

but I believe this slaughter would not be so extensive under normal conditions. Our visits to the rookery disturbing the birds more than was usual, resulted in many a youngster being left unprotected.

It is gratifying to know that these wonderful denizens of the air are not likely to become extinct. Despite their thieving habits they proved to be a constant source of interest, and their unique ways brought forth many a laugh from even the most undemonstrative member of our party.

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## BIRDS BY THE WAYSIDE.

IN GREECE.

BY ALTHEA R. SHERMAN.

We reached Greece by the way of Constantinople. Had the direction of the journey been reversed it would have followed the course of historic Grecian colonization and thus have better pleased those who wish to take everything in its chronological order; but when one has waited more than forty years to visit Greece, it matters little by what route he arrives, so long as a fond dream is realized. This for two score years had been a subject for my dreams, both waking and sleeping, with a difference: The dreams of sleep pictured the Acropolis of Athens in all its ancient splendor. Fulfillment found it, as so often and accurately portrayed by pen and brush of others, leaving little aside from personal sensations to be gained by a visit to it. These proved a surprise for me. It appears that one may know clearly how deeply time and "the unspeakable Turk" have fixed the stamp of death and destruction on this crowning glory of ancient art, and yet in the presence of it be filled with indescribable sadness: such as one may feel at the funeral of a young friend, beautiful, and transcendently noble in character.

With a heart of mourning for the departed race, who wrought so wondrously in art, literature, and national life, one is drawn by a pathetic fascination to solitary wanderings

in certain rooms of the National Museum in Athens, where stands the sculptured grief of a past, long dead, yet not a buried and forgotten past. For there many unique grave-stones are exhibited. Some of these steles are large, with life-size figures, in very high relief often, and not infrequently with the heads carved entirely "in the round." These, in a most dignified and impressive manner, did honor to memories of the dead and the sorrow of surviving friends, along with virginal vases for the memories of maidens: for the faithful Antigones and Electras, for the young and fair Iphigenias, who died unmarried. A count of the gravestones in one room was made, which showed that seventeen were for men and boys and twenty-four were for women. In the last named class it was always a young wife or mother that was portrayed, not infrequently with a child or two at her knee. The marble effigies of some of the warriors may have been erected in memory of the self-same heroes eulogized by Pericles in his ever-memorable funeral oration. In addition to all these there were sculptured likenesses of very human little boys with their pets, sometimes a dog, very often a bird, sons, perhaps they were, of some Xanthippe, who scolded them overmuch when they were alive, and was broken-hearted when they died. In our college days we were doubly dosed with Socrates, when we were given to translate both the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon and the *Phædo* of Plato, and the suspicion took root that even a great philosopher may become tiresome and nerve-racking, when he does little except talk of demons and dialectics, therefore Xanthippe has her justifiers.

In another room of the National Museum were to be seen the articles collected by Dr. Heinrich Schliemann and his devoted wife from their excavations at Mycenæ and its neighborhood. The debt was already great that we owed to this enthusiastic dreamer about ancient Hellas, because of his published accounts of his excavations. And now we were privileged to see the home he built for himself in Athens, as well as this rare collection of antiquities, which help to prove that a high degree of civilization existed in Greece as early as 1400

B.C., or thereabout, and that the Homeric legends were not altogether mythical. The near approach to perfection of the goldsmith's art is established by various examples in the collection. In it are swords inlaid with gold, on which are engraved figures of animals in action, superbly drawn. Of such are the running dogs and lions, cats chasing ducks, and sometimes there are fishes. There is a beautiful gold cup with a bird on each of its handles, which look like sparrows, though the authorities identify them as doves. Birds are frequently the motive in the designs. One of the most attractive of these articles is a necklace, the "repeat" in its design consisting of two birds in very dovelike attitude and outline. Perhaps of similar workmanship and design were the ornaments that filled the jewel-case of scandalous Helen, when she fled from Sparta; while the exquisite ornaments, here preserved, doubtlessly came from the tombs of true wives, whose existences were forgotten ages ago in the land where false Helen and wicked Clytemnestra were remembered.

A carriage drive of about fourteen miles from Athens to Eleusis was our first outing in the environs of the capital. The impenetrable Eleusian Mysteries lifted not the veil of secrecy while we walked about the ruined foundations of Demeter's temples. Afterward we visited a museum, containing sculptured marble relics, among which was one very beautiful little head. Robbed throughout the ages by thieving vandals of all nations, poor, old Hellas holds now small numbers of her art treasures, and we wonder how long it will be before righteous equity will rule the hearts of men, and they will return to her that which was once her own.

The road to Eleusis parallels the Sacred Way, when it is not coincident with it. For four or five miles out from Athens it lay across a valley between fertile fields of wheat and barley. Some deciduous trees were covered with the filmy garm of hazy green that is characteristic of a northern spring. The fig trees were putting forth their leaves and young figs, and other fruit trees were in bloom. Doubtlessly spring migration was at its full height. A drive of similar length at

home would discover for us hundreds of birds, whose songs would fill the air. But on this twenty-fifth day of March the bird sights along the Sacred Way were very few: There were several Hooded Crows and some black Crows, whose species were not determined. Two or three times flocks of small birds numbering from ten to twenty individuals were startled into the air. Earlier in the day Gulls, two Hawks and Swallows were seen. Having passed the valley before mentioned the road climbed a rocky spur of Mount Ægaleos, that bore a perennial crop of stones, then descended to cultivated fields and the margin of the Bay of Eleusis, from which a view could be obtained of "sea-born Salamis." But the rocky brow upon which Xerxes perched on a certain fateful day is supposed to be on the eastern side of Mount Ægaleos.

The noise from the street: the cries of the venders, and the clatter of hoofs on the pavements, awakening me with their familiar sounds the first morning in Athens, brought home the fact that the Orient had been left behind; that we were in a new city very similar to American cities, founded a century, or less, ago. For Athens numbered no more than two thousand wretchedly-housed inhabitants when Greece was freed from Turkish misrule less than a hundred years ago. Beyond question, since their release from thralldom, the Greeks have made most commendable progress. Of this Athens on all sides offers abundant evidence, over which one could tarry long in pleasureable study. But for me there was a lure in the land of historic Hellas: in the scenes that had smiled or frowned on her ancient worthies. Olympia, Argos, Mycenæ, Delphi, and Chæronea, all beckoned in vain, since a slender week of time would not permit the visiting of them, but it did suffice for trips to Thebes and Marathon.

The trip to Marathan by automobile was easily made in an afternoon. As attractions, aside from its battlefield and the famous run made by the messenger, who carried the news of victory to Athens, it offered a view of the countryside in the direction opposite to Eleusis, and seemed favorable for seeing the birds. When at last the city was left behind the course

of the road ran for a few miles over the cultivated plain. Beside it frequently there were buildings, that looked like road-houses, sometimes there were three or four houses near each other, with once or twice a church. For nearly two-thirds of the distance the road lay with innumerable serpentine twistings through a wooded district, at first about the eastern base of Mount Pentelicus, then near the sea, but not in sight of it. No homes appeared in the woods, and cultivated clearings were not numerous. In North America such a district would have been alive with woodland birds at a corresponding stage of spring migration. In the entire afternoon we saw one Hooded Crow, two Crested Larks, a few Swallows and Magpies, and a very few birds that were not identified. In a district so thinly inhabited there seemed to be scarcely enough people to catch all the birds, had that been their main business.

On the plains of Marathon we spent an hour or more about the tumulus, built over the graves of the fallen heroes who, with their more fortunate companions, saved Hellas from the Persian invaders. The soil of the plain appears to be very poor, judged from the scanty growth of its grain crops. Several species of plants were in bloom. On the way there we had passed patches, nearly a quarter acre in extent, that were completely covered as by a carpet with small purple flowers. At Marathon some very attractive blossoms were not recognized, but there was one that called for more than passing notice. Not since my childhood had I seen garden thyme; however, it is a plant, which once known is never forgotten. The wild thyme was blossoming there in abundance, and we gathered handfuls of it—roots and all—to carry to Athens for the eighty per cent of our party that had not cared to make the trip. All had been enjoying the unique flavor of Grecian honey, which the bees are said to gather largely from wild thyme. Whether we were served with the famed honey of Hymettus, or a superior quality produced in other portions of Greece, we could not learn.

There was another article of food of classical fame, which I had been anxious to see before I left the Orient. When

sacks of grain or seeds were brought to our steamer at Haifa some of us had wondered if some such sacks did not contain sesame. We talked sesame, longed for sesame, but did not see sesame (at least not to know it) until a gentleman of our party bought some in Constantinople. After it had been seen and tasted, I was of the opinion that it, served like rice along with fish, had been eaten at a dinner on one of the Egyptian railway trains. It did not look tempting, but proved to be the most delicious fish I ever ate. Ancient Athenian wedding cakes were said to have been made of roasted sesame seed, mixed with honey.

Customs and peoples are ever changing, but the more constant landscape, as well as subjects in natural history, vary little and help us in picturing the past of such countries, for whose ancient rather than recent history we care more. That Greece a few years ago was one of three European nations that refused to join the ornithological union for the protection of birds was known to me, yet the scarcity of birds exceeded my expectations. While deploring such conditions we have daily reminders of much we owe the ancient Greeks in our scientific nomenclature of ornithology: *Charadrius* for the lapwing or curlew, *Chelidon* for the swallow, *Philomela* for the nightingale, and *Halcyon* for the kingfisher are unchanged Greek names. *Diomedea* recalls the mythical story of the companions of Diomedes, who, inconsolable because of his death, were changed into birds. Likewise *Meleagris* for our turkey calls up the story of Meleager's ever-mourning sisters, who were transformed into guinea-hens.

Very naturally one becomes curious to know the ancient Greeks' attitude toward and knowledge of birds. The comedy of "*The Birds*," written by Aristophanes about 414 B.C., throws a little light on these points. He mentions at least sixty-seven species, more birds, we dare say, than the average theater-goer of today can recognize. He pays tribute to the economic value of birds as insect destroyers: both those "that in the marshy glens snap up the sharp-stinging gnats," and those that prey upon the destructive pests of vineyard, or-

chard, and grain-field. He shows that the time for the performance of many annual duties was based on the migratory appearance of certain birds. That mercy was not shown the birds because of their beneficial services is made clear in his arraignment of mankind by a bird represented as speaking in this fashion: "and has exposed me to an impious race, which, from the time it existed, has been hostile to me." Again he has one of his characters, addressing the birds, describe in this wise the warfare made on them by men: "And they shoot at you, even like those who are mad; and every bird-catcher, sets snares, traps, lined-twigs, springs, meshes, nets, and trap-cages for you in the temple; and then they take and sell you in heaps." The internal evidences of this comedy are that in the days of Aristophanes birds were more plentiful than now. Whatever degree of admiration tinges the mind toward things Hellenic, the friend of birds must admit that they have had a hard time for ages, and that it is small wonder that so few have escaped the fowler's net.

Nearly a century after Aristophanes wrote "*The Birds*" Aristotle was engaged in compiling his cyclopedia of human knowledge of natural history. He names about 150 species of birds, scarcely one-hundredth part of the world's species now known to science. There appears a great disparity between the knowledge of birds' anatomy and that of their habits. The Bee-eater is especially cited as the only family known to nest in burrows in the ground, while the myth concerning the Kingfisher is given due prominence as an ornithological statement. In truth, there were strange mingling of facts and fancies then as there are today. An illustration of this is furnished by Aristotle's story that "all birds with crooked talons, as soon as their young can fly well, beat them and drive them from the nest." This has a counterpart in the fancies of the people of today, who see parent birds dangling worms temptingly out of reach of their nestlings, and whose imaginations are so lively they can almost hear a parent bird say: "Come little ones, it is time three of you were out of the nest. All smart youngsters of our family

leave the nest on their fourteenth day. Come Tom, Dick, and Harry, you have now attained that age! But Susan, who is a day younger, may stay until tomorrow."

Only two of our party made the trip to Thebes, which now bears the name of Phiva. The trip had its origin in my desire to see the plains of Boeotia and the sites of Thebes and Plataea. For all true Americans there is unmistakable appeal in the story of any nation's resistance to a foreign invader or usurper. The battles of Marathon, Salamis, Plataea and Chæronea are the prototypes for us of all heroic stands for liberty; and what is better than liberty? The original plan was to go by train to Thebes, and from there take carriage to Plataea. Our Athenian guide was filled with anxiety because two women meditated such a journey, but he wrote for us a letter, addressed to the station-master at Thebes, asking him to engage the team and explain to the driver what was wanted. But before Thebes was reached a supposition came to mind that was deterrent. Suppose an accident should happen to carriage or team, and we were stranded in the lonely country, unable to understand the language or be understood. What should we do? The sequel showed that we need not have worried.

At an early hour one morning, with the aid of a lad from our hotel, we were provided with return tickets and started on the right train for an all-day excursion. It proved to be our happiest day in Greece. As we rode along we tried to recall all we had once known about Thebes. The legendary lore was best remembered. Both rejoiced, however, that we were not called upon to pass a searching examination on the Seven against Thebes, the Epigoni, or the Theban alliances. Teaching a subject, especially teaching it by lectures, is the best means of fixing it firmly in mind, yet I was frequently surprised, when our local guides would mention something that had been shelved in memory's chambers for many years. An experience of this sort happened, while we were on the Acropolis, and two gentlemen of our party were becoming quite disputatious with the guide over the point, which was



Taine's statement regarding the lines of the Parthenon, when the controversy was good-naturedly settled by my assurance that "it certainly must be true, since I had taught it many times to my classes studying the history of ancient art." Thus various questions, trivial and profound, enlivened our journey.

A cloudless sky, a very clean car, with rugs and comfortably upholstered seats were part of the enjoyable things of the day. Manifold were the styles of railway coaches used in the Old World, but only in Greece was the compartment entered from an open little porch or vestibule on the side of the car. A mountainous range separates the plains of Attica from those of Bœotia. On the latter vegetation was not so far advanced. Many fields were being plowed, sometimes by oxen, more often by horses or mules. Flocks of sheep or of goats were not infrequent, but no herds of cattle were seen. The landscape views were most charming, yet always with cold, snow-capped peaks to the north, perhaps Mount Olympus was one of them. Most of the people seen at the stations wore the commonplace European dress, but a few men were dressed in the fustanella, and a few women in homespun with long woolen aprons, woven in colored patterns. Some wore ugly, sleeveless cloaks of white wool with two dark stripes down the back.

Thebes, with an accredited population of three to four thousand, looks no larger than many American villages of eight or nine hundred people. The streets are lined with trees whose branches interlace overhead. Hydrants at intervals pour a never-ceasing flow of water into stone troughs, from which the overflow races down the hill in open gutters. At some of the troughs women were doing their washing. Interest in this water supply is increased by the statement that through a part of its course it is brought in an anciently built aqueduct supposed to date from prehistoric times. Thebes has an enthusiastic excavator, who is the curator of its archaeological museum. He showed us its treasures, and explained them as well as his limited command of English per-

mitted. One of its gravestones was among the finest seen in Greece. The mother, with a new-born infant on her knee, is portrayed with all the grace and delicacy of the sculptor's art. Among relics of finely colored frescoes was outlined the profile of a woman of rare beauty. These relics are supposed to be very ancient, "perhaps from the palace of Cadmus," suggested the curator. Some gray stone slabs are unlike in decoration any other panels that have been found. The outline figures on them were done with excellent drawing. The museum possesses a copy of the famous Lion of Chæroneia, which does honor to the memory of brave defenders "whose fortune was not equal to their valor."

The voices of the school-children, singing, led us to a building, which appeared to have been a dwelling-house, converted to school purposes. It would be well if all those fault-finding American school-teachers, who are furnished with all the conveniences that school money can reasonably supply, could visit that little two-roomed school-house in Thebes. In one room, measuring about 16x24 feet, there were counted one hundred and one little girls, ranging from five to eight or nine years. Most of them were seated on deskless forms, but these, with close packing, could not accommodate all, consequently about a half dozen were seated on stones and a few were standing. The second room was about eighteen feet square. It was supplied with very narrow desks and was occupied by an older grade of pupils, who numbered sixty-one. We heard the children sing, examined a few of their map-drawings and writing-books and regretted that we could not express our admiration for the devotion of the teachers who, under such cramped conditions, were working for their younger sisters, unsealing for them the fountains of knowledge in the land, whose ancient literature has been for ages a well-spring from which thirsty scholars have drunk; and on the very site of the city in which Pindar lived and sang the greatest lyrics of Greece.

The carriage drive to Plataea having been abandoned we walked south from Thebes until a commanding point was

reached and we could view with binoculars the country for several miles in the direction of Plataea. It looked cold, lonesome, uninhabited. When returning, we sought the lee of a steep hillside and sat down to eat the luncheon put up for us by the hotel in Athens. (This was one advantage of traveling with a conducted party. A want needed but mere mention and it was promptly met.) While we were eating, a goatherder with his flock came within ear-shot. As we arose from our meal I announced my intention of looking up the birds whose chirping had been heard. The wind had been making free with any loose articles of clothing, and soon Miss Smith was exclaiming: "Where is my scarf?" and "Thank you," as the goatherder pointed up the hill to it. As we climbed toward it she whispered: "I am pretty certain the goatherder said 'up there' when I asked about my scarf, and 'you are welcome' when I thanked him." When I returned from scouting after the birds (which were Chaffinches) I found her in animated conversation with two Greeks. The goatherder had worked in Kansas City and Seattle, and was doing any odd job he could find until he could return to America. He and his companion were but two of the many thousands who had been called home by the recent Balkan War. Soon after parting from them we met a man whose cheery greeting was, "How do you do?" and somewhat later, while I was giving lengthy attention to birds about the Frankish tower, a passing Greek inquired in the clearest accents of America, "Is there anything I can do for you?" Verily English-speaking Greeks seemed to be springing up on all sides, as if from the ground, like the mythical Thebans of yore. And the letter of the Athenian guide appeared unnecessary.

The Greeks everywhere appeared fond of America. On a steamer that was taking me to India I sat at table next to a learned gentleman and his bride, whose nationality was puzzling for a few days. He spoke seven or eight languages, but conversed mostly in French with the Belgian father and son who sat across the table from him. After learning that

he was a Greek I told him that I was an American, and his interest was immediately and acutely aroused. Evidently he had thought me to be English, as were the rest of the people at that table. When we spoke of the Greek classics, he hastened to tell me that he was educated at Robert College and learned his ancient Greek from an American. So in some small ways is America repaying her debt to ancient Hellas.

We became exceedingly popular in Thebes. A group of school-boys found delight in listening to our strange speech, and we wondered if they remarked that "the barbarians twittered like birds," as said their Dodonæan ancestors thousands of years ago. A bevy of children, among them a little girl carrying a baby, followed us about for several hours. They escorted us to the railway station and waited to see us off on the late afternoon train. We certainly made a host of friends that day.

I had hoped that for seeing birds the Thebes trip would be the best one taken. It was; but this is saying very little. There were seen Magpies, numbering about a dozen, a few Hooded Crows and one or two of their black cousins, a Crested Lark, a large Hawk, several female Chaffinches, a Greenfinch, Sand Martins, and a few Swallows. These were seen outside of Thebes. Within the village stands the ruins of an old Frankish tower. About this tower, flying in and out of its nooks and crannies, were several Jackdaws and at least sixteen Kestrels. Eleven of the last named were in the air at one time. A Christmas bird census for almost any place in the United States would show a better record, yet this was near the height of the spring migration, the distance traveled from Athens was forty-five miles, the time was the entire day, excepting the short periods spent within the museum and the school-house.

To mighty Zeus, the all-powerful, but a single bird, the eagle, was held sacred. While to some of the lesser deities a whole avian collection was sacred: to Hera the hawk, goose, cuckoo, and later the peacock; to Aphrodite the dove, swan, swallow and sparrow; to Phœbus-Apollo the hawk, raven,

and swan; but to Pallas-Athena, the goddess of wisdom, the owl alone among birds, was sacred. Her sculptured forms represent her frequently with the owl. Modern Greece is strong on the emblematic owl. In our dining-room in the Hotel D'Angleterre were counted twenty life-sized figures of the owl on the gilt cornice over mirrors and windows, and adjoining rooms were almost as richly adorned. Both moldings and owls were of an excellent quality of gold-gilt, so said one of our party whose business fitted him to judge. The school-boys seen in Greece wore a dark blue uniform. On the caps of those seen in Thebes, Athens, Corinth, and Corfu was a gilt ornament, having an owl in its center. It looked like an enlarged copy of the owl that used to decorate the backs of our classical text-books. Certain Greek coins, as for example the ten lepta pieces, are embellished with an owl. And it is interesting to learn from Aristophanes that in his day silver coins bore similar designs, of which he scoffingly wrote: "For in the first place, what every judge especially desires, Lauriotic owls shall never fail you, but shall dwell within and make their nests in your purses, and hatch small change." Finally, if at any time Greece should have failed to furnish things of interest in the owl line, we still had, as members of our party, Mr. and Mrs. Uhl of San Francisco.

The bird, sacred to Pallas-Athena, is said to have been the Little Owl (*Athene noctua*). I had no opportunity to hear or see this species, but was told by "the warrior," recently returned from Balkan battle-fields, that it was common on his native island of Syra, and another said the same of his native Cephalonia, while several reported that its notes were frequently heard in the outskirts of Athens. If not actually protected this owl appears not to have been persecuted by a race, that from remote antiquity has cared naught for song-birds—except to eat them. The status of the Little Owl should be kept in mind, when contemplating the scarcity of birds in Greece, and, if possible, a lesson should be learned from it relative to our treatment of the Screech Owl. In 1843 the Little Owl was introduced into England, and other importa-

tions have followed. It has proved a pest, and ornithologists loudly denounce it, though it appears to be no greater enemy of small birds than is our Screech Owl. I have been slow in forming an opinion of the Screech Owl, whose nesting habits and food supply I have studied at very close range for several years. The facts and figures against this species cannot be given here excepting this: In 1916 fifty per cent of the food found in a Screech Owl's nest consisted of birds. The nightly accumulation of feathers from victims, that were not seen, argued that birds formed half of the bill of fare throughout the nest season. Reluctantly the conviction came that in places where small birds are encouraged to stay the Screech Owl should be urged to depart, gently but firmly, by the chloroform route.

The railway ride from Athens to Patras consumed an afternoon, together with an hour or two of the evening. Very few birds were seen. Gulls for most part had left their winter resorts, and none was seen, though we were in sight of salt water during most of the journey. There were seen a few Crows, Magpies, Crested Larks and Swallows, and nothing else. One interesting sight was the canal cut through the Isthmus of Corinth. Though three miles in length, it looked much less, and far below its waters shown like a ribbon. A short stop at Corinth did not admit of a view of the ancient, ruined city even from a distance. If one were thirsty for refreshing colors he could have drunk his fill during the entire afternoon: There were the wondrously beautiful blues of the Gulf of Corinth, beyond which were the violet hues of shore and mountains. Mount Helicon came first and farther on Mount Parnassus raised its snow-capped head. The narrow strip of cultivated land, through which we rode, was devoted mainly to olive groves and vineyards. The grape-vines of the latter ought to have interested more the women than the men of the party. Wherever mince pies, fruit cake, or plum puddings are to be concocted we order for them currants or sometimes we say Zante currants, and there near the railway track were growing thousands of the grape-vines which bear these

currants, something like two hundred million pounds of them annually.

The steamer on which we embarked at Patras in the evening was far north among the Ionian Islands, when morning came. If we passed near storied Ithaca it was in the dead of night, when nothing could be seen of it. The charms of Corfu unfolded gradually as we passed between island and mainland, until we rode as if on an enchanted sea. If the scenery of yesterday had been thrillingly beautiful, that of today was most ravishingly so. To the splendor of color on land and sea were added the touches given it by the red sails of fishing boats. We had a half day on shore at Corfu and drove to the Achilleion, a palace of the German Emperor, who at that time was in residence there, in consequence of which we could not enrich him to the extent of forty cents per capita for the privilege of entering the palace, but we were allowed to walk through the grounds, which were beautified by a profusion of blooming plants and shrubs. The view was exquisite in form and color. but a birdless one. Except the singing of a single bird none other was heard. The ride of seven and a half miles to the palace was through rural scenes: between cultivated fields and olive groves, which were enlivened by very few birds.

For several hours the mountainous coast of Albania lay on our right. Bleak and desolate it looked, with scarcely a sign of inhabitancy. Just what sort of a turmoil was in progress there at that time we could not guess, but we did know that a certain royal weed, William of Wied by name, was trying to take root in that inhospitable soil, and we were glad that it was proving very inhospitable. The northern end of Corfu had been rounded and its shores had faded into distant blue, when night fell. One brief week had been spent in Greece, not much of it had been seen, yet enough to make impressive one fact: that the exceeding smallness of her territory was not at all commensurate with "the glory that was Greece."