

perfectly unhappy about Elgin; Doctor Scott thinks he is better, but I want my Father and Mother very much. My only comfort is my Bratts, they are nice things indeed.

Give my best and kindest Love to my Father, pray pray write to me often.

And believe me your dutiful and most
Affectionate Daughter,

M. ELGIN.

CHAPTER XII

THE WONDERS OF GREECE

IN the spring of the previous year to this (in 1801), Lusieri had paid a visit to Constantinople, presumably to report progress to Lord Elgin, concerning the work of the Artists.

He probably was made acquainted with the Marbles which had been obtained from the Troad,¹ and which formed the nucleus of the Elgin Collection, and it is likely that on this occasion the question of safeguarding the Grecian ones, and making a collection of them, was also discussed.

At any rate his stay was not a long one, and soon after his return to Athens, the Firman from the Porte was obtained which has already been referred to.

Now, a whole year later, Lord Elgin was at last able to visit the scene of the operations himself. He left for Athens, accompanied by Lady Elgin and the children, on the 28th March, 1802.

O.

ATHENS, *April 10th 1802.*

DEAREST MOTHER,

I am now writing in the very room my own dear Mother used to write to me from. You cannot think what a feel of friendship I have for the people here,

¹ The dwellers in the Troad have, of recent years, been visited by a form of that mysterious epidemic of involuntary dancing, which raged in Europe from 1374 onwards, and which, in Italy, was known by the name of Tarantism. It is most vividly and remarkably described in the *Times* of 9th September 1911.

they seem so sincere in their professions, and then they talk all day long about you and my Father. Hunt says he never saw my Father in the spirits he had whilst he was here; but Lusieri speaks of you with raptures. He says,

"Ah Madame Nisbet was enthusiastic, she used to go almost every day to the Pnyx;¹ Monsieur Nisbet said it was very well, but he would rather have a couple of good bottles of wine." Oh the Hottentot!

I have brought the two letters you wrote to me from hence, they are in my writing desk, it is pleasant reading them on the spot.

But I must give you a description of our journey, for it was very romantic. We, our Bratts, and the Doctor went in the Ragusan vessel.² Colonel Murray and Hunt sailed in the English Brig which was to defend us from the pirates of which the seas abound just now, and a little ship was filled with the Maltese that Elgin is sending to Malta.

We sailed from Constantinople monday evening the 28th of March, and only passed the straights of the Dardanelles on Wednesday, we had a most dreadful blowy night. On Thursday 1st of April, the wind still blowing, we put into the Bay of Mantria; it blew so hard there was some danger in landing, but I was so ill on board I was determined at all events to get on shore, but to leave the children in the ship. We pitched a tent in a bit of a cave, and there we spent a fine stormy night; I was really extremely anxious about Elgin, for I dreaded his catching cold, but no power would persuade him to leave me and return to the ship.

Some peasants told us that there were an amazing

¹ Pnyx, a hill to the south-west of Athens.

² Ragusa, a seaport in Dalmatia.

number of pirates and that the night before, eighteen of them had landed at our cave and carried away a woman. However the woman returned that morning and said if she had had another woman like herself, they two could have driven away the robbers.

We had plenty of janisaries, and lighted two large fires close to our tent to drive away the damp. We passed the night unmolested, and Elgin was not at all the worse for it; it is quite astonishing how he recovered as soon as he left Constantinople.

The next morning we sent for the children on shore, but I should have mentioned that the brig stopping at Tenedos to take in wine, we dashed by and never saw more of her. This made us determined not to trust the children in the Ragusan ship, without the brig, for fear of their being attacked by the pirates; the sea ran so high, even in the Bay, that the boat was in the greatest danger of being upset, Doctor Scott was with them, and he declares he would not run such a risk with them again, for £10,000.

We had got from a neighbouring village some horses and asses, you would have laughed had you seen the party; I was mounted upon an ass, Masterman across another, Mary's Paramana upon a third; a great fat washerwoman of mine preferred walking for five or six hours to the honor of riding. When I sent for the children, I said I would only have Mary's Paramana and another woman. Your old friend Paramana and Calitza were both so ill they would not come, and I assure you Fatty is a most unconquerable traveller. Thomas rode and took Bruce up before him; Elgin and the Doctor walked. After six most tedious hours scrambling over mountains, we arrived at the much wished for village, where I expected to sleep like a Queen, but in this, alas, I was most sadly disappointed.

We got to a *Han*, the people light a large fire in the middle but not a crevice was left for the smoke to escape; I took possession of that *Han* for myself, Bratts, and damsels; Elgin and the Doctor went into another. We expected to pass a most delightful night and arranged our beds with great glee, but no sooner had we flung our weary limbs upon them, than we were assailed in such a manner by fleas, not one of us could shut our eyes. It was quite dreadful for the poor children, they were danced out of their beds every two minutes in order to catch the fleas.

The next morning we continued as before, only we contrived two baskets into which we put our Babs, well bolstered up! The people told us we were nine hours ride from Athens; we came to a village where we stopped and dined, then we deposited our little Treasures in the baskets, and off we set.

Lusieri and M. Logotheti¹ came to meet us, we were all sadly tired with this day's journey, I really thought of getting off my horse and laying down, for I never was so fagged. It was between 8 and 9 o'clock when we arrived at Athens, and perfectly dark, besides there was a great dew falling which made me very uncomfortable about Elgin; as for the children, we wraped them quite up, and they arrived as fresh and lively as possible, I never saw them look as well as they do here.

Do you remember the pictures in the room next to your bedroom here? Bruce always shews us Grand-Papa and Grand-Mama; he never fails drinking your health every day. By the bye, I must not forget to tell you that Doctor Scott has twice inoculated Bruce with the vaxine, and he is perfectly satisfied that he had it when poor Doctor White inoculated him. The

¹ The Consul at Athens.

last time he tried it, he brought a fine healthy child to the house, and took the vaxine from its arm to Bruce's, his arm inflamed a little, but the 4th or 5th day it quite disappeared; he says there now cannot be a doubt remaining but that he has had it.

I think my last letter I forgot to mark "N" it was dated 28th of November, so if I omitted it, put "N" upon it.

April 15th.—This morning I made myself as smart as possible having given some days notice that I intended honoring the Bath with my presence; I am sure there were three or four hundred women, Greeks and Turks. Altho' I had formed a very pretty idea of the amusement, I must say it very far surpassed my expectation. Had you dancers, singers, and tambourine players in the Bath? the dancing was too indecent, beyond anything—Mary shall not go to a Turkish Bath!

We had a ball here the other night like those you used to have; how I like to hear them talk of you and my Father, they are really fond of you; Madame Logotheti wears your locket constantly, it is such an old friend of mine; I think I feel rather jealous when I see it on her neck.

We have all this house to ourselves; the Logothetis have gone into another, which makes it much more comfortable to us; I have made Hammerton's room the nursery; did you ever go up the outside flight of stairs? We have repaired the long room and put my piano forte' into it, and we breakfast and sit reading, writing, or arranging medals in the gallery; I have put a gate upon the top of the stairs, so there is a fine airy run for Bruce; we dine at 2 o'clock and drive out in the curricule every day after dinner; tonight we drove to the Monastery of Daphne where you rode,