

PUBLIC SPIRIT IN MODERN ATHENS.

BY D. BIKÉLAS.¹

WITH PICTURES BY A. CASTAIGNE.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

A BYZANTINE CORNER.

I.

DURING the war for Greek independence the seat of government was moving from place to place, according to circumstances, until it was fixed at Nauplia under Capo d'Istria's short-lived presidency. It was in that city that young King Otho landed in 1832, amid the acclamations of the regenerated nation joyfully welcoming its first sovereign. Two years later the capital of the newly created kingdom was transferred from Nauplia to Athens—a measure imposed upon the counselors of the youthful king alike by her geographical position and her glorious name.

On the eve of the revolution in 1821 the population of Athens was said not to exceed

¹ American readers will be interested to know that Mr. Bikélas as the leading literary man of Greece, was chairman of the Greek Committee in charge of the Olympian Games of 1896. The present paper was written by him in English.—EDITOR.

8000 souls. During the war she played an important part. Exposed to all the ravages of that long and merciless contest, many times taken and retaken, the town had then reached the lowest point of decay. When the Turks were strongest in the surrounding plain, where almost incessant fighting was going on, the inhabitants took refuge in the neighboring islands of Salamis and Ægina, as the ancient Athenians had done at the approach of Xerxes, returning with the tide of victory to their ruined dwellings. When the Turks had finally gone scarcely 2000 Greeks were left in the three hundred dilapidated houses piled at the foot of the Acropolis. As to the Piræus, a rickety building which had served as a custom-house was the only one to be seen on the desolate banks of the unfrequented port.

When, a few years later, it was decided to transfer the capital, signs of improvement had already begun to appear; the population had once more reached some 8000, and new houses had been erected here and there. The best one, now serving as a police office, was secured as a royal residence pending the construction of the palace, which, begun in 1834, was finished only four years later. If the aim of its German architect was, by the unpretending simplicity of the façade, to escape dangerous comparison with the monuments of antiquity, it must be allowed that he fully succeeded. The north part, adorned with an Ionic colonnade, by far the best part of the structure, can be seen only from the garden. In spring this garden, or park, with its vigorous verdure, is delightful when the orange-trees are in blossom and the nightingales sing in the shade. It shows what the poor soil of Attica is capable of when properly cared for.

Ancient Athens spread round the Acropolis, especially on the hills facing the south, which are now uninhabited. The new town lies to the north of the antique citadel—an extension of the cluster of houses already existing at the foot of the rock when the war was ended. Two main intersecting streets were laid out—Æolus street, starting from below the Acropolis and running northward, and Hermes street, leading from the royal palace toward the Piræus. The capital was



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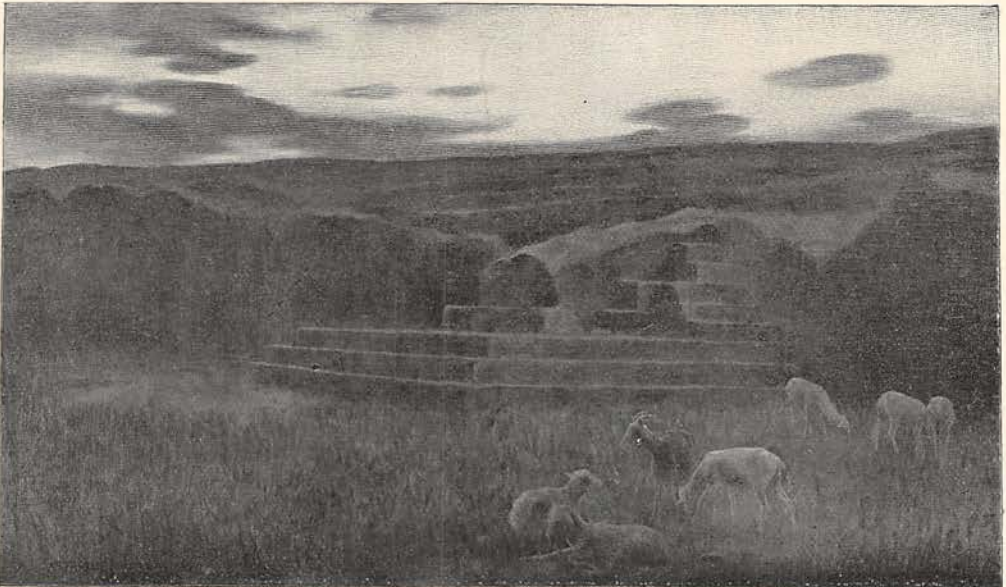
SOCRATES IN THE STREETS OF ATHENS, B. C. 400.

thus designed to lie in the valley between the Acropolis on one side and Mount Lycabettus on the other. No ambition of future development is traceable in the original plan. The ground chosen, and the width of the main streets, tend to show that the founders of the new city little dreamed of its rapid extension. Squeezing herself out of her narrow confines, the city has gradually scaled the foot of Lycabettus and spread beyond the valley on both sides, principally in a southwesterly direction. If the extension had been in a straight line toward the sea, Athens would now be nearing a junction with the Piræus; but both towns, as if avoiding each other, extend in parallel lines, and one must look to a probably distant future for the day when they shall be connected by rows of houses, instead of the long walls of ancient days.

The fashionable quarters of the capital are to be found in the new additions to the primitive plan—the Neapolis, as it is called. Large thoroughfares have there been opened, fine buildings erected, both public and private; and Athens, already the finest city in the east of Europe, bids fair to become, if no stop be put to her progress, one of the handsomest cities on the Mediterranean.

Under King Otho's reign progress was comparatively slow. At the accession of King George, in the year 1863, the population did not exceed 45,000. The advance has been more rapid since then, especially during the last twenty years of material prosperity,

which has lately been interrupted, let us hope temporarily, by the financial entanglements of the Greek government. During that period the immigration of well-to-do Greeks from abroad has not been one of the least causes of this development. In 1879 the census showed a population of nearly 64,000; in 1889, 114,000; and to-day, judging by the vital and building statistics, the number of inhabitants, if it does not exceed, cannot fall short of 130,000. The progress of the newly created town of Piræus is not less remarkable. From 5000 or 6000 souls, which had already gathered there some thirty years ago, its population had grown to 34,000 in 1889, and is now estimated at more than 50,000. Together the two towns number as many inhabitants as they probably possessed in the fourth century B. C. The sources of information as to the population of ancient Athens are indeed vague; but from a passage of Xenophon giving the number of families as 10,000, and from a passage of Athenæus indicating the proportion of slaves to freemen at the time of Demetrius Phalereus, it may be calculated that at that epoch the population of Athens, including that of the Piræus, was about 180,000. The area included within the walls of both towns seems rather to confirm this estimate. The surrounding country was thickly populated—much more so than at any succeeding period; but it is more than probable that the inhabitants of Athens proper and of her seaport never exceeded 200,000.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

A GREEK SHEPHERD.

The progress of the modern capital of Greece will not astonish American readers; but Athens in no way resembles New York or Chicago, nor is Greece America. Between the two countries there is no point of comparison whatsoever. The Americans, springing from and connected with a powerful European nation, began their career with all the ad-

vantages and few of the drawbacks of civilization. They had only to confront the physical obstacles to their possession of the extensive territories which attracted and rewarded their enlightened energy, and immigration accelerated the formation of a glorious commonwealth. The Greeks, emerging from ages of debasing serfdom, had no

political or social or intellectual preparation for the work of regeneration. After having achieved by dint of desperate efforts the independence of a part only of their land and race, they had to undergo a series of revolutions before settling down into an organized body politic. Moreover, the belief that the national unity is not yet complete has tended, and long may tend, to retard the work of internal development. Neither these considerations, nor the fact that the whole country was a scene of desolation at the close of the war of independence, must be lost sight of in forming a judgment as to the progress thus far effected.

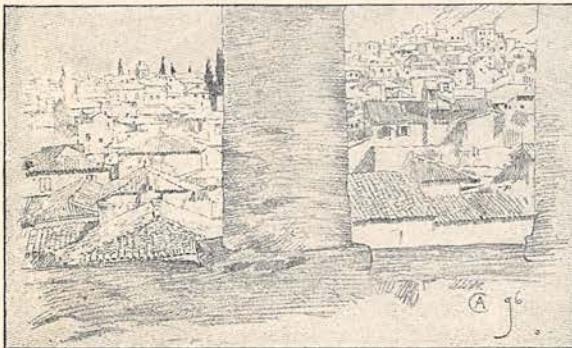
The revival of education was the first care of the Greeks on feeling once more free. In this they received from America welcome help, of which the grateful memory is far from being lost. The names of Dr. and Mrs. Howe of Boston, and of Mr. and Mrs. Hill, who made Athens their home, are not forgotten in Greece. In the schools opened by the latter, and in those of the Rev. Mr. King, six hundred girls were receiving education as early as 1835. Those schools were mainly supported by the practical generosity of American ladies. It may have been forgotten in America that this was the first example of the union of bodies representing different religious denominations in a common good work. A Greek society was soon formed, with the same object—that of female education. One of the ornaments of modern Athens is the fine school building erected for that society at the expense of a wealthy Greek whose name it bears (Arsakeion). This is but one among the many institutions due to the patriotism of Hellenes residing abroad, but nobly vying with each other in the embellishment of the capital which symbolizes the unity of the race.

First in date and in importance of these

institutions is the university. At the time of its foundation academic instruction would seem to have been superfluous, elementary schools being the crying need of Greece; but such was not the feeling of the people. A seat of high culture in the capital of the new kingdom, open to all Greeks within and without its boundaries, was an assertion of national life, a bond of union, and a banner of hope. The new building, the first important one erected in Athens apart from the royal residence, was begun in 1839, and completed only in 1864, though one of its wings was occupied by the university as early as 1841. More than three thousand students, coming from all parts of Hellendom, and distributed among four faculties, now yearly justify the optimism of the original promoters. The cost of the edifice was covered by private contributions. «Each year,» says Professor Pantasides, the historian of the university, «the rectors, in their annual reports, announced gifts showing the interest taken in the establishment by all classes. One offered his field, another his house or books or apparatus. Most of the contributors gave money; side by side with the wealthy donor who brought his tens of thousands came an itinerant grinder with twenty drachmæ; a man-servant sent twenty-eight drachmæ and five lepta, and an old soldier of the war of independence, having only his now useless weapons, gave them to the fund.»

The university, situated on a commanding site in the center of the new town, is flanked by buildings not less imposing, due to the munificence of Greeks living abroad. Baron Sina of Vienna, whose father had already built the beautiful observatory on the hill above the Pnyx, is the founder of the marble palace on the left.

On the right of the university another building of equal magnificence, now approaching completion, is being built at the expense of Mr. Vagliano, a Greek merchant of London. This will serve for the national library. The collection of books now requiring and deserving such a home had very modest beginnings. The nucleus, it will interest Americans to know, was a gift of fifty-two volumes from their countryman Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts, in the year 1837. The collection, then stored in the tiny medieval church just behind the new metropolitan church of Athens, was removed to the upper story of the uni-



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

A VIEW FROM THE TEMPLE OF THESEUS.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

AT THE SHRINE (THE ACROPOLIS IN THE DISTANCE).

versity building on its completion, when the little church, one of the most interesting Byzantine monuments in Athens, was once more opened to worship.

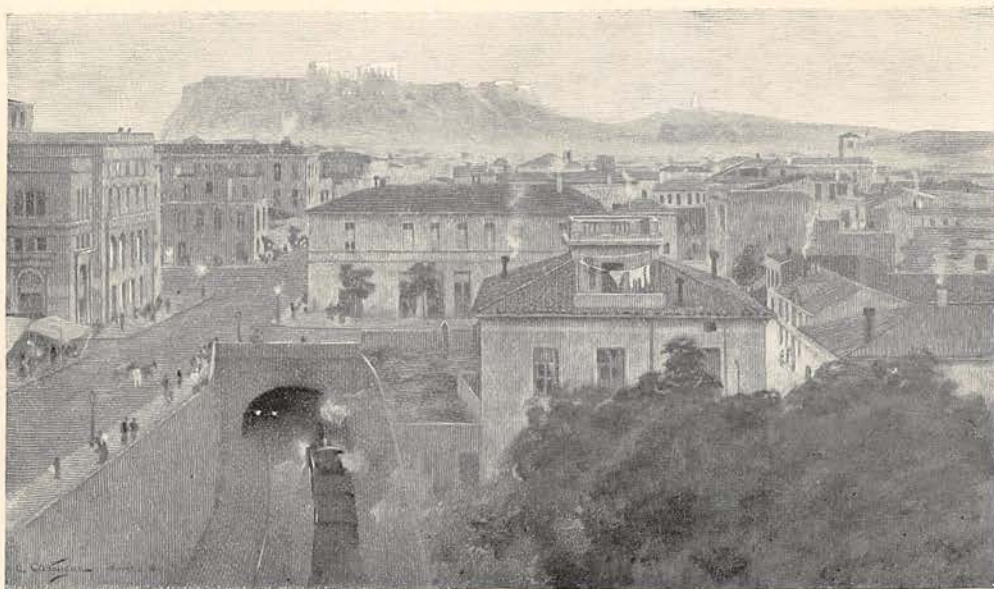
These three buildings of dissimilar styles, but all inspired by ancient Greek art, constitute a group of which any city might be proud. They are the chief ornaments of University street, in which also stand the Arsakeion school already referred to; the Ophthalmic Hospital, a structure in the Byzantine style, likewise erected by private contribution; the Roman Catholic church; and a series of handsome mansions, all surpassed in beauty by the residence of the late Dr. Schliemann. When the few gaps still remaining in this street shall be filled, it will be one of the finest in Europe.

The list would be long were we to enumerate all the buildings or institutions due to private munificence. Among these the traveler will not fail to notice, in the Patissia street, the school of arts, called Metzoveion, after its founders, three cousins from the still unemancipated town of Metzovon, in Epirus. In the upper story of this were exhibited the collections of the Archæological Society, now removed to the Central Museum close by, of which hereafter. In the same building are housed the collections of the Ethno-



logical and Historical Society of Greece, mainly devoted to the revolutionary period.

At the other end of University street, past



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DISTANT VIEW OF THE ACROPOLIS AT SUNSET.

the row of elegant mansions in Kephissia street, lies the seminary founded by Rizaris, an Epirote, and opposite it the model hospital, Evangelismos, patronized by the queen. One of its wings was built at the expense of M. Syngros, the founder of the museum at Olympia, who has also endowed Athens with other philanthropic institutions, such as the poor-house, near the Evangelismos Hospital, and the model prison outside Athens, in the direction of the Piræus. To him is likewise due the home of the Female Industrial Institute, where a society of Athenian ladies provides work and tuition to hundreds of poor girls and women, and where foreign visitors will be glad to find varied specimens of national industry.

Appropriate mention has already been made in *THE CENTURY* of the immense amphitheater of the Stadion which has been restored at the expense of a Greek, M. Avérof, in view of the revival of the Olympic games.¹ About a million drachmæ were spent to prepare the Stadion for the recent celebration of the games. The generous donor, who had already deserved by other gifts an eminent place among the benefactors of Greece, has undertaken to complete its restoration in marble, at the cost of at least double the amount already spent.

Close to the Stadion, on this side of the Ilissus, stands the palace destined for the in-

¹ See «The Olympic Games of 1896,» *THE CENTURY* for November, 1896.

dustrial exhibitions of Greece. This is one of the numerous gifts the Greek nation owes to the two Zappas, who were both born in Epirus, and who both died in Rumania, and whose testamentary dispositions caused an interruption of diplomatic relations between Rumania and Greece, the government of the former denying the right of Greece to take possession of the landed property of the testators, in spite of the opinions of eminent European jurists, and of the offer of Greece to settle the dispute by arbitration. In front of this building, called Zappeion after the name of its founders, a park has been laid out, which in a few years, when the young trees shall have grown, will be one of the finest promenades possible. With the rock of the Acropolis on the right, and on the left the hills above the Ilissus encircling the Stadion, but not hiding the flanks and summit of Mount Hymettus, the view plunges thence through the majestic group of the columns of Jupiter's temple, along the sloping plain, down to the Ægean, the graceful lines of the isle of Ægina closing the horizon. When the sun sets in a sky of fathomless clearness, or sometimes dappled with purple cloudlets, the beauty of the hues reflected on Hymettus and on the ruined marble monuments is beyond the reach of description.

Of the three mountains inclosing the plain of Athens, Mount Parnes is the highest (4640 feet); Mount Pentelicus (3641 feet), with its regular triangular shape suggesting the



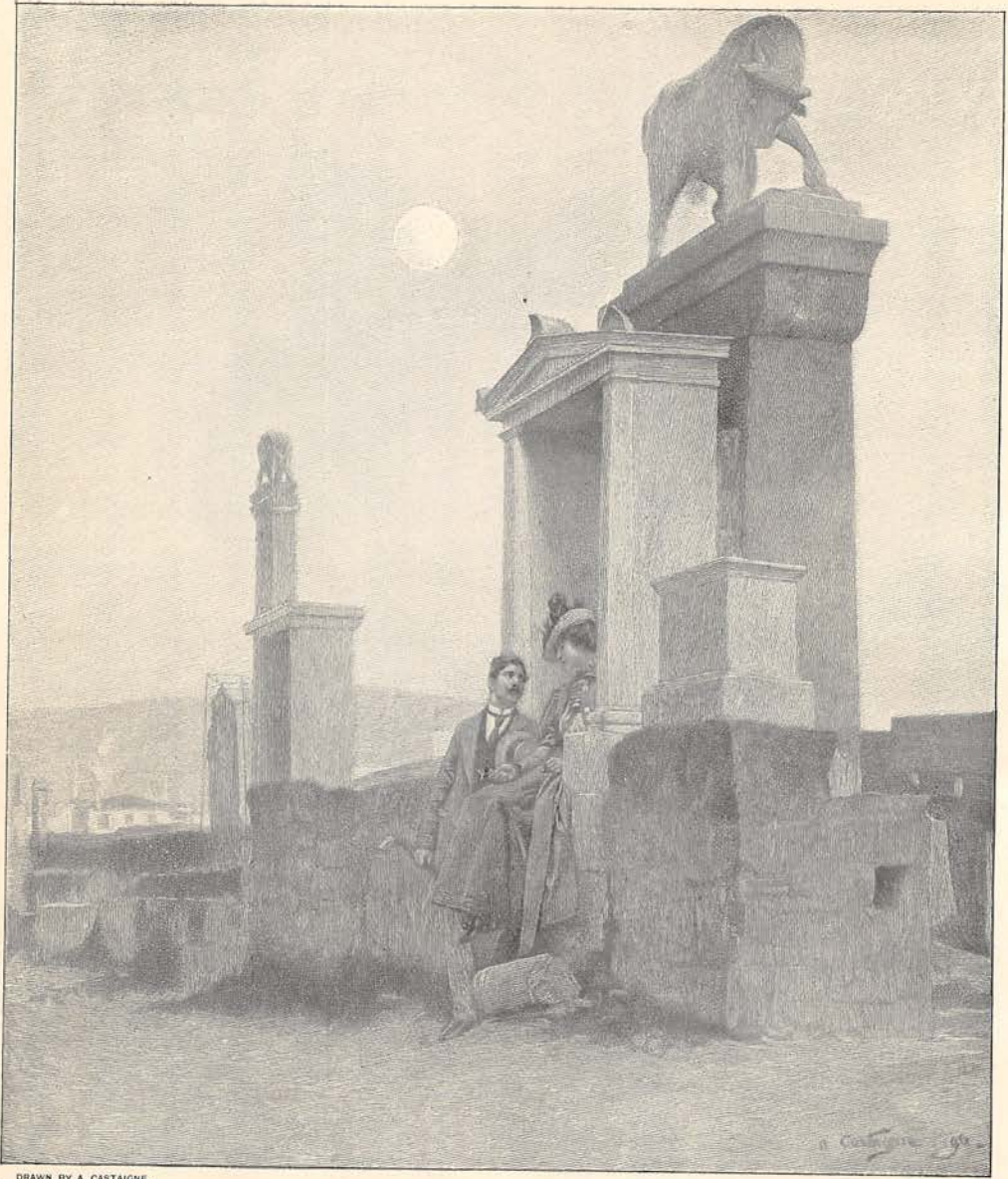
DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

A GIRL FROM ELEUSIS.

pediment of a temple, is the most imposing; but the thyme-covered, honey-producing Hy-mettus (3368 feet) has always been most intimately associated with Athens. It lies nearer to the city, and from almost all the streets and all the windows looking eastward can be seen its curved line marking the blue sky above, except on the rare gray days, when clouds resting on its top are an infallible sign of rain. The various hues of the mountains and the smaller hills forming an

inner circle around Athens, combined with the view of the sea, lend an additional effect of airiness and buoyancy to the aspect. In the long, straight streets of the new town, open from end to end, nothing impedes the view on either side.

In praising Athens, we must not draw a veil over her defects. Such improvements as are indispensable to a modern city have not kept pace with her growth in extent and affluence. The stages of this progress can be



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IN THE ANTIQUE CEMETERY.

seen in the structural inequalities even of contiguous dwellings. These dwellings may be chronologically divided into three categories: those of the first settlers, when all were poor, and the main necessity was at any rate to be housed; those of the thrifty citizens, who felt the want of more space and greater convenience, but had little regard for external appearance or interior comfort, and considered carpets and plate-glass a luxury, and even chimneys of small consequence; and those of the wealthy immigrants, who gave an impulse to the building of elegant houses

among all who, thanks to increasing prosperity, could afford to imitate them. The proximity of the quarries of Hymettus and Pentelicus enables Athens to supply herself with a building material which no other city could have at equal cost. Marble, in itself an embellishment, is profusely used, and loses none of its brilliancy in the dry atmosphere, whose transparency makes pleasant to the eye even the light colors spread on the stone walls, which in other latitudes would hardly be bearable. The agreeable effect thus obtained is increased by the trees in some of the

streets and squares, as well as in the gardens of the better class of houses. But Athens might and would be more verdant still were it not for the lack of abundant water. This want was felt in antiquity as well: to it may partly be ascribed the epidemics recorded by ancient historians in times of war, when the number of inhabitants was increased by those of the surrounding country seeking refuge within the walls. Antoninus Pius endowed Athens with a perfect system of waterworks. They consisted of subterranean galleries collecting the waters of the neighboring mountains. To these old Roman aqueducts, successively discovered, repaired, and utilized, Athens still owes her scanty supply of water. Projects for increasing the supply are ever talked of, but will be deferred so long as the municipal finances remain no better than the national. Meanwhile, the macadamized roads between the fine sidewalks are hardly watered. This fact and the nature of the soil, notorious for its thinness since the days of Thucydides, account for the dust, which is the greatest blemish of Athens. An English lady was heard to admire the picturesqueness of its whirling clouds; but even were that single representative of an

optimistic minority on a fine day, succeeding one of rain, to see the town and the clear outline of the distant mountains through a dustless atmosphere, she could not help regretting that the same effects are not artificially attainable.

On the whole, Athens will show to best advantage if visited after Constantinople and other towns in Turkey, as the standard of comparison will be fairer than that afforded by the great capitals of the West. It must not be forgotten that, if one of the most ancient, she is at the same time one of the newest among European towns; nor ought the long period of her decline ever to be lost sight of when comparing her with other towns.

The traveler who, remembering that long period of Turkish sway, counts on receiving an Oriental impression from the aspect of Athens is doomed to disappointment. Even the national garb is fast disappearing. It may still be worn by a few elderly Athenians. These, and a peasant here and there selling milk or cheese, recall the day when their dress was the national one. It is, however, the uniform of certain soldiers of light infantry, who may be seen parading the streets or mounting guard at the palace, in all the



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE ACADEMY OF ATHENS.

white splendor of the fustanelle. The wide blue trousers of the Ægean islanders are not less rare, nor is there much chance of seeing them at the Piræus, among the craft from the various islands moored along the quays. The uglier and cheaper product of the slop-shop has replaced the picturesque drapery of the olden time. The monotony of the modern costume is broken only by the priests, with their long black robes and their peculiar hats.

II.

THE foreign visitor will naturally first visit the Acropolis and the museums. His red Baedeker or Murray in hand, he will set out on his pilgrimage, and than either book no better guide could he have. The work of the archaeological cicerone is well done in both, and it were idle to repeat here what is so easily found elsewhere.

The Acropolis, most beautiful, most renowned, and most sacred of rocks, will attract the traveler's eye even before he enters the Piræus; it is visible from almost every street within, and from every point outside of Athens; but nowhere is it seen to better advantage than from near the small church of St. Demetrius, on the height between the two hills crowned respectively by the monument of Philepappus and by the observatory, or from the windows of the latter, whence the view of the Propylæa and the façade of the Parthenon, in all their majesty of form and color, is undisturbed by modern buildings. The slope leading up to the entrance of the antique fortress, planted with pine-trees and aloes dating from the time of Amelia, the first queen of Greece, forms a zone of verdure setting off the brightness of the sun-gilt marbles above. On the other side of the rock the remnants of the old Turkish town and more recent hovels, piled one above another, rise with defacing effect to the very base of the Acropolis. These are condemned, and will have to be pulled down sooner or later. The plans are ready, and only await an administration which shall have the money, the will, and the power to carry them out. The steep base of the rock will then be cleared of the accumulated rubbish and of the unsightly dwellings, and more relics of antiquity will, it is hoped, be brought to light. Plantations will cover the cleared ground, and through them the road now leading to the gate of the Acropolis will be continued all round toward Hadrian's arch. The Acropolis itself will thus gain in height and beauty.

However admirable even now its external appearance, the view from within is not less impressive; the setting is worthy of the jewel. No sight can surpass in reposeful grandeur the panorama one commands in skirting the edge of the rock. The mountains inclosing the plain with its olive grove, the blue sea on the south shut in by the isles of Ægina and Salamis and by the distant mountains of the Morea, and, nearer, the columns of the Olympian Jupiter and of the Theseion, all arched by the transparent Attic sky, unite to form one harmonious picture, the natural features of which are heightened by the magic of the memories of old. In other countries, and elsewhere in Greece, may be seen landscapes that stir the admiration of the beholder; but nowhere are to be found more graceful lines or brighter coloring than one sees from the steps of the Parthenon, between the columns of the Propylæa, when the sun goes down:

Not, as in northern climes, obscurely bright,
But one unclouded blaze of living light!

Byron's verses come naturally to the mind on the spots which so well inspired him. The elegant choragic monument of Lysicrates stood within the courtyard of the now demolished convent of the Capuchins where the poet resided. Byron's statue, the gift of a Greek, the late M. Demetrius Schilizri, has recently been erected close by, near Hadrian's arch and the ruined temple of Jupiter.

The concatenation of present and past events caused Mr. Freeman, the historian and many others with him, to protest against the zeal of archæologists, who are apt to overlook the historical interest of postclassical monuments; and he and they continued vainly to protest against each successive obliteration of the traces left by the various occupants of the Acropolis. No doubt a line ought to be drawn somewhere; but where? When the Turks left Athens, the columns of the Propylæa half protruded from the roof of a storehouse, the Erechtheum was an exploded powder-magazine, and tumble-down houses covered the Acropolis. People are still living old enough to remember certain of the Turkish houses serving as museums, and fragments of sculpture and architecture scattered haphazard about the ruined temples. The removal of the former and the setting in order of the latter were on no account to be condemned; but the demolition of the Frankish tower, the destruction of the old entrance to the citadel and of its gates bearing Turkish inscriptions, and the leveling of the bastion connected with Odysseus's achievements,



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

CONSTITUTION PLACE, THE ROYAL PALACE IN THE BACKGROUND.

during the revolution, were contestable measures. The defenders of the point of view of general history have, however, been silenced by the success with which the work of destruction has been crowned. Had it been less thorough, the statues buried by the ancients before Pericles's renovation of the Parthenon would not have been found, nor could the monuments themselves have been studied with the same advantage; but the gain thus secured should not be an encouragement to further depredations. No wiser limit could be put to such work than that suggested by Lord Bute in his address at a meeting of the subscribers to the British school at Athens (1892). «I am not arguing,» said he, «that when one historical monument hopelessly interferes with another, the inferior should not be removed; what I do say is that such removal should only be effected after the greatest consideration, with the greatest care and caution, after making the most accurate record of what is to be destroyed, and with the careful preservation and transference, if need be, to another site of the historical monuments disturbed.»

It is true that foreign archæologists cannot be expected to care much for anything beyond the immediate object of their study and researches, and that the Greeks themselves, from the very dawn of their independence, have regarded the relics of their glorious past as the main link between their country and the rest of the civilized world. The Archæological Society is one of the oldest and most useful institutions of modern Greece. The central museum, thanks to M. Cavvadias, the general ephor of antiquities, and to his excellent staff of young Greek archæologists, has become one of the finest in existence, not only for the value, but also for the methodical arrangement of its contents. Among these will especially be noticed the splendid series of funereal sculptures, and of Tanagra and Myrina figurines, the rare specimens of archaic art, and, above all, the unique treasure of Mycenæ found by an adoptive citizen of the United States, the late M. Schliemann. If the traveler feels some disappointment at not seeing in the museum the «Hermes» of Praxiteles, let him consider that a journey to Olympia is quickly and easily made, and that much may be said in favor of local museums, especially when adjacent to the monuments to which many of the objects they contain once belonged.

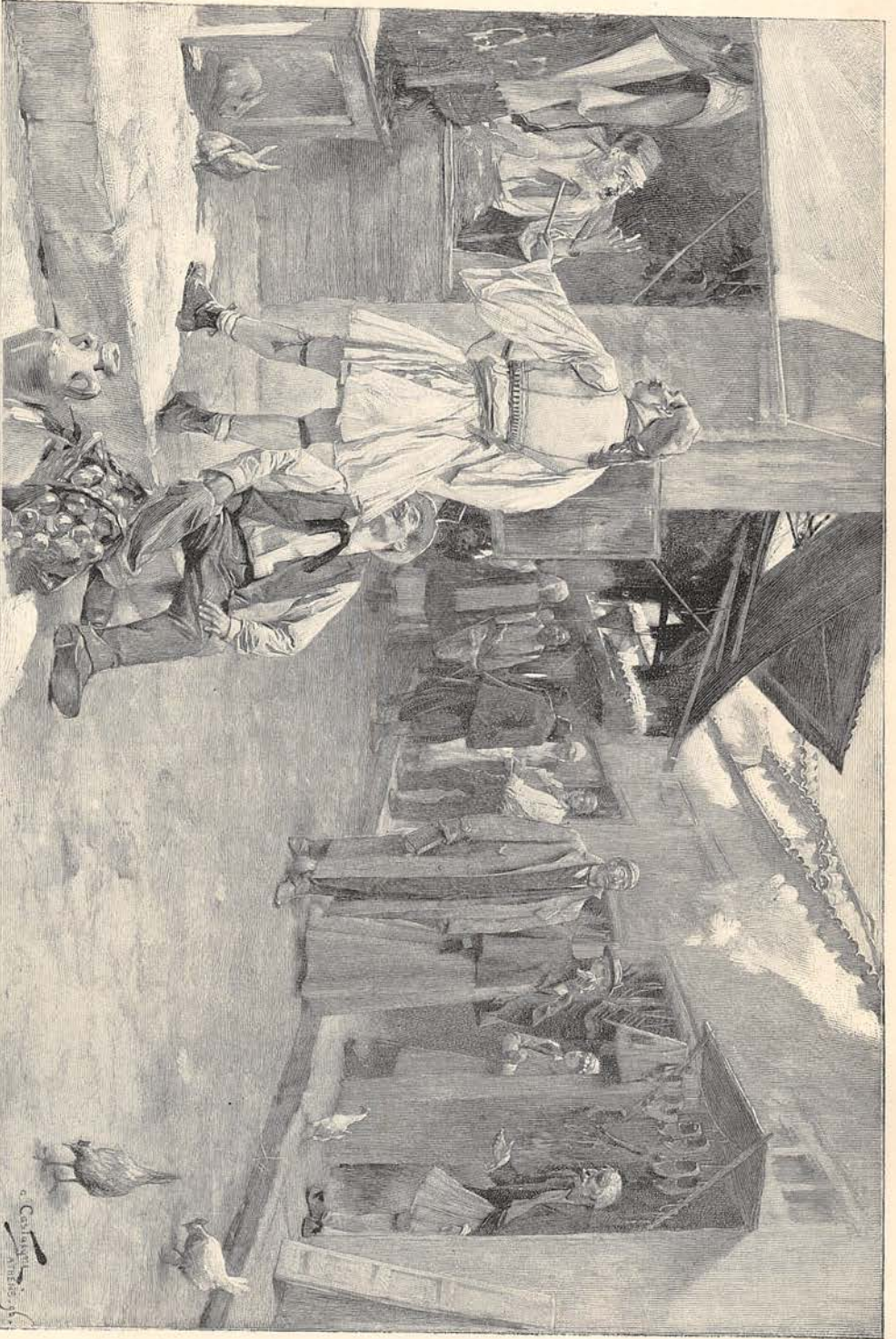
The world-wide interest in Grecian antiquities has been demonstrated by the establishment and development of the foreign

archæological schools in Athens. Thanks to them, the capital is becoming the real center for the study of ancient art. The French set the example in 1845; the German school was founded next; the American school, housed in close neighborhood to the English one at the northeastern extremity of the town, displays, in keeping pace with the other schools, a spirit of emulation which has been rewarded by excellent results, and which promises still better for the future. Between this school and Athens a new bond of sympathy has been created by the recent death of its former director, Professor Merriam, who lies buried in the land he had learned to love so well.

These foreign schools, while tending to make Athens once more a seat of learning, serve also as social centers for visitors of the nationalities they respectively represent, and so help to facilitate intercourse between strangers, learned Greeks, and Athenian society in general. The directors, in addition to their appointed duties, perform others of an international nature, and the traveler, whether he come only to study the monuments, or, like Ulysses, «to see the cities of men, and to know something of their minds,» will not find their protection or guidance less useful than that of the accredited representative of his country. So exceptional an advantage should lend additional attraction to Athens, and yet the number of foreigners, and particularly of Americans, though increasing from year to year, is chiefly limited to a chosen few.

The main cause of discouragement to travelers, as well as to the formation of a numerous foreign colony in Athens, is the relative difficulty of access. This will be remedied when the railway now begun between Athens and Salonica shall have united Greece with the European system. In the interim, the voyage of three days and a half from Marseilles to the Piræus, by the large and comfortable French steamers of the Messageries Company, is rather too long for bad sailors. By way of Brindisi and Patras the voyage is not so long, but it might be shortened and made more agreeable by means of a direct line of larger and better steamers in regular correspondence with the railways both in Italy and in Greece.

Of late years internal communication has been greatly facilitated by the construction of railways and carriage-roads, but without as yet effecting any sensible improvement in provincial hotels, which in general still leave much to be desired. There is, of course, something that gratifies the spirit of adven-



DRAWN BY A. CASTAÑEDA.

IN THE OLD QUARTER.

A. Castañeda
1895

ture in conquering the difficulties which beset the traveler in some parts of Greece; and doubtless many will regret the vulgarization of classic scenes by the «personally conducted.» It will be long, however, before Taygetus, Parnassus, or Pindus is desecrated by funicular railways, or Greece becomes as stale as Switzerland. Without aiming so largely to increase traveling facilities, the Greek government would consult the best interests of the country by rendering it more accessible and more penetrable; and it should seek, moreover, to increase the attractions of the capital. The impulse once given, foreigners would begin to settle there, and the rest might be left to the law of supply and demand. The hotels in Athens are good, and at least two of them rank among the best in Europe. The letting of furnished apartments has not yet been greatly developed, but the Greeks are not likely to overlook a business so profitable. Life in Athens will be found easy and not expensive. The court (to whose social functions foreigners diplomatically presented find easy entrance), hospitable society, historic interest, picturesque environment, and a good climate are among the attractions that Athens offers to those who shall prefer her as a place of residence to one or another of the favored cities of Europe.

Surrounded by a zone of hills, beyond which rise the mountains, and looking south-

ward to the sea, Athens enjoys a climate that is at once continental and insular. The mean temperature is less variable than that of a continent, and more so than that of an island, in the same latitude. The spring and autumn are delightful, and the winters are mild, the mercury seldom falling below zero, which it has not touched once during twenty-two of the winters since 1840. Snow very rarely falls in the plain, though it yearly whitens the mountain-tops; fogs and frost are equally rare, and, upon the whole, the daily variations of temperature are less than those observed in most European towns, including Paris, Milan, Florence, and even Nice.¹ The summer is long, but in the very hottest months, July and August, the sea-breeze which sweeps across the Ægean tempers the heat and diminishes that dryness of the air to which are due the extraordinary tenuity and limpidity of the ambient atmosphere, the wonderful blue of the Attic sky, and the optical illusion which makes distant objects seem near.

Sooner or later Athens is sure to become a winter resort not less favored than any on the Mediterranean, and the permanent home of many foreigners. The opinion thus confidently expressed is strengthened by the fact that few who have lived for some length of time within her gates pass out of them without regret, or fail to reënter them with pleasure.

¹ The mean temperature is in winter 8.90° centigrade, 47.50° Fahrenheit; in spring, 15.37° centigrade, 59° Fahrenheit; in summer 25.96° centigrade, 78.50° Fahrenheit; in autumn 18.70° centigrade, 65° Fahrenheit; January and February are the coldest months (8.04° and 8.63° centigrade respectively); July and August the hot-

test (26.99° and 26.63° centigrade). The mean annual rainfall is 0.4059, and the moisture of the air is put at 74.3 for the winter; 64.9 for the spring; 49.3 for the summer; 65.2 for the autumn. These details are due to the kindness of M. Eginitis, the learned director of the observatory at Athens.

D. Bikélas.

