

CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES AD INTERIM TO GREECE



In January 1922, I was transferred as  
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim to Greece. We  
were not recognizing the Government of King  
Constantine and had no Minister there.

As will be recalled, the Allies had forced  
King Constantine early in the War to leave  
Greece by bombarding the City of Athens. They  
put Constantine on a destroyer and sent him to  
Venice: from there he went to Switzerland where  
he stayed for the remainder of the war. His  
eldest son, the Diadoch, now King George, went  
with him. The Allies and Venizelos made Alexander  
(his second son) King. Alexander did not live  
very long: he was bitten by a pet monkey  
and died of hydrophobia. His attractive  
widow and ~~daughter~~ live most of the

time



9 beline. His daughter married the  
time in Italy. Later on, the Allies permitted  
the Greeks to hold a plebiscite and they by  
an enormous majority voted for the return of  
Constantine. He returned; but the Allies and  
we did not recognize him; and that was the  
situation I met on my arrival at Athens.

*young  
king  
of  
Yugoslavia.*

The Allies, as well as we, maintained  
Legations and had informal contacts with the  
Government, but had nothing to do with the King.

During the latter part of the month of  
January I set out for Athens, by way of Paris,  
where I stayed long enough to see a revival of  
that hilariously amusing play "Le Roi"; and have  
an excellent dinner at Voisin's with Leland  
Harrison, then Counselor of Embassy at Paris.

From



From Paris I went to Rome, where I stayed a few days, but missed the Coronation of the new Pope Benedict XV because I was told that my boat was about to sail from Brindisi. I rushed to Brindisi; the boat was late and I stayed several days waiting for it. In the meantime I might have seen the Coronation, for which the Nuncio at Madrid, now Cardinal Tedeschi, had made arrangements for me. I did not enjoy Brindisi. My boat stopped a few hours at that enchanting Island, Corfu. We passed close by many Isles famed in history, among them Ithaca, the birthplace of Odysseus; also Levkas and Cephalonia, both with more Homeric associations; then into the Gulf of Corinth, where I thought of the famous victory of Duan Juan of Austria at nearby

Lepanto



Lepanto and of the equally famous naval battle near Actium when Antony and Cleopatra fled; and finally through the Corinth Canal, and then on to Piraeus, port of Athens. Every inch of both shores of the Gulf and Canal was teeming with history and legend.

I found a nice house waiting for me at Athens, rented by the Government, opposite the Athenian Club. <sup>(A)(X)</sup> The Greeks fled pell-mell for the coast; ~~hundreds of~~ thousands were killed. Then Smyrna was sacked and burned. Our Naval vessels, then in the Near East, assisted hundreds of thousands to escape by helping to get vessels to carry them away. In all, nearly a million women and children and old men reached Greece. Often refugee ships, packed and over-packed, were

days



days without food or drink. The refugees died on the way like flies from every known disease ranging from cholera to plague, and danger of infection was so great that rather than throw them overboard at times they were thrown into the ship's furnace. I had our Red Cross come to Greece and they helped them a lot. General Haskell was in charge. At one time we were feeding eight hundred and sixty thousand refugees a day. Then various medical units came out from the United States, including one of women. The women were installed on the island where Helen "whose face launched a thousand ships" landed after the fall of Troy - Makronesi - just off Cape Sounion, near the famous silver mines where slave labor paid for many of the glories of Greece. The ladies of the

medical



medical unit asked me to inspect the Island. I was told that there were epidemics of nine different kinds there. Before I started the Red Cross inoculated me against smallpox and eight other diseases. I preferred taking the inoculations all at once rather than stretch them out; with the result that I was laid up with high fever for a week before I could start. I finally got there and was impressed with the efficiency of our women doctors. But even with all the inoculations, I felt a bit uncomfortable when I was told that the group on the right had cholera, and those on the left had plague, and these smallpox, and so on. And then there was one disease against which they had no inoculation, at least at that time, and from which thousands



thousands and thousands died - spotted typhus -  
carried by some sort of flea.

At that time two Greek Colonels (Colonel N. Plastiras and Colonel Gonatas) carried out a revolutionary movement against King Constantine, and he was forced to leave the country, and his eldest son, the Diadoch Prince George became King with the title of King George II. The new King George was married to a daughter, Elizabeth, of the well-known Queen Marie of Rumania.

Young King George, who was a likeable young man, had a very difficult time. The revolutionary chiefs insisted on the trial and rapid execution of the entire Cabinet. It was none of my business, but in answer to a round-about inquiry of mine, I  
received



received a note (which I still have) from an important revolutionary, saying they would be legally tried: I very well remember the morning they were taken just outside of Athens and shot. I felt very sorry for them, especially Baltazzi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, (of a family of Byzantine origin - Phanariots they were called) who had been most cooperative with me under very trying circumstances. In fact, all during my stay the several Greek Governments I had to deal with, at a time when we recognized none of them, were most helpful. I was able to settle a ~~lot~~ *was* of "back claims".

I saw very informally the young King and Queen on various occasions, tea with them for instance, and once the King's younger brother,

Prince



Prince Paul, now <sup>King Paul</sup> ~~the Diadoch~~, (I couldn't see them formally or officially).

During that year I had a destroyer assigned to Piraeus as a station ship in view of the uncertain conditions. The destroyer was assigned by Admiral Bristol from Constantinople; and was changed every week. I once borrowed one of them to make a trip to the celebrated Monasteries of Mt. Athos during the Orthodox Holy Week. Mt. Athos is unique; nothing feminine, not even a chicken or a cow are allowed on the Peninsula. They still keep even Byzantine time. The Peninsula is full of Monasteries, some of them tremendous, capable of holding thousands of monks, and some only communities of single cells. When I went there, there were still about five thousand

monks



monks left. The Peninsula is about forty miles in length and four to seven in width. It is an ancient monastic establishment. According to the legend, it goes back to the age of Constantine, but the first mention in historical documents dates from the 9th century. I saw numbers of priceless manuscripts in the Monastic libraries, and priceless maps; Golden Bulls of the Byzantine Emperors, as well as hundreds of ancient icons; and in the treasuries masses of gold and silver and jewelled religious ornaments. I was accompanied on the trip by the Captain in command of the Destroyer Squadron, the Commander in charge of the destroyer, three young officers from the destroyer and a servant. We moved around on mule back. When we reached a Monastery a figure of a moor on  
a tower



a tower, mechanically operated, pounded a board with a large hammer. All the monks came out to meet us. Speeches were exchanged and then we went to the parlor where we were served, in order, coffee; jam which one was supposed to take in a spoon, gulp down, and then drink a little water; followed by firey arak, and if one didn't stop them, they served the same things in the same order all over again. Some of the Monasteries were beautiful and their Chapels finer still.

We stayed the Easter Eve at Vatopedia. The religious services lasted all night, from eight to eight. The Abbot came for us at midnight and we went in procession, holding candles, through dark corridors, finally reaching the charming 10th century



century Byzantine chapel where the splendid Orthodox ritual was being celebrated. At one moment in the ritual they told me that they were praying for the United States; they were praying for President Harding; "they were praying for you". We were standing holding candles at the side of the altar. Then at another moment they set all the golden chandeliers hanging from the ceiling in motion.

As the Greeks fast very thoroughly in Lent -- no meat, no eggs, no milk, no butter -- we ate quantities of fish, especially of the much-prized octopus. They received us in all the Monasteries with open arms; and when I left Vatopedia they gave me some very fine old amber beads.

Speaking of refugees, the famous explorer

Nansen



Nansen came as head of the League of Nations  
Refugee Committee, but I didn't get along very  
well with him because it seemed <sup>to me</sup> he wanted us to  
spend <sup>the</sup> ~~all the~~ money and the League of Nations to  
get the credit.

Greece has more charm than most: whether  
of temple or of monastery or of city or of  
countryside; anemonies on the road to Sounion;  
red poppies among the olive trees; the monumental  
Parthenon; model for the ages; Olympia with its  
statues; Delphi whose oracles influenced all  
men. When you go to Greece, buy a Pausanias,  
written over two thousand years ago: his de-  
scriptions of the monuments of his day were so  
good that they guide archeologists now in their  
explorations.

I walked



I walked and walked around Athens; there was always something else to see.

I found time to make a good many trips: among others, to Delphi, the <sup>once</sup> wealthy seat of the world-famous oracle of Apollo; it was interesting to sit on the spot in the Sacred Precincts where the prophetic Virgin (later matron) spoke. Olympia, of the Olympic Games: the Olympic Games were held for over a thousand years and were held in such high reverence that the Greeks used the Games (every four years) as chronological epochs (or calendar) to mark their time. The old Greek Gods were surely at home at Olympia: there was something in the air. The afternoon I spent climbing around the ruins is one of the most pleasant I can remember.

Sparta



Sparta, one of the most famous cities of the ancient world which has left no relics worthy of her past.

Nearby Mistra is one of the most extraordinary ruined towns in existence. It is a museum of ecclesiastical architecture and painting of the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries.

Ancient Mycenae (legendary founder - Perseus), the seat of the terrible tragedies of Atreus and Thyestes; and where Agamemnon was King, and where he returned from Troy to be murdered by Clytemnestra's lover.

Tiryns - "wall-girt Tiryns" says Homer; and Pausanias says that "like Mycenae, it is as wonderful as the Pyramids of Egypt." (It isn't)

The celebrated plain of Marathon where the

great



great battle was fought and the Greeks under Miltides won undying fame.

Eleusis of the Mysteries, which possibly symbolized some of the highest feelings of Pagan Man, and which were celebrated down to the end of the 4th century, A.D.

Daphni (burying place of Frankish Dukes of Athens), with its mosaic of Christ of the 11th century, along the road (from Athens to Eleusis) where the annual processions of the Mysters were held. The countryside was lovely.

Epidaurus, with its wonderful theatre and many statues of Aesklepios, the God of Curing. Epidaurus was perhaps the earliest health sanitorium.

The Charming Isle of Euboea. I spent a

Palm



Palm Sunday morning at Chalkis on Euboea.

The peach blossoms were in bloom; Euboea gives a sense of peace and tranquillity like few places I know.

The spot opposite Salamis where Xerxes sat on his Throne during the famous battle of 480 B. C.

Corinth, which was excavated by the American School of Archaeology. The tale of its finding is an interesting one. The School had bought a garden there. There was a well in the garden. One day there was trouble with the well and someone went down and found it was not a well but simply a hole down to a water-course. In due time the water-course was explored and it was found to be the famous aqueduct which brought

water



water to the famous and ancient city of Corinth.

The site was excavated and Corinth appeared;

the famous fountain of Medea; and also the

site of a famous oracle, as well as how the

oracle worked: the oracle was located in a

temple. All the temple enclosure was sacred

ground; no one could enter. On the front wall

there were carved marble slabs. One day one of

the workmen knocked against one of the slabs and

it sounded hollow. They experimented and the

slab opened. They found a runway in under the

center of the temple. This is what happened:

the neophyte passed the night in the temple. In

the middle of the night voices were heard from

the ground underneath. A priest of the temple

had crawled up the runway and there was your

oracle.

We



We climbed also up to Acra-Corinth, just above Corinth, with its still splendid Venetian walls and fortifications. The day we were up there we ran into quite a large camp of deserters from the Greek Army.

All over Greece we ran into remains of the famous Fourth Crusade; parts of very western and very French and Norman Palaces, Churches, Monasteries and Chapels.

Tanagra where the charming little Tanagra statuettes were made and found. There is nothing above ground there now.

I also went to Aulis opposite Euboea, where Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon was sacrificed when the Greeks with their twelve hundred ships were on their way to Troy.



I also went to the famous Monasteries-of-the-Air in northern Greece, which are built on the top of rocks and where one had to be hauled up in a basket. The exterior and interior of the walls of some of the churches in those monasteries were literally, every inch, covered with biblical pictures: veritable biblical picture books.

In all my travels around Greece, everywhere I visited, I was always received in royal fashion by the authorities; reviewed guards of honor; moved around with military escorts, etc., etc.: because the Greeks were so pleased over our helping them with the refugees.

We went also to Megara which was at its zenith in the 7th and 8th centuries, B.C.; we had a picnic



picnic on the Island of Aigina at its famous temple of Athens; and many, many other spots famed in history, legend and story.

The celebrated mountain of Lykabettos rises sharply from Athens' streets. It was only a few minutes from my Legation and nearly every afternoon I walked up its about one thousand feet for a little exercise. There was an interesting old Orthodox Church on top; and the view was superb. On clear days we could see the Peloponessus; and even much farther to famed Greek Islands on the other side of the Aegean Sea. And just at sunset the famous violet crown which hovered over Athens: it seemed to me, however, that the violet crown was formed by the reflection of the setting sun on dust particles floating in the air.

Another



Another nearby mountain was the famed Hermetus; we did not see the bees, but visited another Greek Orthodox Monastery.

The French Naval Attaché was a pleasant companion on some of these trips as we both had a more or less semi-professional archeological interest; and both were particularly interested in the exploits and monuments of the Knights of Malta.

I had been told that there was an old Church near Athens, called in Greek, the Church Beautiful, and the French Naval Attaché and I made many a vain search for it. We finally found it in an abandoned field, and it was worth the name; although its roof was heavily blacked from the smoke of candles. It is only big enough to hold about twenty people; but it is the Church Beautiful.

Of course,



Of course, Athens is full of treasures.

The Acropolis is too well-known for description; at sunset the Acropolis is a life's memory, with the dying rays lighting the Parthenon, that most perfect monument; the nearby Areopagus, where St. Paul spoke. The Stadion; the many museums; the many temples; the many monuments; the Theatre of Dionysius; the Odion of Herodes Atticus; two tiny beautiful ancient Orthodox Churches, at one of which are shown the stone jars allegedly from Cana where Christ turned the water into wine.

The American School of Archaeology was doing good work in excavating and exploring various sites around Greece and I had various walks and talks with the Director, Dr. Hill, and Professor Belgin, who <sup>some years after</sup> ~~now, I believe,~~ <sup>succeeded as</sup> ~~is the~~ Director of the School.

When



When I made a first visit to the museum of sculpture they had put in place a day or two before a recent "find" -- an upright marble slab of over two thousand years ago with marvellous figures of young men playing a game which looked like hockey.

Of course the literate world knows classical Greece but even the classical Greeks knew next to nothing of that wonderful civilization which Schliemann at Mycene and Troy and Arthur Evans at Crete brought to life and light. Schliemann was a poor boy who once happened on a copy of the Illiad: it fascinated him then and all his life. He labored hard, became rich, studied meanwhile, and then set out to find Troy. He was laughed to scorn (it was the age of laughing to scorn); but he found Troy; and then he set out for

Mycene



Mycene of the plays; found it; then for royal treasures; even the nearby village mayor laughed at him; he found them and there they are for all the world to see in the Athens Museum: the gold work; the vases and the masks and the swords and the scabards might be done in London today.

The Knossos paintings, especially of the ladies of the Court remind one of the fair ladies of the Court of Louis XV at Versailles. And they had at Mycene and Knossos and elsewhere drains and bathrooms and sewers, the like of which were unknown again until later Roman days: and then lost again until now.

The Near and Middle East at every turn still give testimony to a man who before he was thirty-three had changed the destiny of the world:

Alexander



Alexander the Great: the world from thenceforward was to be Occidental and Greek-minded and not Oriental and Persian. Hellenistic thought and Hellenistic ways which followed him paved the way for the spread of Christianity among the literate. Scholars have generally neglected or given little time to the Hellenistic Kingdoms which the "followers" of Alexander founded; but, without doubt, the tone for the future was set in Antioch and Alexandria for the cultures of the Western world: The Ptolemies and the Seleucids and the heirs of the other "followers and companions" of Alexander were often vicious men and women but they were also often able, and at times brilliant and they certainly had glamour: Cleopatra had.

In classical days, the first-nights of Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles and Aristophenes were very gay  
indeed,



indeed, especially when the public was well-primed with wine.

The Greek Royal Family were attractive and good-looking and there were some attractive people in their Court. One of the most attractive girls was Mika Skuzes, and there was the Vlasto girl, a tennis champion who was a real beauty. Afternoons in the spring and summer people from the Court and Diplomatic Corps met at the Tennis Club, where there was good tennis. There were visiting Royalties there: a sister of the Kaiser, who was also a sister of Constantine's Queen, married to a Hessian Prince, and her two sons. Also the Danish Crown Prince, who at that time was thought to be interested in marrying one of Prince Nicholas' daughters. (One of Prince Nicholas' daughters ~~is now~~ married to the Duke of Kent and

one



one to the Prince Regent of Serbia, and another to a Prince Charles of Toerring-Jettenbach).

Queen Marie of Rumania, accompanied by the then Crown Prince (King Carol), came in 1922 to visit her daughter (now divorced from King George II).

After the Smyrna fire a lot of "Smyrna refugees" gathered there too. These refugees, with Greek names, spoke Oxford English and the men got their clothes in Saville Row; the women in Paris.

Some of the diplomats were interesting, too. The Secretary of the Italian Legation later became well-known as Ambassador Rosso at Washington. Beaufort, the Dutch Minister, had been exceedingly popular at Washington. Unfortunately, he died very suddenly at Athens. The Greeks still

recognized



recognized the Imperial Russian Minister Prince Elim Demidoff, who had been one of the richest men in Russia and still received in the old Russian way.

The Greeks like ~~resin~~ in their red wine; it is difficult to get used to that. They had a number of very good but very heavy wines: one, for instance, from Corfu which the Kaiser served at State banquets at Berlin. There was some good brandy, also. I made a mistake on that: a young man I knew was making a tour of the Greek Islands and I asked him to bring me back some old brandy from the Monasteries. Particularly, I wanted some from Patmos, of St. John the Evangelist. He brought back a lot but I couldn't drink it: it was too old; turned into pure alcohol. Greek grapes <sup>among</sup> are the best I have ever eaten.

The



The Greeks like to serve fried octopus

tentacles at cocktail time and they are good; *(instead of  
cocktails, they served ouzo, a liqueur flavored  
with  
gum-mastic  
& aniseed)*  
They like also the octopus stewed in his black  
juice; but there he is so terrible to behold.

All summer we swam at a delightful place  
opposite the Isle of Euboea just off the plains  
of Marathon. The water was very, very blue,  
purple blue, and very, very salty. Some of the  
nicest swimming I ever had.

We had several picnics near Sounion's high-  
perched temple of Poseidon, with its columns of  
azure tint and where I saw Lord Byron's name  
scratched by himself on the walls: "Where adverse  
winds and currents caused the building of this  
temple by suppliant seamen, eager to appease the  
Gods."

The revolutionaries almost shot Prince

Andrew,



Andrew, too, and it was only through the intense intervention of some of my colleagues that they let him go.

When I left Athens again I borrowed a destroyer to go to Constantinople. The trip was most interesting; we went by way of the channel between the mainland and the Island of Euboea, all again teeming with history. The Dardanelles we passed at daybreak and my first sight of Constantinople in an early morning sun was one not soon forgotten. Admiral Bristol's (our High Commissioner) launch with some of the staff came out to meet me. The Allied Fleets and Allied Forces were in control. Constantinople was very gay, with the Allied officers and thousands of Russian refugees, some still with money, and cabarets were flourishing.

It



It was spring in Constantinople and the Judas trees were in bloom. A motorboat trip along the Bosphorus was enchanting.

I stayed several days with Bob Scotten (now

*recently*  
*retired as Ambassador to New Zealand*)

~~Minister to Santo Domingo~~). I met some Turks at

parties and I remember especially the celebrated

Halide Khanum, the well-known Turkish feminist

leader.