

CHARLOTTE MESSENGER.

VOL. I. NO. 33.

CHARLOTTE, MECKLENBURG CO., N. C., FEBRUARY 17, 1883.

W. C. SMITH, Publisher.

The Valentine.

At a counter richly laden
With St. Valentine's choice sonnets
Stands a very charming maiden
In the shaggiest of bonnets;
Her love locks and her tresses
Appear a halo golden,
While the style in which she dresses
Is extremely quaint and olden.
She inspects the glowing treasures,
Silken, fringed and satin banners,
And scans their ardent measures
In the gracefullest of manners.
Now and then a saucy Cupid
Pleases this bewitching critic,
But the verses are too stupid
For a taste so analytic.

O'er forget-me-nots and roses
Like a butterfly she wavers,
Till the honey one discloses
Proves the daintiest of flavors.
With this nectar Love insnares her,
And he holds her in possession,
And he tempts her and he dares her
To the following confession.

"If I had the brush of Watteau,
And the wisdom of the sages,
I could paint a worthy motto
On this loveliest of pages;
But no truer heart is beating
Than the heart which beats for you, love:
So I send a simple greeting,
And I sign myself your True-love."

Satisfied with her selection,
As the clerk she re-imburses,
For the missive of affection,
From the prettiest of purses,
While she fastens furs and plushes,
Unaware of admiration,
In a conscious way she blushes,
Thinking of its destination.

Will a certain hero wonder,
Ere the trusty seal is broken,
If his fate is hidden under
Shelter of this tender token?
Will he, when his heart discovers
Who has sent this timely warning,
Be the happiest of lovers
On St. Valentine's own morning?
Martha Caverno Cook.

Outwitting Brigands.

It was on such a morning as we fognurtured islanders seldom witness at home that I stood upon the deck of the good steamer Coumoundouros, watching the nearing shores of the Piræus, which, as all the world knows or should know, is the port of the classic city of Athens. The beautiful unclouded sky; the bright outlines of the sun-bathed coast; the air, laden with the scent of the distant Hymettus; the far eminence with the grand old Acropolis standing out, white and bold in the clear atmosphere; and close at hand the moldering tomb of Themistocles—all combined to arouse such poetic fancies in my mind that I forgot for the moment the prosaic business upon which I had come. The screaming engine of the busy little railway which carries the traveler from the Piræus to Athens, soon reminded me, however, that I was accredited with a mission from a London Greek firm to their friends in the Attic city; and I was soon whirling over the sacred ground.

Where History gives to every rood a page!
We passed the monuments of those doughty champions of the War of Independence, Karaiskakis and Miaoulis, and many other objects of interest; and after a ride of three or four miles I found myself at my destination.

After the first few days I certainly had a very pleasant time of it, the few hours' work each day acting only as a stimulus to my varied pleasures; and having examined the Acropolis, and lunched by the fallen pillar of Jupiter, seated myself in the ruins of the Pnyx—whence Demosthenes declaimed, and Pericles evolved his plans—I looked around, like Alexander, for more worlds to conquer. I thereupon consulted my genial but unwashed host, Kyrie Antonio Pericles Pappademetraopoulos—who, although Plato was to him a text-book, and the sayings of Socrates as familiar as the sayings of Tommy and Harry to an English schoolboy, was always as dirty as a sweep—upon the propriety of betaking myself to where

The mountains look on Marathon,
And Marathon looks on the sea.
For one might as well go to Egypt
without visiting the Pyramids, or to Rome without entering St. Peter's, as to "do" Greece and leave Marathon unexplored. And when my host tried to dissuade me by assuring me that a Greek gentleman's ear had been sent a fortnight before by the brigands to his obstinate relatives, to hurry the negotiations for his ransom, it so roused my blood that I vowed I would go if I

returned as close cropped as an English terrier. So away we started—myself and Themistocles, the son of my host, a sallow, unshaven youth, dirtier than his father—mounted upon two high-spirited donkeys, our revolvers well primed and our commissariat well stocked.

"Adios, Kyrie!" shouted my long-named host as we cantered off.
"Never fear," I replied, waving my revolver defiantly, and feeling that I should be greatly disappointed if the rascals did not show themselves.

On we went, enjoying the scenery and holding a hybrid conversation—he in broken English, and I in sadly mutilated Greek—until in the excitement of the ride and the glorious panorama constantly unfolding itself to our view, I entirely forgot that there were such beings as brigands in existence.

"Now," said I to Themistocles, after a ride of some hours, during which my appetite became unpleasantly sharpened, "let us look about for a spot where we can bivouac in comfort."

We soon found a delightful place, sheltered all round, save where through a small opening we obtained a view of a charming landscape. Dismounting, and allowing our animals to refresh themselves on the grass, we soon made havoc of the good things we had brought. I was laying upon my back smoking a cigarette after the meal, gazing dreamily at the blue firmament; and being too lazy to rise, had called upon Themistocles to pass me the water cup.

"Has the fellow gone to sleep?" thought I, still indisposed to turn my head. "Themistocles!"

But Themistocles heard me not; and when I raised myself upon my elbow, I saw him standing, as if struck dumb and motionless with fear, staring upon the opening. Instinctively I leaped up and clutched my revolver; but before I took a step the cause of Themistocles' fear became apparent; and three shaggy forms behind three blunderbusses aimed direct at me, made me fully aware that I was in presence of those scourges of Greece, the brigands! But oh! what a metamorphosis! Where were the natty green jackets with silver buttons, the plumed hats, and the tout ensemble of the brigands of my youth, of the operas and the picture-books? Three ragged, disreputable-looking figures, clad in greasy sheep-skins and dirty clothes, unkempt, unshaven, took the place of those tinselled heroes. With stern gestures and muttered threats they ordered us to follow them. My first thought was resistance; but when I showed the slightest signs, the three bell-mouthed muskets were bent toward me, and I felt that the odds were too many; and determining to await events, grimly submitted to be led down the mountain by our unsavory guides.

At last, after winding through ravines and hollows, across glens and over mountain-paths innumerable, this most unpleasant journey ended by our guides calling a halt as we gained the summit of an eminence surrounded by trees and tall rocks, forming an extraordinary natural fortress. Beneath our feet, in a deep ravine, with seemingly but one outlet, and excellently sheltered by overhanging foliage, was the camp of the brigands; and here we found the rest of the shaggy ruffians—with the exception of one who stood sentinel—enjoying their siesta with indolent content.

A shrill whistle soon brought the rascals to their feet; and, rushing up to meet us, they displayed a dozen of as unfavorable specimens of the human race as could well be found. Seizing our asses by their bridles, they relieved our captors, and led us down the ravine; and having roughly assisted us to dismount, brought us into the presence of the chief of the band.

"Bravo, lads! excellent, excellent!" he shouted, as his sparkling eyes bent upon us in delight; and after a cursory examination, we were conducted, amid excited gesticulations of the brigands and without undue ceremony, into a dark cavern within the ravine.

"Shiver my maintops!" exclaimed a voice as I groped my way in; "they might give us sea-room, the vagabonds, and not land us in this lubberly creek; and now they are shoving more craft in to anchor!"

"Haul in, Jack, old chum!" answered another; "we must make the best of a bad job, mate."

To say that my heart leaped to my mouth at hearing such unexpected words, and finding myself in the company of my own countrymen, would no more than describe the cheering sensation that thrilled through me.

"What cheer, mates?" I cried in the darkness. Answering exclamations of astonishment greeted my words; and

in a few minutes our stories were told; and I learned that my new-found friends were the captain and supercargo of a ship then lying in the port of the Piræus, who, seeking a like object, had met with a similar fate to my own.

"And now," said Captain Jack Jenkins, "how are we to get out of this scrape? If I had Tim and Joe and Black Tom, each with a cutlass and a barking-iron here, we'd soon make a passage, I'd warrant!"

"That's all very well," said Will Johnson, the supercargo; "but we haven't. If I'd but the opportunity given me, I'd guarantee—"

Whatever the supercargo was about to say was cut short by the advent of two shock-heads at the little opening of our prison, and two harsh voices calling us—as my guide, Themistocles, informed us—to partake of a feast; for we learned afterward that the chief, in commemoration of having made such a good haul, had decided to allow us, his prisoners, to partake of the general festivity. But as a preliminary, we had to undergo an examination, as to our capability of paying the anticipated ransoms. First, we were relieved of our watches and rings, the captain using language rather strong for translation to these pages, to the great amusement of his tormentors, who, with similar gesticulations to his, endeavored to imitate the sound of the captain's words, which of course only added to his wrath and their hilarity.

"You uncombed, dirty-faced vagabonds!" he shouted, "if I had a few of you aboard the Annie Martin, I'd twist your ugly heads over the yard-arm in the twinkling of a jiffy!"

Of course they only laughed the louder at his impotent rage; and I thought it quite as well that they did not understand the language in which he gave it vent.

The operation of stripping us of our valuables gave me an opportunity to observe the appearance of my companions. Captain Jenkins is the beau-ideal of an English seaman. In age about thirty-five, of a large and robust built, a face broad, manly and bearded, and limbs such as would delight a sculptor to copy. His height was nearly six feet; and he had an air of command about him which was doubtless bred of his occupation. The supercargo, Will Johnson, was perhaps ten years younger; nearly as tall as his friend, strong and active; and takes us altogether—for I am of no mean stature myself—we were three men who, under any circumstances, would be no disgrace to our country; and if any opportunity should arise for an attempt at an escape, I felt certain that we should give as good an account of ourselves as any scratch three, here or there.

Having satisfied themselves of the value of my late father's watch, which I parted from with some emotion, and of the captain's gold chronometer, as well as the supercargo's watch and diamond ring, we were interrogated, through Themistocles, as to our means. For myself the name of the firm I was traveling for acted with a talismanic effect upon them, and I was immediately assessed—notwithstanding my protestations—at three hundred pounds. At this price, too, the captain's freedom was valued; while the unfortunate supercargo—whose business they persisted in confounding with that of owner of the cargo and ship—was unanimously voted to be worth twice our ransom. Having arranged this matter to their own satisfaction, if not to ours, we were told to sit down and enjoy ourselves with what appetite we could muster.

The smell of the roast lamb and the freshly baked meal-cakes, however, soon aroused pleasant sensations, and dimmed for a time the memory of our griefs; more especially as, under the apparent certainty of obtaining his booty, the chief condescended to be quite patronizing toward us, carving the joints himself for us, and delicately handing on the point of a dagger our several portions. After we had satisfied our hunger with more solid viands, we were regaled with dried fruits as dessert; and a large jar of a peculiar sherry-colored but bad-tasting wine of a resinous flavor—which Themistocles described as the common wine of the country—was brought in and set down in the midst of us. This we told them we could not drink; and the chief very generously ordered us a couple of bottles from his own particular store, doubtless the proceeds of a raid upon some well-to-do householder.

Will Johnson, after a time, managed to ingratiate himself in the favor of our shaggy host and his friends by his genial happy manner and frank bearing, favoring the company with many

remarks, which, translated by Themistocles, evidently pleased them. When, too, by sleight-of-hand—in which he was an adept—he performed some simple tricks, and gave them a music-hall song with a rollicking chorus, and wound up with a hornpipe, accompanied by the captain with a pocket comb and a piece of paper, the general enthusiasm knew no bounds, and the beetle-browed vagabonds laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks.

Will now became on such excellent terms with them all that he proceeded to take some freedoms with them; and when he snatched the horn from the cup-bearer, and installed himself in that official's place, lading the wine out of the wide-mouthed jar and handing it round to the company, his triumph was complete.

"For heaven's sake!" said he, as he passed us, "don't take any of this stuff, and don't drink much of your own."

"Never fear," said Jenkins, making a wry face, "one taste is sufficient."

And so Will went round with the cup, making a comical remark to this one, and a grimace at that, until the chief—evidently fearing from their hilarity that they were taking too much—ordered them to desist from drinking and return to their several duties.

Meanwhile we were sent back into our dungeon, with a sentinel stationed at the opening.

"Not a word," whispered Will, as we settled down in our prison. "Here's something, captain," he continued, "that belongs to you."

"Why," said the captain, in reply, as Will handed him the article mentioned; "this is a stopper out of my medicine chest."

"To be sure it is Jack," returned Will; "and I must apologize for the liberty of taking your laudanum phial; but my back-tooth was so painful on board the ship last night that I got up and took it, and luckily forgot to return it this morning. You must debit me with the bottle and its contents, for I dropped them both into the vagabonds' wine-jar!"

"What!" we all exclaimed in a breath.

"Now, stop your clappers!" continued the supercargo—"Jack, you know I'm not bad at sleight-of-hand tricks. Well, in the first place, having contrived to secrete the bottle while the blackguards were relieving me of my valuables, and then having attained the position of waiter, what was easier than to wriggle the bottle down my sleeve, whip out the stopper, and drop the lot into their swipes; giving the bottle a crack and stirring the laudanum up every time I dipped the horn into it!"

"Bravo, Will!" cried the captain, seizing his hand and giving it a hearty shake. "If that's the case, we're safe; for the black-faced rascals won't wake up for a dozen hours I'll be bound. There! our guard has dropped off already!"

And sure enough, the drowsy ruffian had planted himself right across the opening and was snoring loudly.

"Now for it!" cried the impetuous Jack Jenkins, rising.

"Hold hard!" said Will. "Let them get well off."

So, settling ourselves down for half an hour, we talked the matter over. At the end of this time we sent the trembling Themistocles to see how things were outside; and after peeping over the prostrate sentinel he gave us to understand that all were sleeping except three, and they were retiring to the farther end of the ravine, and would in a minute be out of sight.

"Capital!" said Will, with suppressed excitement. "Now, each take a pistol and a cutlass from the fellows, and follow me."

One after another we stepped across the sleeping brigand at the entrance, Will relieving him of his pistol, dirk and blunderbuss, while the captain and I stood by ready to give him his quietus at the slightest sign of his waking. Then the four of us, gliding like ghosts, assisted ourselves to whatever weapons we could most easily lay hands upon; and as Themistocles was not of much use for fighting, we gave him the bag containing our valuables—which we found by the side of the sleeping chief—as well as several spare pistols, to carry. Picking our way without speaking a word, we advanced toward the open end of the ravine, and just as we turned round a jutting point of rock we saw the three sentinels, seemingly in earnest conversation.

"Halt!" whispered Will. "Now for a rush!" and each singling out his man and clutching his rifle by the barrel—for we avoided the noise of shooting—we sprang forward. Almost simultaneously, and before the enemy had

time to observe us, we were upon them, and three rifle-stocks descended upon three shock heads with such force that two of the fellows dropped like stones. The stock of my rifle glanced off the hard head of my antagonist and crushed against the rock. With a stifled cry he turned; but in an instant my hand was upon his throat, and the sound died in his gullet; while with the strength of desperation I dashed his head against the wall-like rock; and after a struggle—in which he wounded me with his dagger—he fell from my grasp, apparently lifeless.

"Now," said the captain, "where are the donkeys?—Come, Greek!" he cried to Themistocles; "bear a hand;" and looking around we espied our four animals just as we left them, but with a brigand sitting by them. Here was an unlooked-for reconte! He was fully a hundred yards off, and to get at him we should have to cross a small plateau.

"Leave him to me!" cried Jenkins, preparing to rush forward. But under the advice of the supercargo he stopped. We could have picked him off easily, but dared not, for the noise of the rifles.

"Hang it!" impatiently muttered Jenkins, "we shall be trapped again, after all;" and without further parley the impetuous fellow started off, running on the tips of his toes, with a drawn cutlass in one hand and a pistol in the other. Just as he was within a few yards of the brigand the latter turned round, and seeing how matters stood made for his rifle, which was leaning against a tree a few feet off; but a revolver hurled deftly by Will Johnson—for we had all followed—catching him directly in the face, so effectually stopped his progress that he fell stunned to the ground.

"You persist in doing all the work," said Jenkins, as we came up to him. "But quick, lads; off we go!" and in a moment we were on our asses, and, under the guidance of our Greek companion, were making with breakneck speed for Athens. Up hill, down dale, on we went for a couple of hours without stopping or meeting a human being; then, just as we were about to cross the summit of a mountain at which we had arrived, a harmless-looking peasant wished us "good-day," and was about to pass on.

"Seize him!" cried Themistocles; "he's a scout!"

So seize him we did, for caution's sake; and as there were no trees near, we tied his hands and legs together, and left him begging for mercy. But there was no mercy in us, more especially as Themistocles explained that there was such a curious and mysterious connection between the brigands and villagers that it was by no means unlikely—had we allowed him to go free—he would have hied to the nearest village and roused a swarm of semi-brigands about us.

Having traveled for four hours, and as our asses could scarcely get along for fatigue, we called a halt; and after resting ourselves and watering our animals we continued our journey until, late at night, we reached Athens, where, round the hospitable board of our host, we soon forgot our troubles.—Chambers' Journal.

Value of Hay as fuel.

A Dakota letter has this rather surprising statement concerning the use of hay as fuel: The problem of what to burn, no less than what to build with, is one of the first which must be solved by the settler. The Creator has kindly furnished a fuel unsurpassed in virtue, abundance and cheapness. It is hay. The first time I asked a settler what he burnt for fuel and he told me, I said, "Why, how can you get enough to do you through the winter? I shouldn't think a stack would last you a week." Since then I have heard many other persons make a similar remark. The fact is, however, that it takes about the same amount of hay to run a stove through the winter as it does of coal. The grass cut for fuel is not the same as that used for feeding, but is taken from low or marshy lands where it is long and heavy. It is stacked, and as it is needed is made into twists about ten or twelve inches long, weighing from one-half to three-quarters of a pound. About five tons is put up for consumption in a large stove during the winter. It makes a very hot stove, and is preferred above all other fuels for baking purposes. I have a friend who twists enough for breakfast every morning to last until the next day. He thinks it is the cheapest and most satisfactory fuel the world produces.

Why a pig is like a tree—Both thrive by their root.