

## Literary.

### MODERN GREECE.

As, in the life of an individual, so, in the history of a nation, are found many changes and vicissitudes; and, perhaps, no nation has experienced so many turns of the wheel of fortune as the little kingdom of Greece. We are familiar with this country as the birthplace of the arts, the home of heroic men, and the fountainhead of a language and literature which, for simplicity and grandeur, have no superiors. We are acquainted with the Greeks of the present day, as slaves of the Turk, vassals of Mohammed, menials of the Porte. But their heroic blood is not yet dried up; the Greeks, ever chafing under foreign despotism, were not subdued, and twice during the rule of the Turks made unsuccessful attempts to regain their liberty. In 1827, with the assistance of the three great European Powers, Turkish rule was overthrown and a monarchical form of government established, with Otho, a Prince of Bavaria, at its head. But, after thirty years of rebellion and strife, he abdicated the throne, which was given to Prince Wm. George of Denmark, the present king of the Hellenes, George I.

Under the present government the country has made great advances. Her trade has been enlarged, schools have been established, an admirable legal system has been adopted, and the press of the country is to-day as free as our own. Although the soil is naturally fertile, yet agriculture is very backward, owing to the primitive style of operating the soil and to the indifference of the people to what they think degrading work. But the Greeks, in this respect, as in all others, are advancing; and this people, whose ancestors gave art, learning and civilization to the Barbarian Western World, are receiving their manifold usury.

The manufactures of the country are extremely limited, but with all other branches of industry in Greece, they are increasing. Among them ship-building stands foremost, and the Greeks are rapidly developing a large maritime trade. Another great and promising source of wealth are the Laurium mines, worked by two companies, one French, the other Grecian; there is now a prosperous seaport town, several miles of railway and extensive work-

ings, where, twenty years ago, the first founder of the Greek Mining Company had to make his terms with the brigands infesting the then desert region. The steamers, which come laden with coal from England, take back annually 184,000 tons of minerals. A great portion of these are obtained from the old disused scoria of the ancients, whose methods of smelting and washing were unable to extract the whole wealth of the ore. A large quantity has now been cleared away, and, on the ground thus uncovered, has sprung up a flower, said to be unknown among the indigenous flora. It is alleged, by the savants on the spot, that the seed must have lain hidden from sun and rain for over two thousand years. It has remained while everything around it has changed, and, as soon as the heavy coverings of ages had been removed, it started into life and vigor. And may not the Greek nation of to-day look upon this humble little flower as the type of the new life that has arisen since the burden of a foreign race was lifted and the light of modern civilization and progress has been able to quicken what seemed forever lost?

Standing on the Acropolis, and gazing over the town, Athens must present an attractive and lively appearance, with its modern houses and projecting tiled rooms; new buildings are to be seen springing up in all directions, the streets, newly made, are alive with traffic, and there are large shops, away from the more picturesque old market. Five and twenty years ago it was little more than a badly built, straggling village, with a population of about 7,000; now it is a well-built town, with over 100,000 inhabitants. It is pleasing also to note that, in this pre-eminently educational age, Greece in the few years of her independence, has shaken off Oriental and Mediæval chains, and is to-day fairly abreast of the times. Throughout the nation there is a stir of popular aspiration, an enthusiasm after knowledge and an ever-mastering desire to advance, which form at once the virtue and the vice of contemporary life in Greece. Athens is to-day a busy hive of educational institutions, and in all the cities and villages there are thrifty schools. The Government, too, has not been remiss in providing state education. There is a compulsory school law which does not need to be enforced, no difficulty being found in securing attendance. There are elementary, secondary and