

U. S. Steam Frigate "Saranac"
Bay of Spezia - January 10th 1836

Dear Sir,

The "parcel containing Music", with your very kind and acceptable note, dated at Athens Nov: 22nd 1835, has just been received - having anticipated our arrival at Spezia by some weeks.

The "March", and Greek airs have been duly submitted to the "Capo bandista" of our band, for proper manipulation; and we expect in a few days to have "mis en scene" a new and agreeable 'Souvenirs' of our last visit to Athens; for which of course, all thanks will be due to the kind friend thro' whom we have obtained them.

Our cruise after leaving the Piræus was a pretty effectual "doing up" of the principal ports of the Levant. At Smyrna we found the people as hospitable, the camels as large & fine, the streets as narrow & crooked, and the city and native population as dirty & miserable as we could possibly have expected; we were quite satisfied with a week's abode of the town, and a little impatient of three days in Bola Bay, to water ship - as we had Constantinople before us, and a great many passengers from the flag ship, all anxious of course to get a glimpse of the famous Crescent City. The trip thro' the Hellespont & Marmara was as you may imagine as interesting as possible to those of us who saw them for the first time.

The Commodore was on board with his sweet & Miss Lovett, the Secy. Capt. Magruder, Rev. Mason Noble and their servants, all of whom took up quarters on shore for the fortnight we lay in the Bosphorus. I became acquainted with several Greek families in Pera of whom I saw a good deal, and was delighted with their social good feeling, comfort, & hospitality which I found among them. The "system" of society is much more like our own than that of any people I have yet visited. There is not that reserve (or suspicion) it seemed to me, with them in social intercourse, that the French, and Italians find necessary in their families. There was a presentation to the Sultan of all the Turkies, a cruise around among the shops & Mosques of Old Stamboul, some purchases of embroidered shippers, tobacco and long pipes, a Turkish Bath and some inexplicable sweetmeats, and we felt that we had seen Constantinople. Whereupon, the Com^o Breese, the fair Breese her sister - The Minister resident Mr. Spence, the Brown, and sufficient of the "not so distinguished" gentry of Pera, to form quite a large company, all came on board of the "Sarance" one fine morning for a trip up to the Black Sea. The Bosphorus part of the way was delightful, but as we happened to catch the Black Sea in rather an unamiable mood, the Black Sea party was pretty well rolled & pitched about, to the Black Sea party's hearts discontent, and the order was soon ^{to return it} given, having emanated, it is thought, originally from the "Black Sea party." The "R. S. P." subsequently expressed its self perfectly satisfied and it was soon afterwards put ashore at Sophona, the steamer then pursuing her way, as little winding as may be, to the port of Alexandria. The Frigate had sailed direct from the Gulf of Smyrna, and had reached the land of Egypt some four or five days before we did. A large party visited Gran Cairo, of which I formed a juvenile member, vindicating

most emphatically the freshness of my youth & the greenness of my years by ascending the Great Pyramid without assistance, in the short space of six minutes by the watch; without any other serious effect however than, the loss of breath, and a view of the Valley of the Nile that I would not have exchanged for a peep from Mount Etna itself - Very much to our surprise, the Commodore consented to sail from Alexandria to Spezia, we were to go on to the island of Nioe to land the Pilots. A puff of Wind blew us into the Bay of Chavario in Greece on the 24th Dec^r; & there, as we little thought a few weeks before, we ate our Christmas dinner. The new year came around to us at staples, where we found several very pleasant & agreeable American families. Staples is decidedly the most popular port in the Medⁿ among the Officers - & certainly there is to be found every resource of amusement & pleasure, the polar star of most naval Officers lives, as I take it. Nothing probably would prevent our wintering there but the absence of anything like a port or protection for large ships - There is also a collateral reason why not perhaps as important as any other - the post-Office arrangements are villainous - They open your letters & then forget to put the right letters into the right envelopes, & you are just as like by to to your fair friend at home a "billet doux" from a third & intended for a fourth party, as you are to receive regular correspondence from the home dept. particularly if you be anxiously expecting sundry "bills of Exchange", or other form of "Cambiali" - Exchange, ~~is~~ is quoted there at a figure that is quite a circumstance to people of moderate means derived from abroad - Our funds being all obtained thro' drafts on England, & amounting often to "considerable smart" sums, the purser generally sets his face against Naples, & the old adage, ~~that~~ Money makes the mare go - here the want of it makes the Commodore go. The next Major Wayne at Cairo; he will return to the U. S. in the summer of this year, he has studied the camel very thoroughly, and regrets not having been able

to extend his investigations into Persia, as he expected to.

A party who left us at Civitta Vecchia for Rome & Florence has just returned - the report those places very gay, and full of Americans - Capt. Long desires to be ^{kindly} remembered to you self, & Mrs. Hill. We expect to return to the U.S. Early in the Spring - the steamer "Susquehanna" is to relieve us - From my last acct. from St. Orleans I learn that Bishop Polk has sold his plantation in the interior of the State, and removed with his family to N. Orleans - Please make my kindest regards & remembrances to your kind lady, and believe me ever,

with sincere esteem,

Yours truly, Chas. C. Willis.



[Handwritten flourish]

recd 9 Feb



Dear J. Hill -
Chaplain to the English Embassy
Athens -
Ch. Willis
officer on U.S.S.
"Frigate Saratoga" Greece -
1857

