

MEMORIES OF QUEENS.

ALEXANDRA, DAUGHTER, WIFE, AND MOTHER OF KINGS.

The sudden death of a Queen of Sorrows, Olga, Queen of the Hellenes, at her villa at Rome, reminds me of very delightful associations with her at Athens in the year 1897, during the Græco-Turkish war, a short encounter which gave victory to the finer man and superior soldier, the all-conquering Turk.

My sympathies naturally were Philhellene. Had I not in youth absorbed the Metamorphosis of Ovid, looked on exquisite goddesses floating in diaphanous garments on the summit of lily-scented Olympus, laughed with Cupid, and had my heart wrung by the questing pipes of Pan? And was not my conscience perturbed concerning the frieze of the Parthenon and that lonely caryatid, so safely immured in the stuffy British Museum, when they longed for the kiss of perfumed Attic breezes?

And had not the barbarous Turk in more modern times ground to powder the debris of Athene's incomparable Temple on the Acropolis and used it for callous warfare? And was not Western Europe convinced that the Greek people, children of the Gods, were still of classic mien and Spartan valour?

Naturally, I was all ardour when one day I received a letter from the Hon. Charlotte Knollys in attendance on Alexandra, the then Princess of Wales, enclosing a telegram from the Crown-Princess Sophie of Greece, asking for trained nurses to be sent at once to Athens. I was invited to select the nurses and if possible to raise funds for the purpose. Nothing daunted I appealed through the press, and found myself the richer by £500 almost by return of post.

The *Daily Chronicle*, then in its zenith, controlled in those days by two brilliant young men, Mr. H. W. Massingham and Mr. Henry Norman, had opened a fund for the Greek wounded. Money poured in, the two funds were amalgamated, and some twenty trained nurses fitted away by the Brindisi express, and were placed at the disposal of the Crown-Princess in Athens. When during the Larissa stampede one of these damsels was compelled to travel precariously south, clinging to the top of a crowded train, British potentates in Greece, nervy and alarmed, questioned the wisdom of British nurses, even in uniform, running exciting risks with the fez of the wily Turk

bobbing up just beyond Volo! Ednem Pasha might come south any day (and sure enough he did, and one of these very Sisters squatting calmly on a heap of stones by the roadside watched him pass by!). In London we were advised that a shepherd was required to look after these lambs in Athens and elsewhere. I was invited to go, and in 48 hours was away upon one of the most entrancing of all my travels; carrying safely in my hand-bag an open sesame in the beautiful flowing handwriting of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales. It was in this wise. Just a few hours before departure there came a resounding knock on the door, a Royal footman handed in a letter from Marlborough House commanding my presence there for an audience with the Princess "as soon as convenient" (note the courtesy), a letter all sweetness and "wanting to know." Of course I lost not a minute in obeying this gracious command.

Upon arrival I was received by the Hon. Charlotte Knollys. "Ah! Mrs. Fenwick," she said, "you are virtue rewarded, going on this humane mission to the country of the brother of Her Royal Highness, and you have never asked for favours or introductions or anything. It is wonderful, people are not usually like that. I will take you to the Princess." And she chatted on in her simple unaffected manner in most kindly fashion until she ushered me into the boudoir.

Once within that bright room, all crimson and gold, full of flowers and family portraits, nothing could have been more gracious than my reception by the Princess. Though middle-aged in those days, this exquisite woman was still a girl in spirit, gracile, alluring, a caster of spells, and not less entrancing, than when

seen as a bride at Belvoir Castle more than thirty years before. Words are a poor medium in which to convey beauty, because real beauty is such an intangible thing. Charm—grace—Divine essence go to the making of it, and they are as elusive as air. In the presence of this lovely being, a lover of beauty realised a rare satisfaction, and when through seeking sad blue eyes something of tragedy was conveyed to you—you remembered with reverence the sweet Lady mourned her first-born—and that so terrible a grief leaves for ever the shadow of unshed tears.

In half an hour the Princess knew all our hopes and fears for the suffering Greek people, approved our plans and preparations, our uniform of blue and white—the Greek



Lafayette]

[By courtesy of "The Gentlewoman."

THE PRINCESS IN HER ROBES AS A DOCTOR OF MUSIC.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)