

APPENDIX I

“Summer in Greece: An Impression” (1955)

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Ellinikon Airport at three o'clock in the morning. Sleepy officials. American Greeks storming back for a visit to the homeland. Baggage in wild confusion. “How many American dollars do you bring into Greece?” The limousine into Athens. The regal crown in blue neon lights over the door of the Parliament building in Syntagma, Constitution Square.

Three hours later, a twenty-one-gun salute from Mt. Lycabettus in honor of King Paul, on his “name-day.” Still later, parades. Khaki-clad soldiers. Evzones, King’s guards, in white “ballet skirts” and red fezzes, arms swinging smartly. Blue and white flags. Blazing heat.

Loring Hall, the “Queen’s Megaron,” at the American School. Congenial fellow-students. The cool, dark library, across the street. The Gennadion, with a wealth of books on Byzantine and modern Greece. The School gardens. World-famous archaeologists chatting easily at lunch. The siesta or rest indoors, until four o'clock. Streets hot, silent, deserted.

The Thon-Theseion bus, with the little illuminated ikon on the dashboard. The first shocked awareness of fleas about the ankles. Men with black mustaches and yellow “conversation beads.” Squeaky shoes. Gold teeth. Black-robed, umbrella-bearing priests, with beards and with long hair rolled up under their high hats.

The Acropolis, soaring aloft. The golden-brown Parthenon. The great walls. Caves on the north slope. The Ionic beauty of the Erechtheum. The permit from the American School, which opens all doors. “Nice post-cards, lady?” Pitiful, unwanted cats, thrown down from the Acropolis and crawling painfully about, dying of hunger. Down below the Parthenon, overladen, broken-spirited donkeys, with all the sadness of the world in their despairing bray.

The Agora, with friendly American faces everywhere. Guide-signs in English and in Greek. Red flowers against the ancient walls. Recent bullet-holes in the Hephaestum. The incessant “chip, chip, chip” of the stone-masons restoring the Stoa of Atalalus. The little museum, with the ostraka and the contents of

the Mycenaean tombs, the library inscription, the Alcibiades inscription, the judges’ ballots, the wonderful sculpture of the Agora temples. Workrooms for the study of pottery, sculpture, inscriptions. In the shady courtyard, the heavenly coldness of the water in the American drinking fountain.

The joy of finding the Choregic Monument of Lysicrates, up a small street. The Byron inscription. The large Roman building just discovered by men repairing a busy modern street, and doomed to be carefully reburied. The great Olympieum, with its fallen column. The white-seated Stadium. The public gardens, thronged with children and nursemaids. Exhibitions in the Zappeion. Advertisements of the ancient plays to be performed in the Odeum of Herodes Atticus and in the theater at Epidaurus. The King’s palace, with Evzones at the gate—“Why, it’s just a nice, pleasant house!”

The Benaki Museum, and its magnificent collection of folk-costumes. On Stadium Street, Schliemann’s house, Iliou Melathron, now the Supreme Court. The great white marble Bank of Greece. “Thirty drachmae to the dollar.” Vendors of lottery tickets. The University, the Academy, the National Library, all in the classical style. The National Museum, almost ruined in the war, now being restored. The breath-taking collection of ancient sculpture and pottery now on temporary display in an adjoining building.

Zonares’, and scores of Americans consuming reasonable facsimiles of ice-cream sodas at little tables on the sidewalks. The arcade. Post-cards. Evzone dolls. Silver jewelry. Homespun dresses. Embroideries. “Shall I buy Peggy that luncheon set, or those filigree earrings?” Turkish delight, rose-flavored. Bhaklava. Sesame cakes. Pistachio nuts, salted in the shells. The changing of the guard at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The air-conditioned office of TWA, in Syntagma. Crowds in the American Express office. “Why, hello, Jim! When did you come to Athens? It’s a small world, isn’t it?”

Bargains in straw hats, near Omonia Square. The American information library. Shop windows filled with sun-glasses. Newspaper kiosks. Endless buses and cars. “Why can’t they control this traffic better?” The latest fashions in modern shops on Hermes Street. Insistent, staccato church-bells. Silver votive legs and arms for sale in small shops near the churches. The smell of incense. The Little Metropolitan church, in the middle of the street, with ancient reliefs built into its walls. Prayers and Byzantine chants broadcast by loudspeaker from churches out over the hurrying throngs. The smell of ouzo. Hephaestus Street, black and noisy, with the open shops of the metalworkers. Shoe Lane. Ancient Greek coins and terra cottas. “Beware of forgeries!” Open butcher shops, without refrigeration, looking like battlefields. Flies in droves. “And it’s 105 in the shade!”

Meals at the School: Eggs and honey, okra and vegetable marrow, lamb and sliced tomatoes, jagourti with brown sugar, melons and Turkish coffee. Your own wooden napkin-ring, with Geometric ducks neatly inked upon it. The rapid rising of the moon over Hymettus, as seen from the terrace after dinner. Witty dinner guests, most of them renowned archaeologists. Tall tales, and breathtaking reminiscences.

The beginnings of comprehension of Modern Greek: "Kale 'mera sas!" "Parakalo." "Eucharisto poly." "Embros!" "Oriste!" "Ti kaneis?" "Poson kostizei auto?" "Pos onomazetai auto?" "Then thelo auta." "Ochi dexia—aristera." "Katalambano." "Ela, ela!" "Siga, siga!" "Kale 'spera sas." "Chairete!"

Memorable experiences: Watching Mylonas, with his fabulous man lanni, uncover a Geometric grave at Eleusis. Jet planes breaking the sound barrier over the ancient Telesterion. Thompson lecturing in the Agora and on the Pnyx, Stevens at the Parthenon, Robinson in the Roman market, Eliot on the Mound of Marathon, Vanderpool on the Areopagus, in the Cerameicus, and at the Mycenaean well on the Acropolis. Wace visiting the American School.

Trips to more distant sites: The chartered bus. Thick dust. Roads under construction. Breathlessly sheer crags. Hairpin turns on loose gravel, with an ikon at each danger-spot in the road. Olive trees. Fig trees. Fields of tobacco. Acanthus plants growing wild. Intensely blue sea. Byzantine monasteries, their inner chapel walls ablaze with great, austere mosaics. Old, old temples. Women in the fields, their heads and mouths covered against the dust. The lonely shepherd with his crook. Flocks of goats. Flocks of sheep. Nettles and thistles, rocks and snails and lizards. "Is that a snake-hole?" Hard, fast climbing up a mountainside to an ancient wall on the summit. Report on the site by an earnest, perspiring student. The "archaeological chasm"—the very deep, unfenced well or pit that one suddenly encounters at most sites. "Excavating" ancient sherds with one's own hands. The slippery descent to the bus, over shifting stones. Dusty shoes. Blazing sunburn. Lunch under the trees, with Spam sandwiches and goat's milk cheese, and warm water out of a canteen. Huge ants, carrying off a piece of bread with concerted team-work.

The village hotel. Primitive plumbing. The shower without any water in it. The common bathroom with no hot water, no lock on the door, and no plug in the tub. The wardrobe with no coat-hangers and no hooks. The brass beds. The mattress with the hollow in the middle. The door knob that falls off. Dinner in the village square, to the delight of the inhabitants. "When they hiss at you, are they hostile or just flirtatious?" The local merchant who lived for thirty years in Chicago, and who comes to

chat with you as you eat. Fish soup or lemon soup, goat meat or squid, sliced tomatoes in oil, okra, goat's milk cheese. Mavrodaphni wine. "Gazosa," synthetic lemonade in bottles. "Greek stomach," and the fear that one is going to die.

Unforgettable sights: The tremendous mountain view from the theater at Delphi, and that over the sea from the temple on Aegina. Workmen freeing the statue of Agias from its war-time protection of plaster, at Delphi. The rugged pass of Thermopylae, and modern "Knights of Thermopylae" swarming over the battlefield. The Cadmeia at Thebes, where Laius' palace once stood; and the little open vegetable shop at the corner of "Epaminondas Street" and "Oedipus Street." The wild, rocky gorge of the oracle of Trophonius at Lebadeia, and the cold rush of waters through it. Greek islands from the air, on the flight to Crete. The serenity and majesty of Mt. Ida and Mt. Dicte. The throne-room at Cnossus. The thrill of being lost in the "Labyrinth." The new museum at Herakleion, with the frescoes beautifully displayed. Little Cretan children at the tourist pavilion in Phaestus, speechless with joy on the gift of a few colored drinking-straws. The old, old walls and Lion Gate at Mycenae. Schliemann's Grave Circle, and the newer circle, outside the walls. The inn of the "Fair Helen and Menelaus." The Cyclopean galleries at Tiryns. The perfection of the theater at Epidaurus. The citadel at Sparta, where Helen and Menelaus lived; and the temple of Artemis Orthia, where the Spartan boys were ceremonially flogged. The stupendous walls and fortifications and churches of Mistra. The starting-line in the stadium at Olympia, with the starting-grooves once gripped by the toes of the greatest athletes of ancient times. The Hermes of the later Praxiteles, standing dramatically in a bed of sand as a precaution against earthquake damage. The pit near the "workshop of Pheidias," where the Germans believe they have found the moulds for the great statue of Zeus. The American dig at Lerna, with its heaps of prehistoric sherds. The towering rock of Palamedes, ghostly above one in the moonlight, at Nauplia. Acrocorinth, and, at its foot, the Agora that knew St. Paul. The Corinthian canal, straight as an arrow, with the blue sea cleaving the rocks sharply. The coast-road traveled by Theseus, as he performed his labors. And, best of all, the Acropolis again, rising majestically before the eyes of the traveler returning to Athens.

A hard summer, you say? Yes, to some extent—but one never to be equaled, never to be forgotten. There can be nothing more inspiring for a teacher of the classics, Latin or Greek, than to see with his own eyes the places where the greatest civilization of the western world reached its peak. As he gazes, all that he has read in ancient literature springs to life, becomes infinitely meaningful; and he takes back to his classes across the sea a spark that he will never lose.