

# Northern Messenger

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## The Monasteries of the Air.

(Sunday Hours.)

A hundred miles westward from Volo — a name that has become so painfully familiar since the recent war between Turkey and



THE MONASTERY OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

Greece — are the famous monasteries of Meteora, or Monasteries of the Air.

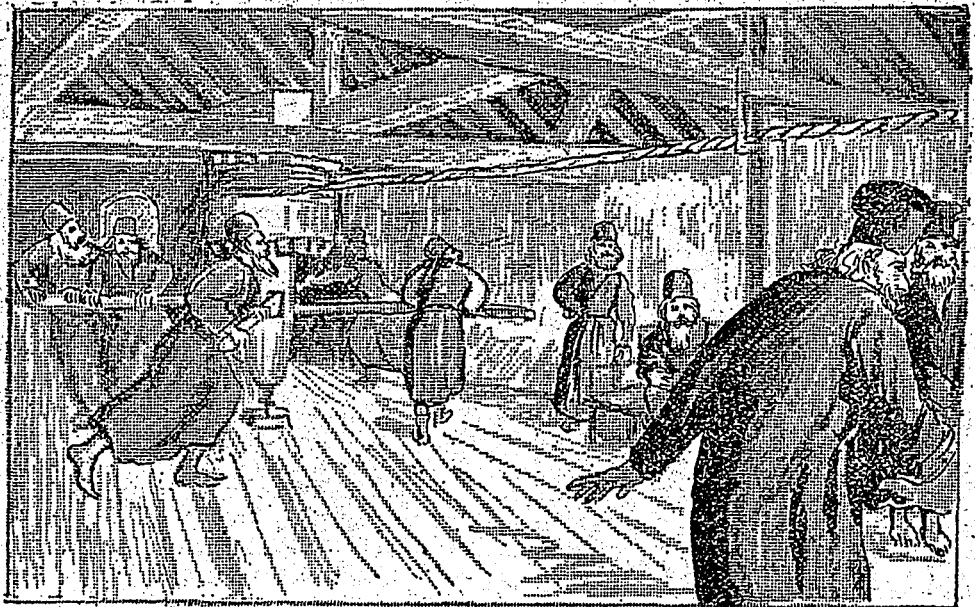
From the town of Kalambaka the cliffs rise sheer behind it, and to the right of it, to a height of over one thousand five hundred feet. On the summit of some of these rocks stand two of the monasteries—the 'Hagia Trias,' or Holy Trinity, and the



THE MONASTERIES OF THE GREAT METEORA.

'Hagia Stophanos,' or Saint Stephen. These monasteries are occupied by monks of the Greek Church.

But the most remarkable are the Monasteries of the Great Meteora. They can only be reached by getting into a net at the end



MONKS WORKING THE CAPSTAN.

of a rope, and then letting yourself be hauled up a height of several hundred feet to the summit of the crag.

Mr. G. N. Curzon, the present Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, thus described, in the 'English Illustrated Magazine,' (1891), a visit which he paid to these monasteries:

'A lovely walk of an hour and a half through a glade of mountain oaks, past the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, on its separate crag, and other abandoned eyries on lower peaks brought us to the great mass of rock, one thousand eight hundred and twenty feet high, which is crowned by the buildings of the Great Meteora. Above us was a sheer scarp of rock one hundred feet high; and upon this was reared a tower of about the same height culminating in a wooden shed, from which it was evident that the rope and net were worked. No signs, however, of these implements were forthcoming, and the holy fathers appeared to be indifferent to our approach. We shouted and fired guns to no purpose; and it was not till after some minutes that a venerable face was protruded from the aerial loft and communications were interchanged. But not even then did the ascent become at once feasible; for, as there were only two monks in the monastery, assistance was needed at the capstan to haul us up. Accordingly a series of rude ladders attached together like the links of a chain, and whose lower end had hitherto been hitched up by a rope from aloft, were let down so that they fitted on to the top of another ladder reared against the rock from the ground.

The upper ladders led to a small doorway in the rock, from which an alternative entrance to the monastery was provided by a staircase inside. When the ladders are hitched up, and the rope is coiled round the capstan, the monastery is absolutely inaccessible, and its inmates can bid defiance to any foe but cannon. The ladders furnish a most unpleasant mode of ascent, as they are only loosely strung together, and flap against the perpendicular cliff with each movement of the climber. However, three of our escort with some gallantry swarmed up and disappeared in the hole in the rock. Presently a big iron hook with something



ABOVE US WAS A SHEER SCARP OF ROCK.