

## PANAMA HYMN

BY WENDELL PHILLIPS STAFFORD

We join to-day the east and west,  
The stormy and the tranquil seas.  
O Father, be the bridal blest!  
The earth is on her knees.

Thou, Thou didst give our hand the might  
To hew the hemisphere in twain  
And level for these waters bright  
The mountain with the main:

In freedom let the great ships go  
On freedom's errand, sea to sea, --  
The oceans rise, the hills bend low,  
Servants of liberty.

The nations here shall flash through foam  
And paint their pennons with the sun  
Till every harbor is a home  
And all the flags are one.

We join to-day the east and west,  
The stormy and the tranquil seas.  
O Father, be the bridal blest!  
Earth waits it on her knees.

# AT THE FEET OF MY TEACHERS<sup>1</sup>

BY ABRAHAM MITRIE RIHBANY

I

My intellectual history began in the school of my uncle, my mother's first and favorite cousin, Priest Michael, of the Holy and Apostolic Greek Orthodox Church. I could not have been much more than three years old when my mother led me to sit at the feet of the priest of my people and receive instruction. The 'Child Mind,' 'School Age,' 'Adolescence,' and the many other psychological zones were unknown to my people. I could say 'papa' and 'mamma,' and many other words at the age of three, and according to my parents' ideas I might just as well be saying the letters of the alphabet.

At that time the men who could read and write in El-Shweir were extremely few. Certain parish priests established what might be called reading circles for the purpose of fitting some of the youth of the parish with sufficient knowledge of reading to assist the priest at the mass. The course consisted of the alphabet, the Book of Psalms, writing, and a short exercise in mental arithmetic.

My recollections of my uncle's school are dim and meagre. His house consisted of two rooms, one of which was the schoolroom. Besides the door this room had one window, which had wooden shutters and no glass. It was opened when the weather permitted.

The pupils, who numbered about

<sup>1</sup> An account of the author's earlier years appeared in the November *Atlantic*.

twenty-five, sat on the straw mats on the floor with their legs crossed under them. In compliance with good manners, we took our shoes from off our feet upon entering the room, just outside the threshold in summer and just inside in winter. In the days of Moses that was done as a sign of reverence for holy places, as he did it before the 'burning bush'; and, as in ancient Syria every family had a household god, the shoes had to be removed from the feet upon entering the house in deference to the family god. The habit survives in the land 'unto this day' as a social grace.

But in my uncle's schoolroom another enterprise went hand in hand with education. Oriental parish priests, of whatever communion, marry, as did the priests of Israel. My uncle had a large family and a small income. Therefore, in order to keep the wolf from the door he betook himself to weaving cloth, on a hand-loom which stood in the schoolroom. The clerical weaver, with flowing hair, luxurious beard, and ample black garb, sat on the edge of the 'loom-pit,' dug in the floor to accommodate the treadles. He devoted his feet to the treadles, his hands to the shuttle, his eyes to the web, and his ears and tongue to the pupils. At significant moments he would come into living touch with his disciples through a long stick which lay conveniently near his hand.

The only reliable memory I have of my student life in my uncle's school is that he was more interesting to me as