

4374 P. 148
AMERICAN FARM SCHOOL • THESSALONICA, GREECE

NEW YORK OFFICE: 17 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

News-Letter

December 1953

IN THE WAKE OF THE EARTHQUAKES

The stricken Ionian Islands are several hundred miles from the American Farm School, but 35 of the earthquake victims have been on the campus learning how to rehabilitate their homes and farms more rapidly. Funds were provided by the Bible Lands Missions Aid Society of London.

One 15-year old second-year boy who was at his home on the island of Zante when the disaster struck, wrote the following as a composition for his class in Greek (translated by Edmund Keeley):

"The 12th of August arrived, a summer day full of sunshine, and the people were in their vineyards gathering the currants - men, women and children, all happy, with songs and loud voices, cutting currants without stopping. The hour of 11 a.m. came, and people sat down to eat, not knowing that the hour was approaching when the beauty of Zante and the other two islands would be extinguished. ...

"Before the people had finished eating they heard a strong rumble, and at the same time a great shaking which kept people from walking. And the houses were falling and the earth was splitting. And the rocks were rolling down from the mountains, and dust was stirred and covered all the island, and people were unable to see each other. Then the cries of children and mothers pierced this chaos, and you could hear mothers shouting the names of their children, and some of the children answering them.

"I was at my uncle's shop. After the earthquake started, my uncle and aunt went out in the street. I sat under the doorframe, and all the time I could see houses falling. When the tremor stopped I tried to find my uncle, but I did not find him, neither my aunt. I asked somebody and he told me he saw them being crushed by a wall.

"Then I started for the village where my mother and sister were staying. On the way I met people going to town searching for their kin. When I got near the village I saw our house fallen. I found my mother and sister crying, first for me because they thought I was dead, and then because they saw the houses in ruins.

"And then another rumble was heard, and a shaking stronger than the first. I said I should go back to the town to see about the shop and find something to wear because all my clothes were at my uncle's but while I was going I heard people saying that fires had started and the town was burning from six sides. When I came near I saw my uncle's house in flames....

"So this day passed. At night we all stayed awake looking at the town which was burning like fireworks. The next day we went to our house to try to uncover our belongings. All the furniture was broken. We saved a few clothes belonging to my mother and sister, and a little wheat. The rest became one with the stones and the earth.

"For a few days there was great hunger because very little food was saved, and even if one had flour there was no oven to make bread. Two days passed before our protectors, the English and Americans, brought us various kinds of food and the Greek planes dropped bread, and the ships gave out bread too. This lasted until they organized the means for people to get food.

"In the days following the earthquake while I was still confused from the horror of it, I tried to collect enough clothes for the coming school year. I was also worried about the tuition, but the letter arrived telling of the American scholarship. I was very thankful, and I said to myself: 'There is a God.'"

The American Farm School was one of 16 private agencies working in Greece which sponsored a reception for King Paul I and Queen Frederika in New York City on November 30. In his remarks the King said:

"The solidarity and the human compassion of the men and women all over your vast country in coming forward to help Greece in her hour of need, provides a unique, wonderful, and deeply stirring example to the world.

"On the part of my people and on my own, I want to express to you and through you to the countless contributors to your agencies who have made your work possible and so effective, our heartfelt gratitude and thanks."

NEW ARRIVALS

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hope Reed sailed on November 28 to take up residence at the School and help with some of the administrative responsibilities there. Mr. Reed has recently retired from the insurance firm of Johnson & Higgins; Mrs. Reed, a cousin of Charles House, has long been a Trustee of the School.

The Fulbright teacher of English this year is Harold E. Simonson of Puyallup, Washington. Mrs. Simonson grew up in China, where her parents were missionaries under the Presbyterian Board.

MOVING PICTURE AVAILABLE

The 16 mm. talking moving picture "The American Farm School" which was made by a Syracuse University Film Unit for the Department of State, is now available on loan for showing to groups.

This picture, which takes about half an hour, was designed as one of a series to be shown in Greece to indicate what Americans are doing for that country. The English edition has now been distributed in a number of countries, and translation into other languages has been authorized. Write to American Farm School, 17 E. 42nd Street, New York 17, if you can use it.

The first plot of ground for what is now the American Farm School was acquired on November 27, 1902. The first year 400 mulberry trees were set out, and a little hut was built by the caretaker - "a half dugout, made of drygoods boxes." At one side he put up a chimney which furnished an open fireplace, and in the fresh mortar he wrote, prophetically, the words "The American School" in Greek.

In the fall of 1903 it was decided to build a house and stable of mud brick and to get a practical farmer to work the land so as to bring in some income while waiting for funds to start the School. The house, a two-room affair, was to be ready about Christmas; but even before then the plans had forged ahead, largely because an insurrection near Monastir had left in its wake a number of orphans who needed care.

Dr. John Henry House was in America in November, 1903, when his colleague in Salonica, Mr. Edward B. Haskell, wrote him: "When I asked Vasil (the farmer) whether he and his good wife could not gather a few orphan boys into the house with them he cordially assented and thought they could manage 10 to 20! Of course, this will be in the primitive native fashion, but the boys will have a shelter and food and clothing. Vasil will have family worship with them, and says he can teach the more ignorant their A.B.C.s. This seems to me a Providential arrangement, and fills my heart with joy. For I see in this humble two-room mud farm house the sapling which is to grow into our Hampton Institute."

A few months later twelve boys were installed in one of the rooms, with the farmer and his family in the other. A few contributions had been received for the work - including funds for a well from the Bible Lands Missions Aid Society of London.

* * * * *

From Salonica, Ann and Charlie House send you, dear Reader, their best wishes for all the joys of the Christmas season.