slept but little lately, and have had many disquieting dreams, but this night I have slept well—very well, and the one dream that came to me was a pleasant one."

"What was the dream that was so pleasant, Effendi? Pleasant things are not so plentiful nowadays."

"Why, I dreamt that Athene had come and had freed her Parthenon—and that she showed herself to me—triumphant," said Gerard, smiling.

"Umph," muttered Spyridon, who was not versed in classic lore, but knew that Athene was in some way the patroness of the city.

"Umph," he muttered again, as if in disapprobation of the goddess's dilatory ways, "and was that the whole of the dream?"

"Yes, and quite enough," answered Gerard, stifling a sigh as his memory flew back to a certain morning when he had made a design for "Athene victorious." "It needed no more—but why art thou here?"

"The vessel I came over in, Effendi, had some sick pallikars on board who have been landed on the island to get a few days' change of air."

"Poor fellows!"

"There is one of them who will get another change soon. He was with Karaiskaki, and he is but a boy still."

"Poor fellow!"

"He seemed so ill, and such a mere lad, Effendi, that I would not let him go with the

others, but had him carried to a widow's cottage here. She lost both husband and son in that onslaught to free the Akropolis, and so is always willing to take in any poor fellow, because of her own son, you see, Effendi."

"That was well done, Spyridon. Poor woman —husband and son—her all?"

"Her all. I told her that the Effendi would go and see the lad—was that well?"

"A doctor would be of more use to him, Spyridon; I will see that one is sent."

"Perhaps it was not well, then, in me to tell the poor lad himself that the Effendi would go to him?"

"Hardly well, this time, and wherefore?"

"I told him that the Effendi was the brave Englishman who with the Frenchman and others took the ammunition to the Akropolis; and he would be glad to see you."

"That is a rather out-of-date story now, Spyridon; but I suppose soldiers like soldiers' tales, and thou must ever be prattling of them. I will go perhaps and see the lad to-morrow. Meanwhile take care that he has a doctor and all that is necessary."

"The time of his sojourning here is not for long; he's just like a dry autumn leaf now, that's been left hanging on a withered stalk—still

fluttering, but which the first puff of wind will bring down."

Spyridon was sometimes like the *Old One* of the Morea, who greatly indulged in metaphors. Seeing his persistence, Gerard made answer, "If the boy is in so bad a case, I will go at once."

Spyridon was rather a rough valet, but he promptly tendered his services, talking all the while.

"The lad had been with Karaiskaki for a year or more, and the general had a great liking for him, keeping him always by his side. When the general was brought back to his tent to die, he sent for the lad and gave him his blessing. A good Christian was our old Karaiskaki."

"Greece lost one of the noblest and purest of her sons when he fell," cried Gerard, with energy. "And was this young pallikar with the army that came to relieve us in the Akropolis?"

"He was, Effendi."

"And is dying of wounds received in that engagement?"

"No, he is dying of fever."

"Lead the way, Spyridon, and tell the widow who I am, and that I am coming directly."

"Widow Pandeli knows all about the Effendi. She has heard before of Captain Gerard Lowe

of the Crusaders. I'm told that this lad comes from the Parnes' district, where you were enlisting."

"What, was this sick boy one of my recruits?"

Spyridon twirled his moustache. "He was not one of the regulars at any time, Effendi, but he came from that part."

"Ah, he was with the irregulars, you say, under Karaiskaki. I had nothing, then, to do with his enrolment. Let us go."

"I made bold, Effendi, to take in a few rugs."

"Quite right."

Spyridon, who proceeded to show the way to the hut where the sick pallikar was lying, went in alone upon his arrival there, and exchanged a few words with widow Pandeli.

"It seems," he said on his return, "that the lad has fallen asleep, Effendi. Will you go and see him later on?"

"No, as I am here, I will go and sit by him, and watch for his awakening. Leave me," and passing into the inner room, Gerard closed the door behind him.

A tall window opposite the door threw the light that came from it full upon the bared head that was resting upon one of the rugs that Spy-

ridon had alluded to. This was rolled up to form a pillow, whilst a second was used as a couch, and a third, that had been laid across the lower limbs, covered all but breast and shoulders.

Gerard did not advance more than a few paces. He was suddenly arrested, it would seem, by the aspect of the sick youth before him, that was so unlike the usual type of pallikars. The head was bare, and the broad pale brow had apparently been bathed very recently, for drops of water hung upon the crisp curls that surmounted it. Wasting fever had dug hollows in cheeks and temples, and had flushed the former with harshly-defined circles of red.

Gerard dwelt with a fixity of gaze upon every curve of lip and chin, as a sculptor might have done if comparing a living model with some classic statue of Idoneus. A look of complete abstraction stole over him, as if he had lost all consciousness that the prostrate figure before him was not of marble, but was the body of a living man, who, already in the throes of death, was about to escape from his humanity. Gerard's eyes were rivetted upon the face. He moved not, he hardly dared to breathe, but his left hand softly drew from beneath his breast the string of amber beads. Still gazing and gazing,

as one whom some unaccountable spell has bound, his fingers closed over the amulet of Pappas Zacharias; when the heavy lids of the dying youth were slowly lifted, but as if unable to sustain their own weight, closed again immediately. The amber beads fell to the ground, and Gerard uttered an involuntary cry.

"Irene!"

The eyes opened again, this time to their full extent.

"Irene!" He threw himself on the floor beside her. "Irene, why hast thou brought this misery upon me," and burying his face in the rugs he wept aloud.

Two arms were stretched out towards him. "Gerard, my beloved, my husband!"

He raised his head. "Irene, why didst thou then this wrong to me—to me, thy husband?" The words of reproach were like blood drops from his heart.

The feeble, trembling arms that had clasped his neck essayed to draw him nearer.

"Hush, it was so willed," she murmured. "My country called me. From a child I had heard and listened to her voice, and had vowed to give myself up to her. Weep not, it was so willed that I should go forth and die for the cause, as my father had done before me."

"Irene! Irene! the anguish of it, the anguish of it! Had I not the same hopes, the same desires, would thine have burned less brightly because of me?"

"Yes, beloved, yes. When thou cam'st to St. Elias, it was then that lying voices began to speak to me, bidding me to give to thee my whole heart, my whole soul, to thee alone, and be happy. It was but a wile of Sathanas, for as I thought of thee, the love of country waxed cold. When the news came to me that my blessed father was slain and that I was orphaned, the false voices spoke again and still louder, and told me to flee to thee—to flee to thee, not to fight for our poor unhappy land, but to go with thee as thy bride to some place more loved of God, and leave it to its fate. Gerard, husband, I have triumphed over the devices of the evil one. Yes, I have triumphed. Grieve not, it was so willed, and what is written is written."

Gerard, by a strong mental effort, thrust back his grief. The clouds of mist that had enshrouded the memory of the priest's daughter were lifted at last, and there was a sunshine gleam as the dark suggestions of insanity and suicide that had clung to him like the pestilential vapours of malaria fell away.

The worn, pale face of the dying girl was

lighted up by the enthusiasm that like a flash of vital energy overcame present weakness, and lent a reflex of its power to himself.

"We have met at last, my Irene—I thank God that we have met at last," he whispered softly.

Supporting her with one arm, he laid the curled head upon his breast, and soothed her with loving words, mingled with the assurances that the hour of her country's deliverance was at hand.

As a sick child hushed upon its mother's bosom is lulled to sleep, so the spirit of the heroic girl, as she lay in his arms, seemed conscious of having at last found rest.

Poor widow Pandeli, who had softly opened the door during this interval, closed it as softly and withdrew.

After a while Irene raised her head.

"Thou'lt take care of poor little Neroula, dear Gerard?"

"I will."

"She loves thee—she has always loved thee."

The weary head fell back with a sigh, and nestled under the shoulder of her betrothed. But the dark angel was drawing near, his coming presaged by a sudden flaming up of the expiring taper of life.

"Lift me up—lift me up—Gerard—husband—

let me look upon the blue hills—upon the purple seas once more!"

He raised her in both his arms. Her dimming eyes strained to take in the beautiful panorama that lay before her.

"Dear—dear—country—it was worth a life!" she gasped.

Gerard felt a spasmodic quiver run through the form that now hung heavily in his embrace.

He laid her gently back upon the rugs, and kissed her chilling lips.

"My ever dear Irene!"

The widow Pandeli again opened the door.

"The *Kyria* Gennadios is waiting without," she whispered.

"Let her come in," said Gerard.

CHAPTER XXIII

AN ARTIST'S HOME NEAR LYKABETTUS

THE autumn of 1828 had come, and it was therefore some months since the Greeks, with the full concurrence of all the powers, had chosen the Count Kapodistria for their governor. He had already arrived at Nauplia, and had sworn in the name of the Holy and Indissoluble Trinity to serve with zeal and faithfulness the nation that had called him to rule over her. The country that he set himself to guide was a scene of widely spread desolation and ruin, where, in many of her most fertile districts, there were neither corn-fields, olive trees, nor vineyards, but only smouldering ruins and roofless walls. Nevertheless, Greece was freed.

But although the cruelty and rapacity of man may for a time make deserts and wildernesses of fruitful plains, and although an Ibrahim at Tripolitsa may plough up a conquered site and

sow its soil with salt, the forces of Nature will prevail in the end. With marvellous rapidity, when the condition of the rescued nation, and the state of her disorganized and impoverished people are borne in mind, did the labours of the Greeks bear fruit.

The seat of Government was still at Egina, but all eyes turned to Athens with feelings of sadness and longing. The aspect of the city was one of extremest misery; all the more touching because of the unsullied grandeur of her Parthenon, that stood out against the clear sky as a protest against the blackened heaps that cumbered the earth beneath. The labour of clearing away the accumulated rubbish that hid up the sites of former domiciles of the more wealthy families was at once commenced. Those families who, from a traditional love of learning, had been long established there, came back at once to seek out what might remain of their ancestral homes. Foremost among them were the illustrious George Gennadios and his noble wife, the descendants, on both sides, of a lineage as remarkable for their devotion to literature and art as for their patriotism. After much searching, the devoted couple found four bare scorched walls. A hastily prepared roofing of planks was put up, and beneath that they

passed their first night in liberated Athens. What to them was a labour of love, was not less so to many others, and soon, very soon, solid and substantial stone houses began to rise everywhere.

Not far from the hill of Lykabettus, where the dreamy asphodels quiver in the spring breezes, all up its slopes to the chapel-crowned summit that hangs out a lamp at night among the stars of heaven, there stood a newly-built house of the above kind. It had been erected for an Englishman who had taken an active part in the war of liberation, and who was now taking as active a part in the restoration of the city of Athens. In this house, built at his own cost, Captain Gerard Lowe, of the Crusaders, lived the life of a student and an artist. Besides the artistic and student life, he was a helper in the work of education, which was being put upon a more solid foundation by his comrade in arms, the George Gennadios before mentioned, who, having spent the bulk of his fortune in the work of liberation, was now devoting the remainder of his life to the improvement of the schools.

For some months post a yacht had been cruising in the Mediterranean, but had kept exclusively to Italian waters, for the owner, an English gentleman, who had his wife on board,

was carefully watching the course of events, before proceeding to the shores of Greece. Now, however, as all cause for anxiety as to the prudence of such a course was set at rest, the white sails of "The Bonny Clara" lifted themselves to the wind, and in less than a week the pretty craft was anchored in the Peiræus. Mr. Philip Warrenne, the owner of the yacht, as he assisted his wife on shore, appeared to be in as exuberant spirits as the best philhellene alive could have been, on first setting foot in a freed Greece. It must be confessed, however, that his smiles were due to the presence of an English frigate, the Union Jack of which dancing merrily in the breeze, met his eyes as they entered the harbour. The sight of the national flag at once inclined him to take the kindliest interest in every Greek ship or boat as well as in the sailors that manned them.

"Those are very neat craft," he said to his wife, "very neat craft, considering—and the men are as fine a set of fellows as one would wish to see."

The ricketty vehicle that he engaged to take them on to Athens could hardly be called a "neat craft," but the choice was limited, and Mr. Philip Warrenne was in high good humour.

Clara's heart was too full of vague expectation

to speak much during the four miles' drive from the Peiræus to Athens, but looked eagerly from side to side as if, now that she was really in Greece, she was expecting to see her brother at every turn. What an enigma was the brother she loved so much! Her simple mind was perplexed as she thought of his long and mysterious silence. He had written once or twice during the last two years, but his letters had been curt and unsatisfactory. She was now in the land that seemed to have enthralled him so deeply, as to make him forgetful of home ties. He had almost forgotten her, and in half an hour or thereabouts she should see him.

There were not many newly-built houses near the base of Lykabettus then, that the driver would have had much difficulty in finding this particular one, to which the English consul at the Peiræus had directed them. The coachman, however, having himself served, and having been among the besieged in the Akropolis when Captain Lowe of the Crusaders had helped to bring in the gunpowder; he was particularly anxious to impress the fact upon his fares, with a smiling affability and familiarity of gesture that was perfectly inexplicable and perfectly unintelligible. When he came near the Akropolis, his gesticulations became more complicated;

pointing to it with his whip, and striking his own breast with many a travestied attempt to pronounce the name of the "Capitan Ghe-rart Lovey."

There was no attempt at architectural beauty in the house before which the carriage drew up, but it had a honest, substantial look, being built entirely of blocks of stone and ignorant of stucco; whilst the door was wide and lofty. One rapid glance and a suppressed cry, and Clara, who would not wait to be assisted out, but although she was trembling in every limb, made haste to the portal, while her husband and the driver were endeavouring to come to some understanding about the fare. Mr. Warrenne had obstinately refused the assistance of a dragoman, the want of which was now made manifest; but as the coachman kindly undertook to instruct him in the values of the currency, the difficulty was adjusted in the usual way.

Whilst Clara was investigating the portal, in order to lay her hand upon the knocker or bell, the door was swung back upon its hinges, and a tall dark man, in all the paraphernalia of fustanella embroidered jacket, leggings, and a belt stuck round with very portentous looking weapons, appeared at the entry.

Clara started, and drawing back, Mr. Warrenne stepped forward to relieve her embarrassment.

"Is Mr. Frank Harbord at home?" he asked, with his clearest English intonation.

The man spread his right hand, with all the fingers opened out, upon his breast, and shrugged his big shoulders.

"Try the other name, Philip, the one he is known by here."

"Mr. Gerard Lowe!" shouted Mr. Warrenne, as if by loudness he would be more easily understood.

"A—h!" cried the man in fustanella, "the Capitain—Anglos?" with a little lifting up of his eyebrows, and a pause between each word.

Mr. Warrenne smiled, and nodded assent.

"N—o," answered the man apparently proud of his English; "the capitain—n—o, the madame—yees."

Clara darted an aggrieved look at her husband. "He might have told us that," she murmured.

"Yees?" said the man with a jerk of his head backwards, which signified, "Will you see the madame?"

"Come, Clara, let us go and see 'the madame;' you knew all about it two or three years ago. I suppose marriage was bound to follow before this."

"He might have written when he married," pouted Clara.

"Madame Ge-rard Lowe—ye—es?" repeated the man persistently.

They both bowed assent, when the man in fustanella, with a lordly air throwing back the door to its fullest extent, and graciously signalling them to follow, strode down a wide hall, the first glimpse of which announced that they were in the house of an artist, or lover of art. This impression was conveyed, not only by the few archaic marbles and vases that had been rescued from destruction and which were disposed here and there, but by the breadth, and general absence of crowding in their arrangement.

Striding a few yards in front, with that proud swing of the body and erect pose of the head that seem to be inseparable from the wearers of the Greek national costume, the man opened a door at the far end. After speaking a few rapid words in Greek to someone within the room, he turned round, and with a frank and familiar courtesy that had something especially *naïve* about it, he again laid his hand upon his breast, and with the slightest possible inclination of his fez-covered head, motioned to them to enter.

"The Kyria — the Madame speak the Ingleesh," he said, and withdrew.

"That must inevitably be Spyridon," whispered Mr. Warrenne, fumbling for his card-case.

Clara, who had got over her little feminine pique at not being duly informed of so interesting an event as a wedding, was in advance of her husband, when a lady of middle height, of an exceedingly pale complexion, and with large, very dark eyes that partially redeemed her face from a look of ill-health, came forward. The general appearance of the lady was that of a graceful, well-dressed Frenchwoman. Emboldened by the man in fustanella's assurance that "the Kyria spoke the Ingleesh," Clara, forgetful for the moment, addressed her as "Madame Frank Harbord."

"No—not here—not Harbord here," answered the lady quickly, with a faint smile.

"I beg your pardon—Madame Gerard Lowe, I suppose?"

"Yes—Madame—Ge-rard Lowe."

"Gerard Lowe is my brother," said Clara promptly, as she kissed her on both cheeks. "And you, I presume, are Irene."

"No, I am Neroula."

A painful silence of a few moments fell upon them all. A shade of colour passed over the pale face of the "Kyria," and her lips were slightly compressed.

Philip Warrenne, who had imperceptibly raised his eyebrows, was the first to speak. Being a very practical man, he was considering whether his very impulsive brother-in-law might not have been imprudent enough to marry a foreign lady under his assumed name, and blurted out:

"You will forgive my wife, madame, for addressing you as 'Madame Frank Harbord,' but such is my brother-in-law's real name, although it was his fancy to adopt another, which, not being his own, is unfamiliar to us."

"Yes, I do know—I do know—but he is Ge-rard Lowe here." And as if to clench the matter she added very decidedly, after a pause, "And to me—to me—he shall be Ge-rard all the years—all the years."

There was evidently a small amount of friction.

"Will my brother be home soon, dear Madame Lowe?" asked Clara, in the sweetest and most subdued of tones.

"Yes, I have sent Spyridon to bring him—he comes!" waving her hand in the direction of the window.

A moment more, and the brother and sister flung themselves into each other's arms. It was awkward for Philip Warrenne and for Madame Lowe.

"Madame has not seen her brother for so long?" asked the Kyria, rather frigidly.

"Not for a very long time, madame, and he is her only brother."

"Forgive me, my dear Philip," cried Gerard, releasing his sister and seizing Mr. Warrenne's hands, "forgive me."

"My dear fellow, what is there to forgive? but I think, as you must both have so much to say, that I'll leave you a little while to have it out, and take a stroll on to the Akropolis. We will reserve our talk till a more favourable opportunity," he added, with a laugh.

"Neroula," said Gerard, after Mr. Warrenne had bidden them all a temporary farewell, "I think that if you will excuse us for a short time I will show my sister my studio."

The Kyria bowed, and Clara, who had not quite recovered from the embarrassment into which she had been thrown by addressing her brother's wife as "Irene," felt that it would be a relief to both, and smiled assent.

As Gerard, holding his sister by the hand, led her round his sanctum and pointed out all the different studies that he had made, Clara could see one idea, one figure, present in them all. There was Athene either as goddess or as personified Wisdom, Athene triumphant, Athene

sad, Athene everywhere; and in every position and in each one she recognized the face of Irene Notala.

As her brother paused from time to time to point out some technical beauty in a classic, calling her attention to various points, she had a suspicion that his words dropped automatically from his lips, and that he was thinking of something else. For herself, she was quite conscious that this was the case. She was asking herself more than once how it had come about, that with the face of Irene all around, when the very air of the room seemed palpitating with the word "Irene," that the name of her brother's wife was Neroula.

They had gone round three sides of the studio when Clara's eye fell upon an easel upon which rested a half-finished drawing of the head of a youth. She stopped before it with an involuntary exclamation.

"That is a study for a picture I am thinking of painting—allegorical somewhat; it is to be a standard bearer wounded to the death, and is to be called 'The Victory Won.'

Clara could bear the tension of her heart no longer. "And that, too, is Irene," and flung her arms round her brother's neck.

"What of Irene?" she sobbed out.

"Irene is dead!"

"Dead?"

Gerard raised his sister's chin with one hand, and looked straight into her face.

"I see what is in your mind, dear child," he said calmly, with an almost paternal gravity, "the history that I am about to tell you must have been told some day, and why not now." He was silent for a few minutes, when placing a chair, he drew forth a stool for himself. "We will sit awhile." And then, with that exquisite face of Irene Notala before them, as it had been photographed in his soul, in those last moments of her life—when a gleam of glory lighted up the clouds of death with a vision of her country fréed—he told his sister the whole tale of how he had loved and how he had suffered. Clara's tears fell fast, but Gerard had passed the flood gates that dam up a passionate anguish from an everlastingly sad memory.

Meanwhile he had not said one word about Neroula, nor told her how it had come to pass, that Irene having died, he had taken her sister to wife.

Clara was puzzled, but there are some heart depths that even a sister dare not sound.

Gerard had ceased speaking. Clara, who had not ventured to lift her eyes from the ground

whilst she heard his voice, looked up. The expression of her brother's face was changed. He was gazing with a far-away look of absorption at the drawing on the easel; a smile seemed to be playing upon his lips, and in his hands was a string of amber beads.

Some undefined instinct forbade her addressing a word to him at this moment. He seemed to have forgotten her presence, and Clara also at this moment, arrived irresistibly to the conclusion that she must not seek to lift the veil, and resolved to ask no further questions.

Gerard Lowe, becoming suddenly conscious of his lapse, rose from his chair as he thrust away the amulet of Pappas Zacharias. "Forgive me, dearest, we must go back to Neroula; we have been away too long, and she will be wondering at our absence."

Before they re-entered the room they heard the sonorous voice of Mr. Warrenne in lively conversation with the "*Kyria*."

"Philip has made good use of his opportunities," said Gerard gaily.

"We have arranged it all, Frank. Ah, I forgot! it is to be Gerard—Gerard always—" cried Philip Warrenne, his face beaming with frank good humour, "we have arranged it all. Madame Lowe and yourself are to go with us for a short

cruise. Have no fear that I shall not bring you back again to your adorable Akropolis; but a few weeks on the sea is just what you both want, and what you shall both have."

Gerard looked at his wife. The hearty kindliness of Mr. Warrenne had brought back a slight tinge of the old sprightliness into the pale face, and the large dark eyes were turned upon him wistfully. The refrain of the Greek song came suddenly to his memory,

"Black eyes last for aye, for aye."

Neroula glided up to him and slid one hand into his.

"Thou wilt take me, wilt thou not, Ge-rard?"

"She is still so young," mused her husband, "only nineteen—a mere child—and she, too, has deeply loved—she, too, has greatly suffered."

"Thou wilt not say me no, wilt thou, Ge-rard? thou—wilt—take—me," she pleaded caressingly.

The strong hand of the man closed tightly over the little fingers that lay laxly in his grasp, and there came into his eyes a look of ineffable tenderness.

"Yes, dear Neroula, yes, dearest wife," he faltered in under tones, "we will go together; it may bring back the roses to thy cheeks."

"We must have Spyridon the inscrutable with

us, too," cried Mr. Warrenne, "it will be a new experience to have a klepht on board."

"As you please, dear Philip; you are master of the situation to-day."

WAR SONG OF RHEGAS

How long shall we, O Pallikars, in fastnesses abide,
Like savage beasts on desert hills, and sterile rocks to hide?
In caves to dwell—or only see the bare boughs over head—
Because for slavery's dire cause the world of men we've fled?
For this we leave our brethren, our Fatherland so dear—
Friends, parents, children, all that to our hearts are near.
For better is a freeman's life for one short fleeting hour,
Than forty years of bondage vile beneath a tyrant's power.

* * * * * *

Come hither, then, with ardour, and without one moment's loss,
And take your oaths together upon the uplifted cross.
Your country calls you; it is she who suffers for your sake,
And with a mother's tender voice your vows she bids you take,
'Mid good and learned counsels, and patriotic zeal.
This is the scope of all we teach—this what we all must feel,
That law must be our first intent—law only be our guide—

That law shall be our country's ruler—law, and none
beside;
For anarchy's another name for tyranny as dire,
'Neath which, like brutes, we should endure a still more
blasting fire!
So now, with both our arms upraised, to heaven lifted
high,
To God from our hearts' inner depths with one voice let
us cry.

THE OATH

"O King of all the nether world, now do I swear to Thee,
That in the grasp of tyranny henceforth I ne'er will be;
Never will bow before it—will never more abide
By its decrees—and from this cause will never turn aside;
But while upon this earth I live, my only aim shall be
To bear a bold and dauntless front against all tyranny;
And faithful to my country still to tear its yoke away,
And by my leader's side remain unmoved and steadfast
aye.
Should I dare break this solemn oath, may lightning fall
from heav'n,
Consuming me, that I become like smoke by strong winds
driven."

Πολεμιστήριον ὑπὸ Ρήγα.

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AMYGDALA