The Greeks of Today.

All About The Brightest, Bravest and Busiest Little Nation of the Orient.

The Royal Family and Why the King Favors the Russians—Gossip About Queen Olga—How the King Looks, Acts and Talks—The Modern Greeks and Their Political Ambition—How Political Campaigns Are Managed—Elections in Churches and the Ballot Box—How Athens Looks Today—Its Colleges, Museums and Cafes—Something About Greek Newspapers, Railroads and Telephones—A Story of Prince George—The Repairing of the Parthenon, etc.

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Special Correspondence of the News.

WASHINGTON, D. C., February 24th, 1897.

THE trouble between the Greeks and Turks may end in the dismemberment of the Turkish empire. The loss of Crete, it has again and again been prophesied, would be the beginning of the end. Crete is the key to the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. Fortifications here could easily command the entrance to the Black sea, and if the Greeks hold Crete it is a question whether they will not hold it for the Russians. This is what the English feared when they prevented Greece from taking the island in 1864. This was shortly after the marriage of King George, a Russian princess, and the English were afraid that his wife would turn his feelings toward Russia. The danger exists today. Queen Olga is a Russian of the Russians. She is, you know, the cousin of the present czar. She was the niece of Alexander II, and her daughter not long since married a Russian prince. I spent some time in Athens just before the Princess Alexandra was married, and during my stay had a chance to learn much about the royal family. I had an interview with the king, through our minister to Athens, and met many friends of Queen Olga. She has practically Russianized the king. I am told. He has not adopted the Russian religion, but by law his sons have to belong to the Greek church, which is, you know, the church of Russia. I was in Greece on the king's birthday. This is a national holiday, and at such times the king and queen appear at church together. They sit upon chairs of gold, cushioned in red velvet, while all the rest of the people in the church must stand up. Queen Olga is very fat looking. She is a blonde, with round full, regular features and a beautiful neck and shoulders. She is tall and stately, and is every inch a queen. The Greeks are very proud of her. They admire her when she appears at her receptions in gorgeous dresses, wearing many pearls and diamonds. They love her also because she does not put on airs, often going about the city of Athens without even a maid with her. The Greeks are democrats, rather than royalists, and they like the queen's democratic ways. They admire her also on account of her character. She is a woman of culture, speaking nearly every European language. As soon as she became queen she took up the study of Greek, and she is now the patroness of a number of schools for girls which she has founded. It was in an industrial school that the wedding dress of the Princess Alexandra was made, and the work was done by young Greek girls.

A CHAT WITH THE KING OF GREECE.

I found that the king was very popular among the people. My audience with him was arranged by our minister to Greece. He mainly received me in the palace, and from the democratic way in which he treated me I could see why he is so much liked by the Greeks. He shook my hand as I was presented with a good deal more cordiality than I have ever gotten from a President of the United States. He looked, however, much more dignified than any President ever did. He was dressed in a uniform not unlike the undress uniform of one of our army generals. His coat was buttoned up to the neck and he wore a little gold braid on his collar. He is, I believe, about five feet ten inches tall, but he stood so straight that he seemed to me to be about six feet. He is a very handsome man. His hair is blonde; his hair is of a light color and a blonde mustache shows out over a strong, well-cut mouth. I was surprised when he greeted me in the best of English. He spoke it as well as I did and our conversation was carried on in that language. He asked me a number of questions about things in America and grew enthusiastic as he talked of the future of Greece. He told me that the Greeks were a very patriotic people, and said that they had all the bravery and force of the Greeks of the past. He referred to the railroad development which was going on in the country, and said that Athens would be a much greater city than it had ever been in the past. Throughout the whole interview I could see that he was very proud of the Greeks. He has a right to be so, for it is largely due to him that Greece is in such a good condition today.

THE GREEKS OF 1897.

Very little is known about the modern Greeks. They are the Yankees of the far east. They are shrewd speculators and are the money changers of the Mediterranean. The biggest business houses of Egypt are owned by Greeks. I found Greek selling goods in Roumania, and they do very much the same thing in Servia and Constantinople. They are no more brighter than the Turks, but a common saying among the latter is "From the Greeks of Athens, from the Jews of Salonica and from the Armenians everywhere good Lord deliver us." It is said to the credit that one Greek is equal to at least two Jews, and the Jews have long since given up coming to Athens, as they can make no money there. The Greeks pride themselves on their democracy. They respect the king, but they don't think that he is any better than themselves, and they say that they believe so much in equality among Greeks that they prefer to have a foreigner rule over them. The king's title, however, is only a limited one. Every Greek thinks himself a statesman, and to hear them talk you would imagine they were running all Europe. Their country is, you know, only about as large as one of Virginia's, or about half the size of the state of New York, and its population is not more than 2,000,000, though there are about as many more Greeks scattered throughout the other countries of the Mediterranean.

A NATION OF POLITICIANS.

There is more political discussion in Athens than there is in Washington. While this trouble with Crete goes on business will probably be given up for the time, and the people will do little else than talk about the situation. The chief places for such gossip are the cafes, of which there are hundreds in Athens. Here every afternoon and evening thousands of people come together to drink coffee and talk politics. The newsboys hang round the political papers, of which there are but a dozen in Athens, and each man has his paper and his coffee. These papers are printed in the same characters which you find in the Greek classics, and the modern Greek language is much the same as the old Greek. I found that I could get along with a little phrase book, and could even read some of the jokes in the Greek comic papers.

POLITICAL SCENES IN GREECE.

The Greeks of today are as great stump speakers as their forefathers were. There is much shrewd electioneering done, and the wives of the Grecian candidates help their husbands quite as much as our American wives do theirs. Some of the women even electioneer for their husbands, and I was told of one Greek woman who, seeing that her husband would probably be defeated, went to some of the villages in the district and said that every one who voted the right way would have a free railroad ticket to Athens and a ticket to the theater. The Greeks are crazy for amusements, and this led gave her her a seat in the parliament. Every man in Greece has the right to vote. The members of parliament are elected much like our congressmen. Their terms are for four years, and they receive salaries of about four hundred dollars a session. They have more power than our members of congress, and it is they in reality who govern Greece. It is they who will decide as to wars with Turkey, and it is from them that the appropriations must come. The king has the right to veto, but he would not dare to exercise it against a large majority. He is just as anxious to be popular with his people as the president is anxious to be popular here, and he is pretty sure to do as the people want.

HOW THE GREEKS VOTE.

A political campaign in Greece is very much like a political campaign in America. The Greeks are fond of good speakers and the man who can make a good stump speech stands a chance of an election. There is much fraudulence, of course, but the modern Greeks are intelligent, and the poorest of them consider themselves on an equality with the richest. The waiters at the cafes and the drivers on the street cars will talk politics with you, and the politician has to do the same. Suffragists in Greece that he does in the United States. All of the elections are held upon Sunday, and curiously enough the polls are in the churches. In Athens you have to go to the cathedral to do your voting. The voters are all registered, and the elections are watched much more carefully in Greece than they are here. Every candidate watches his own box, for there is a ballot box for each candidate. He does not do it in person, but has a sign appointed in each district to take his place. The ballot boxes are arranged in a row along one side of the church. They are so fixed that only one man can pass through at one time. Each box is about a foot square. In its top there is a pipe, the hole in which is just large enough to admit the arm of a man. This pipe runs down through the middle of the box until it meets a partition which divides the box in half. One side of the box is for affirmative ballots and the other for negative. The ballots are backshot, and the voter having put his hand down into the pipe drops his ballot for or against the candidate as he pleases without the possibility of any one knowing how he voted. Each voter is given only so many ballots as there are candidates, and each judge can see that he has but one ballot in his hand before he puts it in the box. There are few election frauds in Greece. It is almost impossible to stuff a ballot box, and to draw the ballots in the boxes do not correspond with the registration of the citizens who the schools vote is thrown out.

ENTERTAINING ATHENIANS.

When I started for Greece I expected to find trees a-many going on to smell. I changed my mind when I reached Athens. The Athens of today is a modern city. It has wide streets paved with cobble stones, and its houses are much like the three and four-story flats of some parts of Paris. Its people dress as we do. There are carriages with liveried coachmen and footmen, and a ride in Athens is as any part of Europe. The better classes of the modern Greeks have a good deal the appearance of the same class in the United States. They are well dressed and well educated. The most of them speak a good deal of French, and French is the society language of the Greek capital. I had no drivers who could speak English, French and Greek, and as many of the tenants using my cay they were playing in Italian plays. There is an Athens University which has nearly a score of professors and about 1,000 students. Here the young Greek gets a heritage classic education and he can, if he chooses, add to it a course in law, medicine, theology or philosophy. There are, in addition to this, thirty-three other colleges in Athens, containing nearly 2,000 students. The kingdom has a system of common schools in which attendance is compulsory. There are also a number of private schools, and in Athens I found a fine polytechnic institute and an academy of science, several good libraries and a large national museum. There was also a girl's college, which contained 350 students, and there are girls' schools in many parts of Greece.

LAND OF RAILROADS AND TELEPHONES.

I rode from Athens down to the sea coast on a steam tramway, and I took excursions out into the country on street cars. It seemed strange to me in coming to Athens to see carriages from the sea, passing over the road upon which Solon and Aesop perhaps walked, to be turned out of the way by a steam stone crusher, which was macadamizing the road. I telephoned a number of times during my stay in Athens, and at night as I walked up and under the electric lights I wondered how Diogenes would look if with his lantern he should again here seek for an honest man. The Greeks have as good a postal service as you will find anywhere. There are many book stores, and the displays of goods in the shop windows are quite as fine as those of any American city of the same size.

DON'T LIKE FARMING.

As for the business of the people, the pure Greek does not take to agriculture. There are fewer farmers among the Greek nation than among any other. The most of the people are in mercantile business, in the professions, or in shipping. They are natural sailors, and Greece probably has more ships in proportion to her size, than any other nation in the world. They have quite a good little navy, some of the vessels being armed with Krupp guns. They have seventeen torpedo boats, each over eighty six feet in length; a dozen gun boats, three first-class cruisers, and other vessels enough to make them quite a formidable enemy for Turkey. In addition to these, Greece has about three thousand sailing vessels and 364 thousand steering vessels, which trade with all parts of the Mediterranean. Prince George, the second son of the king, has a small navy which he calls his own. He has frightened his men a number of times by his daring ways of steering naval vessels about. Not long ago he was in command of a gunboat which was coming into the Piraeus. As the boat neared the harbor, it was found that there was a large fleet of fishing vessels at anchor there. It was, under such circumstances, to slow down to half speed, but Prince George insisted on going ahead as fast as the ship would go. He took the wheel himself, and with the utmost dexterity guided the gunboat through the narrow pass between the vessels without even touching a cable, while the officers and men looked on with mingled alarm and admiration.

Prince George is now twenty seven years old. He is more than six feet in height, and is brave to the extreme. It is probable that he would like nothing better than a naval battle with the Turks, and the probability is that he would come out ahead.

THE REPAIRING OF THE PARTHENON.

King George has done a great deal to restore the old ruins of Greece. Some excavations were made at the Parthenon during my visit, and the king aided in washing all some of the marble statues which were found. He is interested now in having the Parthenon repaired, and the day may yet come when we will be able to look upon this great structure as it was in the time of Socrates. It seems to me the heaviest, most impressive of all ruins. It stands, you know, on the top of the Acropolis. The Acropolis is on the very edge of the new Athens. The modern houses of the city climb up from the base of its sides. It is a steep rocky hill, which rises straight up from the plain on which Athens is built to a height of about one hundred feet. It looks much like a great rock of rosy red marble set here and there a bit of grass or a blood red poppy, peeping out of its crevices. The plateau upon the top of the Acropolis contains, I judge, about ten acres, and upon it is the Parthenon. You have seen pictures of it. They do not give you much idea of its beauty. Imagine a forest of great marble columns standing upon a raised marble floor the area of which is almost an acre. Let each column be as big around as the largest cart wheel you have ever seen and let it rise upward for thirty-three feet in a beautifully symmetrical form. Let it be fluted, and let its capital rich in its plain Doric grace uphold a wall of marble beauty. Let this room a block of the most wonderful sculpture of the world, and you have the skeleton of the building. The interior contains other columns and rises in its center the building as a whole has a wonderful beauty. You see it for miles around Athens and it stands out before you as you come into the harbor at the Piraeus. At present the wall at one end is almost intact save the frieze, which was carried off by Lord Elgin and which is now to be seen in the British Museum in London. The Parthenon looks best in the evening. All of its ruins have the rich color of age and the colors seem to glow and gold under the rays of the setting sun.

THEY CARE MORE FOR NEW THINGS.

The Greeks of today are proud of it as they are of all their old ruins, but as far as I could learn their minds are more in the future than in the past. They have not the artistic tastes of their fathers and when spoken to about Greece they will point with pride, not to what has already been in the past, but to the wonderful advancements that has been made within the last generation. They consider themselves a strong young nation, rather than an old one, and they say that they expect to raise Greece up to the status it once held as one of the great countries of the world. They are entered in their determination and their future is certainly bright. They have as good brains as any people of the world. They have the muscle and they mean success. As St. Paul once said of them: "They are always seeking after some new thing," and he might many added had he visited them in these days, "they are not afraid to give hold of it when they find it." If Turkey is to be divided you may be sure that the Greeks will get something out of the leavings.

Frank G. Carpenter

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1 Platter, Decorated.
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1 Water Pitcher.
1 Fancy Cup, Saucer and Plate.
1 Rebecca Tea Pot.
1 Oat Meal Set, Fancy.
3 Breakfast Plates.
1 Vegetable Dish, Decorated.
1 Tankard Pitcher.
1 Salad Dish, Decorated.
1 Sugar Bowl.
6 Dessert Dishes.
1 Berry Set.
1 Sugar Sifter.
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1 Fancy Cup and Saucer.
1 Salad Bowl, Square.
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6 Table Forks.
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