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Isabel J. Armstrong
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Two Roving Englishwomen in Greece

Isabel J. Armstrong (born c.1848) and her travelling companion Edith Payne were part of an increasing cohort of determined women entering territory deemed unsuitable for ladies: travel. Women such as Isabella Bird (whose work is also available in this series) and Mary Kingsley had defied social convention in order to explore the world around them. Their independence of spirit and thirst for knowledge made them inspirational role models. Little is known of Armstrong and Payne other than what is recorded in this engaging account of their Greek adventures, about which 'the general opinion seemed to be that we were going out to be murdered.' First published in 1893, the book depicts a country whose traditions and way of life were in danger of being swept away by the advance of modern technology. Incorporating vivid descriptions of Piraeus, Olympia, Thessaly and the monasteries of Meteora, the narrative is charmingly illustrated with Armstrong's own sketches.

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COMING DOWN FROM THE MONASTERIES OF METÉORA.

[Frontispiece.]

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BY
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TO
MRS. EDMONDS
WHO HAS PLEADED THE CAUSE OF THE
GREEK PEOPLE
IN SONG, BIOGRAPHY, AND
ROMANCE

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PREFACE.

To the majority of English people, Greece is still a *terra incognita*, and to that fact alone can be attributed the wide-spread belief in the dangers encountered by the traveller in that kingdom. On my friend (Edith Payne) and I announcing our intention of starting off by ourselves to Greece, the general opinion seemed to be that we were going out to be murdered ; or, if it did not come to murder, that we should get into some hobble out of which it would take at least a modern Perseus to deliver us. Our experience taught us that Greece was a charming country in which to travel, and if we did encounter danger, that was purely of our own courting.

In the spelling of Greek names every writer appears to take out his own patent, but as I could only draw from the Fountain of Ignorance, it has been my endeavour to give the names spelt in the way that we found of the most practical use.

Likewise, in the same spirit, I have tried to refresh the memory with the common traditions connected with those places, and which will not always come when they are called. Thessaly being very dear to us and almost an unknown country, my pen may have lingered there too long, but for this and the many blemishes that I fear do figure in these pages, I can only throw up my hands to a generous public and cry "*Tobah!*" trusting that my sins of omission and commission may find exoneration in the desire to portray faithfully a glance at a state of society that is fast being swept out of Greece by the advancement of railways and the introduction of Western ideas of civilization.

I am indebted to the exceeding kindness of Miss Eggar for the spirited frontispiece, in which she has portrayed with wonderful accuracy the dress and character of "Ariel," the chief of our guard to the monasteries of Metéora.

The rest of the illustrations are reproductions of some of my sketches.

I. J. A.

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