

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

OLD GREEK EDUCATION, by J. P. Mahaffy, M.A. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. Toronto: Willing & Williamson, 1881.

IN the midst of our keen debates on the best educational methods, despite of classical reading, it requires a strong mental effort to realize that the very thoughts that stir our brains and struggle for expression were on earth before, at least a couple of millenniums ago, and were then clothed in a literary form which excites the envy and the despair of the best modern writers. On a question of training processes,—literary, æsthetical, or physical,—it would be exceedingly difficult now to employ an argument which cannot be either actually reproduced, or at all events closely paralleled, from the lectures of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, or Isocrates. Even in athletic training, which now engrosses so much attention and ingenuity, it seems hopeless to attempt anything *very* new. We Canadians pride ourselves on our graceful national game, Lacrosse. As in duty bound, we believe it to be a genuine product of our own soil, found here by Cartier, Champlain, and the other pioneers who saw the Indians at play in the broad glades of the forest; and handed directly to our sons by these red-skinned *autochthoni*. As we all know, the Byzantine Empire lived on the stirring memories and traditions of the Athenian Hegemony, and prided itself on its servile imitation of those glorious old Greeks who, alike in physique and intellect, were held to be the type of perfect development. Now hear the game of Lacrosse described by a Greek of Constantinople 680 years ago, and we may be reasonably sure that the game was *then* a venerable legacy:—"Certain youths, divided equally, leave in a level place, which they have before prepared and measured, a ball made of leather, about the size of an apple, and rush at it, as if it were a prize lying

in the middle from their fixed starting-point. Each of them has in his right hand a 'stick' (*rhabdus*) of suitable length ending in a sort of flat bend, the middle of which is occupied by gut strings, dried by seasoning, and plaited together in net fashion. Each side strives to be the first to bring it to the opposite end of the ground from that allotted to them. Whenever the ball is driven by the 'sticks' to the end of the ground, it counts as a game."

Some fine manly sports, though thoroughly understood, were from association of ideas distasteful to free-born Greeks. Even in seagirt Attica our champion Hanlan would have ranked far below a cabman. Regattas were quite usual, but the rowing was given over to slaves, though the memories of Salamis might well have secured for future oarsmen high and honourable recognition. There was no lack of leisure among the youth of Greece, for they had no foreign languages to learn, and the *ologies* were still in a state of protoplasm—mere scientific jelly, so to speak. And, truth to say, these idle hours were often filled in by employments that gave the old statesmen much anxiety for the future of their country. Gambling took early and deep root. Some few of the identical dice that were employed have come down to us, and of these few it is melancholy to relate that some are *loaded*.

It was not for want of State oversight the Greek youth went astray. At Athens, as well as at Sparta, the child was held to be the property of the State, and the father was thus a trustee for the State. At Sparta an ignorance of the three R's was rather expected than otherwise; there, the ambition was to beget stalwart men-at-arms,—tall, lithe, and adroit. At Athens the ideal of perfect manhood comprised not only a splendid physique, but graceful action and eloquent expression. In both cities, infants that were weak, under-