

in the ordinary course and directly they knew what the ransom was all they had to do was to pay it and twenty-four hours later the children would be returned to them safe and sound.

Old Costi told them nothing they did not know before: still he was an authority on the subject of brigands, and Calliope found some solid comfort in his assurance that her darlings were safe.

The rumours which used to reach *Pappas Demetri* in the old days had materialized.

After Stephano's and Calliope's engagement Niko had gone and had never come back. Then they heard he had definitely joined Abdallah's band up in the mountains as an apprentice.

He had served his novitiate with great credit: and two years afterwards on the death of the chief, a mild tempered cut-throat some seventy years old, he had been elected by an over whelming majority in his stead.

Niko's fame had spread all through the country, for he was bold as a lion and some of his most important captures had been made within a couple of miles of Symrna itself.

His terms too were high. In one case he had asked five thousand pounds for a well-to-do Armenian merchant, and in another case ten thousand. In both instances the money was paid. He had put the price up in the latter instance for he had the good luck to come across an English subject.