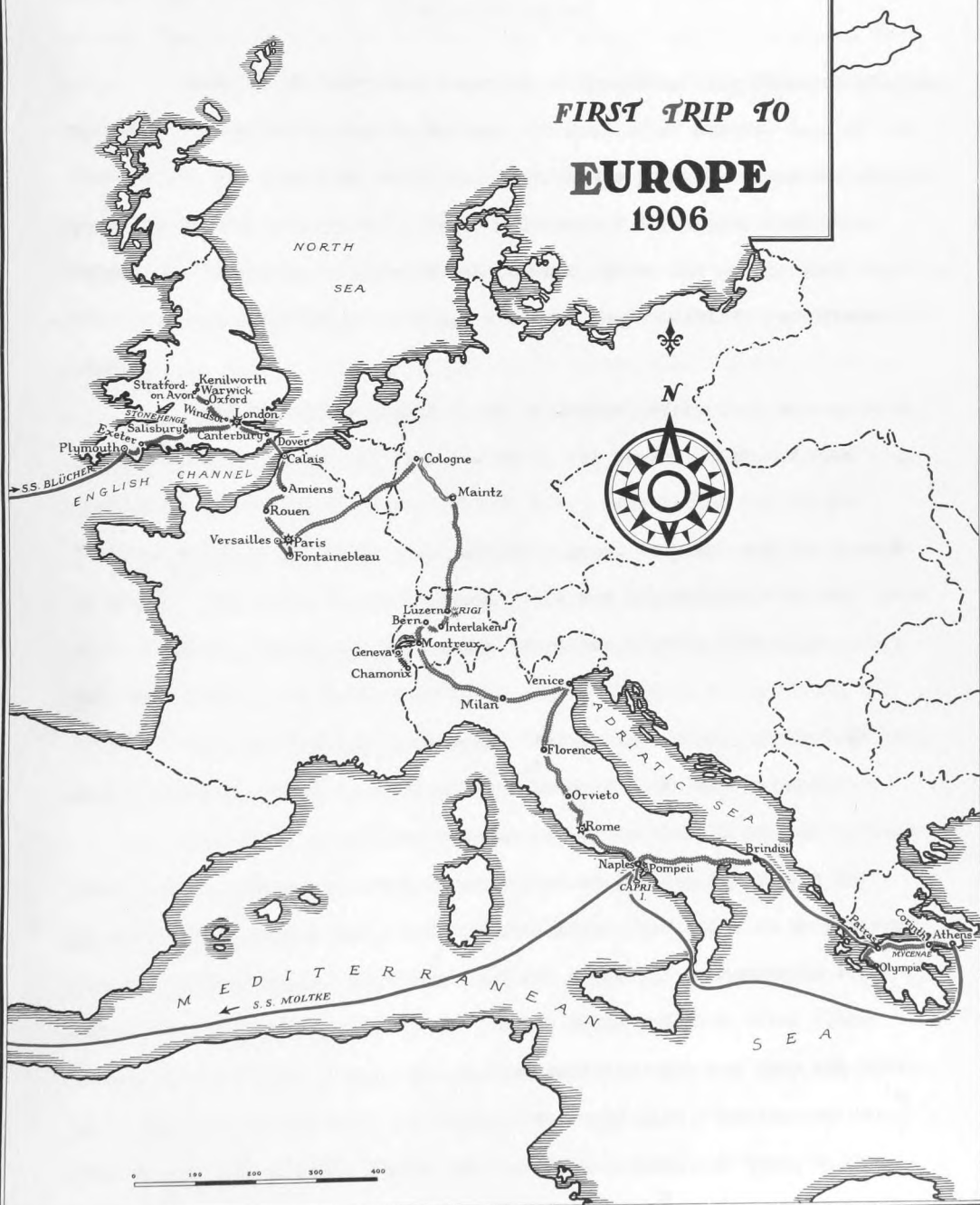


FIRST TRIP TO EUROPE 1906

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CHAPTER X

FIRST TRIP ABROAD

The one greatest and never-to-be forgotten trip which an American can take is his first trip to Europe. To see, after several days of endless water, the land from which our forefathers came, to visit the shrines of which he has read so much, to find himself a foreigner, lost in a medley of languages, currencies and customs, gives the thrill that comes but once in a lifetime of travel. At least so Grandfather and Grandmother found.

They began talking of going to Europe before they were married and had kept it up continuously for about ten years. Both had read eagerly of what they hoped some day to see. Grandfather had taught European History and Latin, had coached a pupil in Greek and would need no guide. My, would it not be grand if he and Grandmother some day could go to Europe? But at the end of ten years the project seemed more distant than when it was first discussed. Three children had arrived. In spite of heroic efforts to live simply and to save money, the amount that could be saved out of a school man's salary in that day was small.

One evening, as conversation turned to the old subject, Grandfather said: "We only tantalize ourselves with plans for a trip to Europe, let us either go or quit talking about it." "I will go whenever you are ready," said Grandmother. In two weeks all arrangements were made. Grandfather's mother would run the house and look after Ruth. Grandmother's father would come up from Appleton with his pony and look after Charles and George. The whole town would give attention to the family. We had tickets, second cabin, on an inexpensive boat, S. S.

Bleucher and all was set. We would surprise the children by a dramatic announcement.

So at dinner Grandfather announced the great news to the children - Charles (8), George (6) and Ruth (2). The children went on calmly eating their dinner and after a while Charles broke the silence. "When you are over there, father, I wish you would collect me some foreign stamps."

The whole town helped us get away - and then one day - Oh, joy of joys, we saw in the distance the dim outline of old England. Could it be possible that the dream of a lifetime was at last come true?

We disembarked at Plymouth, bubbling over with eagerness to see everything. From the train window the country looked so green, so interesting, that we fairly jumped up and down in our seats and kept saying, "This is really England." The train made a stop at Exeter. We got off, checked our baggage and hastened to see the cathedral. Was anything ever so stupendous or so grand, and were not the tombs of the bishops interesting? But we must tear ourselves away. Buying a couple of buns, which we ate on the bus top, we returned to the station for the next train to Salisbury. Here the cathedral was larger and more beautiful and more interesting than Exeter. How impossible it had seemed at Exeter that anything anywhere could be more interesting.

But visitors would be admitted to Stonehenge up to eight, let's get a carriage (there were no automobiles in that day) and go. As we rode slowly along, enjoying the delightful English countryside, a boy offered to sell us cherries. We then remembered, for the first time, that we had had only a bun for lunch and no dinner. However, some cherries would suffice until we returned.

At Stonehenge one rather resented the fact that a private individual had fenced in the historic ruins and charged us a fee for admission

We did not resent the fee, but it seemed to us that the state should take possession of so sacred a shrine.

The temple of the Druids! Was it possible! We were not photographers at that time, but we noted carefully the position of the stones, bought postcards and, as we returned, our appetites increased with every mile. We re-entered Salisbury just as the town clock struck ten, only to find that although it was still not dark, every eating place which sold food in this quiet English town had closed for the night.

However, so slight a mishap as the loss of dinner should not mar the joy of so glorious a day - we could be up early in the morning and get a real breakfast. We were up bright and early (shortly after six) but not a soul was stirring in our hotel. No matter, we would find a restaurant outside - but outside every place of business was closed by huge wooden shutters. This lack of eats had ceased to be funny. However, we would take a walk. At 7, no doubt, we could find an open restaurant. At 7:30 Salisbury was still apparently a city of the dead, and we decided to return to our hotel - still no evidence of breakfast.

It was now getting on toward 8 o'clock. Certainly it must be possible to get breakfast if one made noise enough. The receipt worked. What did we wish? Bacon and eggs and rolls and jam! Did breakfast ever taste better? Our spirits quickly revived, but drooped a bit when we got the bill. "What is this item 'extra service?'" "Oh, that is for getting the servants up so early to get some breakfast." It seems in England, perhaps due to frequent morning fogs, more likely due to English love of living leisurely, it is the custom to get started one hour later than we do in this country.

We cannot write you the thrill upon thrill which came to us in

England. Every day seemed more wonderful than the day before - the British Museum, Westminster Abbey, Kenilworth, Stratford-on-Avon - no guide to shout at us; just ourselves - a guide book and a background of years of study and anticipation, and the enjoyment of a dream come true.

Our last night in England was spent in Canterbury. As we sat on a bench eating wonderful English strawberries out of a box in true English style, a gentleman at the other end of the bench, likewise eating strawberries, addressed us as Americans. "What makes you think we are Americans?" asked Grandfather. "We are wearing English clothing and have not spoken a word." "Oh," replied the gentleman, "you have such an alert look on your faces, you look as though when the train went, you would be on it." We then noticed that English faces had a placid expression quite in contrast to the rather nervous look of American tourists.

We crossed the Channel and left the boat train at Amiens. Neither Grandmother nor Grandfather had ever studied French and could not speak a word of the language, but no matter. Everywhere we went someone could speak English, we thought. Imagine our consternation at suddenly finding ourselves in a big city station unable to read the signs or understand a word anyone spoke.

By sign language we finally got our bags checked and took a street car headed toward the Cathedral. Did the street car really go to the Cathedral? We would ask the conductor. We said "Cathedral" over and over again, but with no luck. We showed the conductor the word in the guide book. He could read! "Wi, Cathedral." Certainly we must have pronounced the word his way at least once in all the variations of accent we had tried. The conductor was now all animation and with elaborate and inimitable gestures began to show us how big it was, how in one corner was a spiral

staircase which we must take and get the grand view from the roof. As a matter of fact, we need not have worried, for soon the Cathedral loomed over us. In most cities the easiest thing to find is the Cathedral.

Returning on foot, we stopped to purchase some buns and fruit for our dinner. We did not feel that we could waste either money or time on long drawn-out table d'hote meals when there was so much to see. In the window was a small canteloupe marked 3 - doubtless 3 of the strange little coppers we had seen today for the first time. The shop woman was not interested in our offer - let's try 3 of the large coppers. Still no interest. Finally we offered a whole handful of coppers. The woman looked at them critically and shook her head, Grandfather concluded this melon must be a family heirloom and there was no use trying to buy it.

As he turned away, a passerby spoke in English! "Can I be of help? I had a terrible time learning to get along over here and if I can assist you, I shall be pleased to do so."

"That is very kind of you," said Grandfather. "I am only curious to know why the woman won't sell that canteloupe." "She will sell the canteloupe all right, but she wants three francs." "Three francs," said Grandfather, "she can't mean to charge that - that would be 60 cents of American money." (The franc was then worth 19 cents.) "It's an imported melon," he explained. "When you get to where the melons are raised, you can get one for a few centimes."

We arrived in Rouen at 10 p.m. The day had been most interesting, but somewhat wearing. We had better go to a hotel where English would surely be spoken. Hotel Victoria. That certainly must be English. But "the only one who could speak English was out." After much difficulty in trying to understand terms, we were conducted to a room with a huge

four poster bed with the mattress at about the height of our shoulders! How were we supposed to get in? We could not find step ladder in our dictionary. No matter - a chair and a good hop would do the trick. Soon we were in dreamland, where some of the characters spoke English.

Next morning it was decided that we must learn some French quickly. A couple of days later Grandfather tested his newly acquired vocabulary by ordering melon for dessert. Imagine his dismay when he received a bowl of sausage.

We will have to skip our wonderful days in Paris and our attempt to see all there was in the Louvre. To the Louvre collections we devoted every forenoon for five days and then losing our way out, wandered through endless corridors one had not been in before. The task was impossible - let's give it up and play outside.

In Germany we fared better, for Grandmother could talk German reasonably well. But at our first dinner Grandmother had trouble getting the waiter to understand that Grandfather wanted a cup of hot water to drink. The waiter understood her words but could not comprehend the idea. Grandmother persisted until at last it dawned on the waiter that Grandfather really proposed to drink a cup of hot water. In sudden surprise he threw up his hands and said, "Heis wasser, mein Gott."

We went up the Rhine and after a few glorious days in Switzerland went through the Simplon Tunnel to Milan. Was any place ever so noisy? We promptly decided while in Italy to stop at good hotels and not trust to pensions or less expensive restaurants. There was one joy, however - the Italian understood his own language. When one looked up a word in a dictionary and spoke it, the article requested was forthwith at hand.

On the way from Venice to Florence we got off at Bologna to find a bit of lunch, perhaps a Bologna sausage, ha! ha! Upon return Grandmother found a man's hat in her seat next the window. She thought nothing about it, pushed the hat aside and resumed her seat. A well dressed Italian gentleman soon appeared and indicated that Grandmother had his seat. There was plenty of room in the compartment. The gentleman presumably preferred to sit next the window. Grandmother showed her ticket to indicate that she had had the seat all the way from Venice. This was not satisfactory to the man and ere long the Italian began to shout and gesticulate violently. Whereupon Grandmother smilingly resumed her knitting and let him shout and gesticulate.

This was more than human dignity could stand - a mere woman pay no heed to him - an important man in his own country? He rushed off and brought the conductor. Grandmother again showed her ticket, but the conductor ruled that Grandmother had forfeited her seat by not leaving something in the seat - baggage overhead did not hold it. The man by putting his hat in the empty seat had won title to it.

Grandmother concluded that might be good Italian law, but thought she would try an application of the good old English principle that possession is nine points and when the conductor got to the shouting stage, she calmly returned to her knitting and let the conductor and the man both shout and brandish their arms. Soon two champions appeared - a man in our compartment and one in the next, who testified that the lady had had the seat all the way from Venezia and the arguing soon waxed warm as only arguments in Italy can, with all four shouting and brandishing their arms.

Suddenly the conductor calmed down and looked perplexed. He had ordered the lady vehemently to leave the seat but had not even disturbed the

serenity of her knitting. Should he lift the foreign lady out of the seat? Not being very large himself, maybe he had better not try. He slapped the man on the back, advised him to be "polite" and walked off. This was entirely too much for enraged male dignity, and the man rushed into the ticket office, presumably to report the conductor and order the police, but the conductor craftily ordered the train out of the station and there was nothing for the man to do but to climb back on the train. Not caring to remain in our compartment, he made some remark about Americans, gathered up his baggage and retired into another compartment.

Thereupon two Italian women, who had sat trembling to see what dire thing was going to happen to a woman who denied a man his legal rights and defied a conductor, now that the fuss was over, gave up themselves to uproarious laughter and laughed off and on all the way to Florence.

"What part, Grandfather, did you take in the controversy?" did one of you ask. Well, Grandfather will tell you confidentially. He did not take any. He knew it was not necessary. He had tried to argue with Grandmother before.

At Florence we expected to meet John Sholicher, Grandfather's colleague on joint debate. "John" had spent a year in Europe while studying for his Ph.D. He was now head of the Latin department of Indiana State Normal at Terre Haute and was spending the summer in Italy doing additional work.

He had asked that we write him care of General Delivery, Post Office, Florence, the hour of our arrival. Having had trouble with our mail, to make more certain, we wired him instead. We approached Florence with a sigh of relief. We were tired of making hotel arrangements for ourselves in foreign lands - now we could leave it all to John. Imagine our

consternation upon arrival to find no John. We had no address by which he could be reached other than that used. Was he in Florence? Perhaps he had returned to America.

We resumed our burden of looking out for ourselves, selected a hotel from the guide book and started toward the hotel in a carriage. As we rode toward the hotel in a carriage Grandmother began suddenly to shout and wildly gesticulate. Grandfather thought she had gone crazy - doubtless the noise and the hot weather had unsettled her mind. But no - she had chanced to see John walking along the highway.

John was surprised to see us. He had called twice a day at General Delivery for mail, but since he had not specifically asked for a telegram he had not received our message. John was very helpful to us, especially in Rome, where he planned our programs and piloted us through the Forum, and at Pompeii where he spent a half day explaining the significance of the ruins.

At Naples, Grandmother got a touch of homesickness. When she saw boats about to sail for the United States, she wanted to get back to the children. Probably this was accentuated by the colorful but pathetic picture of unclad children wandering the streets with no one to care for them. A child was seldom entirely naked, but what he wore had no relation to modesty - a hat brim, or one sleeve, or perhaps a single shoe. At the promenade hour on the fashionable highway, we noticed that all turned out for something. We went to see what the obstruction might be. There in the middle of the sidewalk in the midst of the well dressed parade sat a naked child munching with great enjoyment a huge ear of corn.

But a trip to Greece had been planned. John was to accompany us. He had never been in Greece, none of us had studied modern Greek. It was

to be three innocents in a foreign land. We were not likely ever to be in Europe again. The children were in excellent hands. All letters were reassuring. It meant only about ten days. So Grandmother reluctantly agreed to keep our original sailing date.

We took the hot day ride by train to Brindisi and embarked on a diminutive Italian steamer for Patras. We did not have private staterooms. Grandmother went in a room with some Greek women and John and Grandfather drew an Italian for a roommate. The Italian insisted on having the porthole closed for the night - a clear August night though it was! However, since John was larger than the Italian and Grandfather could help some, it was decided to leave the porthole open while the Italian bundled his head in a blanket to keep out the night air.

If the two nights were trying, the day between was wonderful. We landed at Patras, early the second morning, all eagerness for new adventures which were soon to begin. There appeared to be ample time for breakfast before taking our train. What we did not know was that Greek time was thirty minutes faster than our watches. As we leisurely ate, an English speaking waiter suggested that our train would leave in about ten minutes. That was his deferential way of breaking the news that our train was even then starting from the station. We did not know that. But we did know that ten minutes was too short a time for the elaborate ceremony of boarding an European train.

John hustled ahead to get tickets. We hastily paid the bill and emerged from the hotel only to see the train, which had already left the station, crossing the other end of the square, a hundred yards away, with John frantically waving out of a compartment window. We started to run for the train and all the populace began to shout "Americanos, Americanos."

Some fleet-footed youths tried to pull us that we might run the faster, the engine slowed down and friendly Greeks pushed us onto the moving train.

John had not had time to buy tickets. No matter. At the next station the conductor took us past the long line who hoped they might buy tickets before the train left, into the ticket office where the ticket seller stopped all else, converted some of our French gold into Greek money and sold us tickets. We bought third class tickets but felt we owned the road. We had learned for the first time a fact of which we had many evidences thereafter, that the Greeks are the most hospitable people of Europe, at least so far as Americanos are concerned.

We went down to Olympia and saw for our first and only time the world's greatest piece of statuary, the Hermes, made by the hand of Praxitiles himself. We tried in the afternoon to understand the excavations and we enjoyed the soft evening breeze. There is perhaps nothing so wonderful in the line of weather as an evening in Greece a bit up the mountain side. The guide book had frightened tourists away by saying that Olympia was too hot to visit in the summer time and the hotel register showed that only ten tourists had visited the place in the past two months. As a matter of fact, the night was so cool that we were glad to supplement our scanty bedding with our cravenet coats.

Next morning we did not care to study - we would just lie in the shade of a great olive tree, glad that the guide book had frightened all the tourists away, and just dream of the distant past. But whoopee! Upon the excavation descended a caravan of 400 German tourists, each with a quarter of a bed sheet attached to the rear of his cap and a number on his sleeve. Some with steel tapes began systematically to take measurements, some busily gathered specimen of the flora, and some with nets frantically chased insects where the ancient Greeks had come to worship.

A disquieting thought struck us - the hotel would not be able to feed so many. We better get lunch right away. We were less willing by this time than on our first arrival in Europe to go without our meals. Alas, we were already too late. Many of the Germans were specialists on the foods and drinks of the lands they visited, and they had already exhausted the limited stores of the hotel and were quarreling about the price. The Germans finally paid what they thought right and walked off, while the proprietor hopped up and down on his one real leg and with violent language and gestures invoked the wrath of all the Greek gods, both ancient and modern, upon the ravaging hoard.

We would do well to get on the train - there probably would not be seats enough for all. Before long the Germans arrived, crowding every compartment. Just as the train was about to leave, one said to John, "You will be fined for losing your number." "We are not with the party, we are just going back to Patras," replied John. "This is our private train," said the German. "It does not go to Patras, it goes in the other direction and connects with a boat we have chartered for a cruise." A kindly Providence appears to look after innocents abroad as well as innocents at home.

On our correct train and headed for Patras, our thoughts turned again to lunch. On the way to the train, we had stopped in front of a native restaurant in a hovel of sun-dried brick with mud floor, and requested soft boiled eggs in the shell and unbroken loaves of bread. The inside of each would be sanitary. To our surprise they understood. The eggs were fresh and cooked as requested. This would have sufficed had not a lad boarded the train with a large melon under each arm. A sudden desire seized us to try one of those melons.

We had seen huge piles of them in Brindisi marked 2 cents each,

presumably not much good - but let's buy one. We offered 2 cents, the boy shook his head - 4, 6, 8 cents; the boy cast envious glances at the coppers, but shook his head - probably they were not his melons. At 16 cents, he parted with one. On the outside the melon was smooth like a watermelon, on the inside, to our surprise, it was almost filled with a rich yellow meat. We shared it with some other Americans and all agreed it was the most luscious melon they had ever eaten. A new thought. Hereafter we would live largely on melons.

Then, however, at our hotel in Athens we requested our waiter to serve us a melon every meal, he seemed distressed. Apparently in his mind melons were peasant's food and to maintain caste one should try to eat hard peaches and pears. A quarter of a century has changed that attitude and today hotels proudly furnish you their fine Greek melons.

But Grandfather is ahead of his story. We left the train at Corinth and after riding four miles in a two-wheel cart to see the ruins of the ancient city of Corinth, we took train to Nauplia. The train was scheduled to average fourteen miles per hour, but did not perform anywhere near to its schedule. No matter in a land where time doesn't seem to count. Next day we returned to Tiryns and Argus, whence we took carriage three miles to Mycaenae. At Mycaenae we found an excavation eighty feet in diameter, surrounded by a double circle of upright stones guarded by a lion gate; also a couple of other tombs. These were not so much to look at, but what a story.

In a day when German critics agreed that "Homer" never lived and the Trojan War was a myth, Schlieman believed in a personal Homer and thought the Iliad a record of a historic battle. Schlieman, a German lad, was apprenticed to a grocer. Early disabled for physical labor, he

embarked for Venezuela, was shipwrecked and went to Russia. He followed the gold seekers to California in '49, became an American citizen and returned to Russia. Finally accumulating a fortune through trade, he decided to retire and announced he would prove that Homer really lived by finding Troy. The critics laughed, but Schlieman set men to digging where, according to his reading of Homer, Troy should be, and he uncovered a city which all critics agreed was the Troy in the Iliad.

Before the world of classical scholars had recovered from their surprise, Schlieman announced he would offer further proof by uncovering the tomb of Agamemnon. Could you blame the critics for smiling again even if they didn't dare to laugh aloud? Again, reading his Homer, Schlieman set men to digging on the Greek Peloponesus and uncovered the most startling discovery ever made by an archeologist - not, to be sure, the tomb of Agamemnon, although Schlieman always professed to believe it was, but the tombs of a race of kings who had attained a high civilization, been destroyed and forgotten long before the dawn of a Greek civilization.

At Mycaenae, at the bottom of the circular excavation mentioned above, he found six tombs hewn perpendicularly into the solid rock and in them seventeen bodies covered with gold plates and golden face masks, crowned with golden diadems and surrounded with golden utensils aggregating one hundred pounds in weight - beautifully embossed cups, carved gems and bronze daggers inlaid with gold. Some day in Athens you may see long cases filled with these beautiful things. Here, too, you may see the marble palace which Schlieman built in which to pass his declining years amid the plaudits of savants.

When we returned from Mycaenae to Nauplia to take a boat to Athens, we found the post office in a state of seige. Our friends, the 400

Germans, had bought all stamps of all denominations and were clamoring for more. Our family missed one letter from inability of the post office to produce a stamp.

Upon our arrival in Athens we found ourselves in a maze of Greek capital letters. Street cars were headed for mere collections of Greek capital letters, shop signs seemed unintelligible. We started to spell one out - Th-O-M-A-S-K-O-O - oh, Thomas Cook! Someone there can speak English and get us headed right!

Grandfather will not attempt to record the thrills we got in Athens - the task is beyond him. There are not many things to see in Athens, but among those few is the greatest treasure of the classical world - the Acropolis. After a summer of strenuous sightseeing, it was not disappointing to find that the "House of Sophocles" was only a big shade tree under which we might take a nap, and it was not hard luck to use a sailboat on a pleasant afternoon to see where Greeks and Persians on the Bay of Salamis fought the decisive battle of western civilization.

The King's gardens were scheduled to be open to visitors at 2 p.m. Sunday, but we found them locked. However, a swell looking man with a beautifully attired lady came out of the palace and started to walk in our direction. The Prince, no doubt - we would steal a good look. Approaching us the man said: "You too are Americans." He had left Greece some years before, had made money in candy manufacture in America, had returned to claim his fiancée and they had called to offer their respects to the king. Could he be of service to us?

We had wished to see the gardens. He took us into the palace, introduced us to the major domo. Unfortunately during the absence of the king from the city, we were told, discipline among the servants had broken down,

and the man with the key to the gardens was out "on a spree." However, since we were Americanos and had been disappointed, if we would return in the morning, the gardens would be open just for ourselves alone. Next day we were conducted through the garden and furnished flowers from the royal rose bushes.

Grandmother had tried to buy silk for a dress, but we could not get the price down to what we wished to pay. This "prince" visited the store with us and at a word from him in Greek the price was half what it had been to us the day before. He secured a Greek dressmaker who came with a maid traipsing on behind with the bundles to the lady's hotel at the ladies' convenience, and for her services, including all the hand made tucks the lady might desire, her charge was \$4.50.

We sailed from Athens to Naples - a satisfactory boat this time. John stopped at Palermo to explore Sicily, but we were now impatient to get home. As we passed between Scylla and Charabydis, on the Italian side all saw Scylla a dangerous looking rock, and on the Sicillian side most of the passengers heard only wind and the swirling waters of a whirlpool, but those whose ears were attuned to the classical heard also the alluring voice of a siren calling us out of our path. We were not alarmed, for we knew that our Ulysses had stuffed his ears with the cotton of practical seaman-ship and we could listen with joy to the dangerous call.

Is not imagination wonderful? At present you all have a bountiful supply of it. May you always retain enough throughout life to enjoy the myths of Greece and Rome.

Soon we were back in Naples. A cool breeze was blowing, homeless children were huddled together in the doorways. We were anxious to get home. The S. S. Moltke was the counterpart of the S.S. Bleucher, but how

different its second cabin looked! The piano was covered with a tarpaulin, obviously was not to be used on the voyage. All furniture had canvas covers, there were no tablecloths, no good china, no silverware. We learned too late than an Anglo Saxon ought not to book second class from a south European port.

But, presto - chango - off from the furniture came the canvas jackets; out came table linen and china and silverware. A large ship had been injured - many of its first class passengers to get back on schedule had accepted second class on the Moltke and for this trip only, second class on the Moltke would be as near to first class as the captain thought within his power to grant.

It was a grand trip across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic and we asked ourselves, as many an American has asked himself before and since on his return from his first trip abroad, "Did anyone else ever have such a wonderful trip as we."

Grandfather to this day is certain that he never got so much travel joy for the same amount of money. We are not going to tell you what it cost, you would not believe it. We have ceased to believe it ourselves, although we both agree on our recollections.

At home we found the children well. The whole town gave us a warm reception. Little Ruth would take no chance of letting her mother out of her sight again, but a few days later Charles confided to Grandfather that if Grandpa Blackwood would bring his pony up again, it would be all right with Georgie and him for us to go again next summer.