THE GIRLS OF GREECE.

"It is well to travel if one can. It teaches one how many nice people there are in the world."

So said an aged English lady to me, her stranger-fellow-countrywoman, as we journeyed together in the train which carried us back to Athens after seeing the famous "dances of Megara."

I agreed with her heartily; but a moment afterwards I was reminded that travelling does not do everything, and that those who would truly see Greece or Italy must start with a little bit of their genial atmosphere and sense of beauty already in themselves. For a sharp rasping voice from the other end of our carriage gave utterance to this sentiment—

"Greece seems to me a very poor country altogether."

It was, alas! another fellow-countrywoman who spoke, a woman in early middle-age, and this was all she had to say to a party who, except myself and the old lady, were all Greeks, one of them a Greek who had just told us that he was returning to his fatherland after twenty years of absence, and who had voluntarily stood during the greater part of our journey that this sour-voiced foreign woman might enjoy a seat!

In this connection I have used a word which I do not think we British always realise. When we are abroad, it is we who are "the foreigners," and I think most of us will acknowledge that we are treated with a kindness and a consideration which is not invariably shown to strange visitors in these islands, while some of us, with shame, may own that we do not always act and speak with the courtesy and deference due to our kindly hosts.

This does not so much arise from any ill-will, as from our insular position having made most of us, unaccustomed for generations, to see any manners or customs, or even shades of complexion, save our own—leading us to the deplorable error of feeling that everything strange to ourselves must be pitiable or at least ridiculous. We still have among us more than we like to think of the spirit of the old countrywoman who was sure that the English army must conquer everywhere because so many people were praying for it, and who, when asked whether she did not think other nations were also praying for victory, promptly responded, "Maybe, but it was not likely the Almighty could understand their gibberish!"

A GREEK WOMAN.

Travellers themselves often have a great temptation to dwell rather on the wonders—natural or artistic—of the lands they visit than on the special features and interests of the humanity dwelling among them. The Pyramids and tombs of Egypt and the marvellous remains of the Athenian Acropolis are apt to crowd out thought of the varied races who throng the streets of Cairo or of the wonderful progress and glorious aspiration of the modern Greek.

One can understand the temptation. The Pyramids and the Parthenon are, so to speak, already the familiar friends of all educated people, and admiring inquiry concerning them is but like the renewal of old acquaintance. But what can we know—or learn—of these crowds of strange faces passing panoramically before us, speaking tongues, too, which but few of us understand?

And yet, after all, in these crowds the ancient Egyptian and Greek have contributed to the present a more enduring element than even their most marvellous monuments—an element which has still got its share to play in the world's drama, perhaps even after the last great relic of antiquity shall have finally crumbled to dust. And so the traveller surely renders some service to the cause of human brotherhood when he tells whether the panoramic faces smiled on him, whether the "unknown tongues" were spoken in gentle accents, and when he does not forget to record those little touches of nature which make the whole world kin.

And that is why I should like to tell my friends of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER a little about the girls of Greece.

I made my first acquaintance with them on the afternoon of Palm Sunday, when we were but new arrivals in Athens. A kind friend resident there had conducted us to Mars Hill that we might read St. Paul's great missionary sermon on the very spot where he delivered it. As we read, three little maidens drew near and paused, listening to the unfamiliar English. They belonged to the very poorest class, and they were clean and neat, with nicely braided hair and sweet, delicate faces. Our resident friend entered into conversation with them in their own tongue, giving them a free rendering of what we had read. They listened and responded courteously—one of them, at least, being quite familiar with the story of St. Paul. They said they belonged to the Greek Church. One of them went off and gathered some of the asphodel with which the grass was rich. She presented little bouquets to each of us, and a spray of that asphodel now lies in my New Testament over Acts xvii.

As days passed on of course I saw more of Greek girls. In the house where I lived there was a kind, dark-eyed hand-maiden, who was a Spartan. (Just think of being a Spartan by birth!) She knew a good deal of English, and was always ready in a shy diffident way to speak it. She never met me without a "Good morning" or a "Good evening," which had a home-like sound to my ears. She did her work in an obliging pleasant way, and often brought us up a rose from the garden. I saw her about her work at all hours—from five in the morning; but I never saw her otherwise than tidy, smiling, and soft-spoken. Through my sketching in the streets and fields I was brought in slight contact with many other Greek girls, though our mutual ignorance of each other's language prevented free communication. They took intelligent interest in what I was doing. If they made any remark to a companion, it was made in a gentle whisper. They were always ready—unasked, nay, before I thought of it—to render me any little service, such as holding my water-bottle or paint-box while I changed my position. They never crowded me nor got in my way. In short, they were *thoroughly* well bred; and these, remember, were the little girls running bareheaded in Athens streets.

In the churches too, the women, both the attendants and the congregation, were always kind and considerate. Seats are few and far between in Greek churches; there are none in the body of the buildings, but only down the sides, with a few chairs scattered in the gallery, where few but women go. But I was never allowed to stand long, and service-books and general guidance through the course of the ceremonial were constantly rendered.

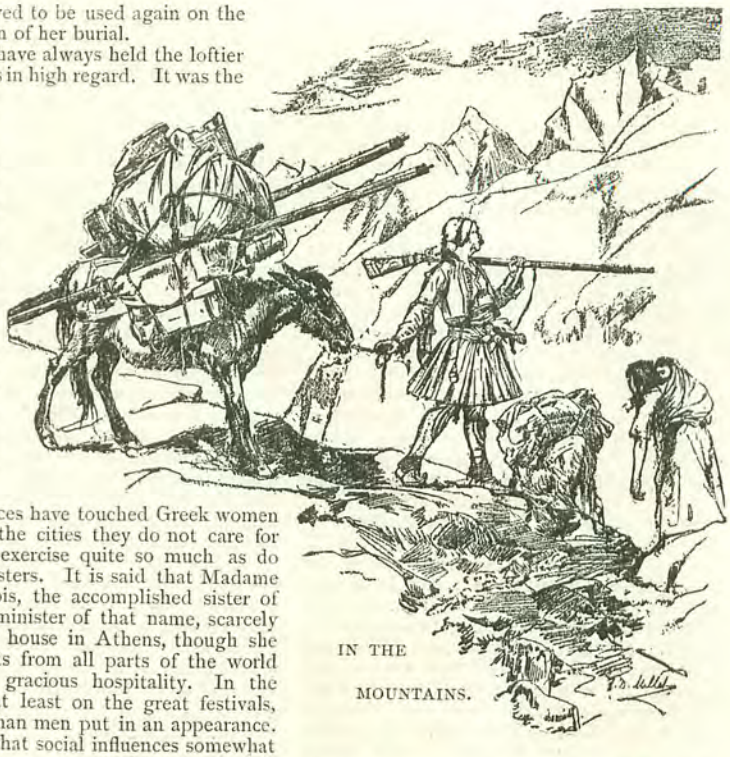
The girls of the richer classes are, I understand, generally well educated and highly accomplished. Many of them are good linguists, English and French governesses

being very frequently engaged by well-to-do Greek families. The Greeks have always valued education. Even when their Turkish oppressors made instruction in the Greek language and the Christian religion into a crime to be visited with penalties—they still pursued it, though under conditions indicated in the Greek child's song,

"O pretty little moon,
Shine out and guide my way,
And while I steal to school
Let not my footsteps stray!
There knowledge good to us is given,
A precious gift sent down from heaven."

Foreign residents in Athens dwell much on the charming and gentle manners of the Greek ladies. Yet there is fire and grit beneath the sweetness, for in the Greek War of Independence, in the early decades of this century, Greek women were among the foremost in struggling against the Turkish yoke, under which, certainly, their sex had not suffered least. Among the heroines of that time is one "Bobalina," who with her own fortune fitted out vessels and headed her warrior sailors in person. Her picture in her heroic action hangs among the other portraits and relics of the Greek Revolution in the Polytechnic at Athens. Women, too, bravely bore their part in the Siege of Missolonghi, and fought in the terrible sortie with which it ended. In 1881 an aged woman was carried to her grave clad in the dress of a Pallikar ("soldier" or "lad") which she had worn when fighting by her father's side at Missolonghi, and had secretly preserved to be used again on the solemn occasion of her burial.

The Greeks have always held the loftier female qualities in high regard. It was the statue of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, which presided among the antique glories of the Acropolis. The Greek women of to-day have their share in every progress. A lady physician, Dr. Mary Kalopothakes, has started in successful practice in the capital. Yet Turkish influences have touched Greek women so far that in the cities they do not care for active outdoor exercise quite so much as do their western sisters. It is said that Madame Sophia Tricoupis, the accomplished sister of the late prime minister of that name, scarcely ever leaves her house in Athens, though she welcomes guests from all parts of the world with the most gracious hospitality. In the churches too, at least on the great festivals, fewer women than men put in an appearance. It is said, too, that social influences somewhat tend to separate the young of the two sexes, and that courtship rather follows definite offer of marriage than precedes it.



IN THE MOUNTAINS.

GREEK HOSPITALITY.

Nevertheless, the simple habits of the country people at least give many opportunities for the selection of partners. The sons and daughters of neighbouring farmers meet to work together among the vines, and they meet to rejoice together in the village dances which in Greece form such a feature of every festival—Easter, St. George's Day, St. John's Day. Such dances, which take place at midday, and in which the elder men and women freely join and indeed preponderate, are of a quiet decorous character—a circle or semi-circle with linked hands moving round with slow graceful steps, while the dancers sing in a low voice. The songs are very varied, and some are very old. Some breathe memories of the national hatred to the former Turkish oppressors, but most are love-songs. We give brief translations from two.

"The sea consumes the hills and the hills the savage beasts,
And the black-eyed and the fair ones consume the Pallikars."

And again—

"When thou combest thyself, Xanthoula,
Give me the combings,
And I will take them to the goldsmith
To make me rings therewith."

The evening which follows these public festivities is a favourite time for approaching the parents of a girl with formal declaration of love and offer of marriage. As the Greek poet Drosines put it—

"Ere the hill is darkened, ere the sun sinks o'er its side,
Proposals fair for her he sends, and asks her for his bride."

Whatever may be the conditions and restrictions of Greek courtship, I must say that I have never seen faces more beautiful with calm contentment than those of the Greek village matrons, nor ever met with more kindliness and ready cheer than I noticed in the Greek old women, even of the humblest class, whose worn faces were always ready to brighten into a smile for the strangers as they saluted us with words of blessing or greeting.

The national dress of the Greek countrywomen is very noble, and may it be long ere it changes for the vulgarities of fashion! It varies considerably in different districts, but all the variations have certain features in common, which bring them fairly within the poet's description:

"Put on thy white embroidered gown, thy finest, softest vest,
The skirt of red with silken flowers, thy chains across thy breast."

Other things being equal, the married women are dressed with much greater richness than the girls. For one thing, on festal or "full-dress" occasions, they wear upon their heads delicate white veils, flowing down behind, and often daintily embroidered, while

the maidens simply obey the poet's invocation—

"And bind a yellow kerchief their graceful heads around."

The turning back of the skirt, as shown in our illustration, is also a sign that the wearer has not yet attained the married state. Embroidery of every kind is introduced wherever possible; white embroidery on vest and ruffle, gold embroidery on jacket, and a singular very rich kind of *appliqué* on skirts. Girls spin, dye, weave, and make their own clothing, and have a stock in hand on the day when they become brides. Nor is female industry in Greece confined to articles for personal use. "Home industries" are in full force there. The beautiful silks, gauzes, and stuffs of the country are woven by cottage families upon hand-looms. A nice old woman, carrying a basket laden with these dainty wares, was in the habit of calling at the *pension* where we lived, and she said that everything she sold was woven by herself and a daughter.

Such costumes as I have described can be bought in Athens at prices ranging from £2 to £6 or upwards, but these are for sale chiefly to visitors and artists. It would be a rare accident which would drive a Greek countrywoman to buy what she delights to make for herself. Even in Athens, where European dress prevails, I was told that ready-made garments for women are scarcely to be had, that there was not such a thing as a "blouse" for sale in the whole town, nor did I notice many dressmakers' "signs." The more valuable parts of the national costume will last a lifetime, while "the chains across the breast" and the curious head-dress, made of tiny gold and silver coins, is generally an heir-loom. These feminine ornaments are always spoken of as a woman's "weapons"—a subtle Greek hint of the "execution" she effects with them! Yet, as a favourite term of endearment with the Greek lover is "my partridge," it may be presumed that he admits that there is some "snaring" and "bringing down" on his side too!

The relation between parents and children is very tender and strong in Greece. Widowed mothers constantly reside under the same roof as their married children. There are many songs and legends which dwell on the sacredness and joy of filial duty. For instance, take the legend of the bee, which in Greece is called "the blessing of God," and which by its honey provided all the sweetness of Greek cookery, at any rate in former times. The poet Viziênos narrates that a mother had three daughters, who were all employed outside the home-roof. The old woman, finding herself dying, despatched messengers to summon her children to her side. One daughter replied that she was too busy to come, another that she had something else to do. These were at once transformed into a spider and a tortoise. But the third came running, and when her mother asked what she had upon her hands, she answered that it was dough, because when the messenger came she had been making a cake, and had not waited to wash off the flour and butter. The mother thanked God for her good child, who straightway became the valued and welcome bee.

"Forth she flieth on joyful wings,
By flower and bloom carest,
And to every creature a blessing brings,
She—whom her mother blest."

I think I cannot do better than to close my paper by quoting in full a lovely little poem about a Greek girl, written by George Drosines and translated by E. M. Edmunds. By hinting a beautiful race's philosophy of beauty, it opens to us the hope that every gentle word and winning way may add to the human loveliness of creation.

THE ONLY DAUGHTER.

"Tell me, O lovely maiden, whence do thy graces flow?
How did thy mother nourish thee? what care did she bestow?
With sugar did she feed thee, that thou art aye so sweet?
Was milk thy drink? For thou, like milk with whiteness art replete.
Did she bathe thee in rose waters?—for thou bloomest like the rose:
Made she a bed of downy plumes whereon thou might'st repose,
With sweet musk for a pillow—that thou of musk might smell?"
"My good and darling mother, my mother deeming well,
With sugar hath not fed me, white milk for drink nor gave,
Nor that I might be more than fair, did with rose-water lave:
She gave me no musk pillow, no bed of down to press:
But my kind mother nourished me with many a fond caress:
And with her loving kisses she all this sweetness sent,
And with her tender blessing this balmy perfume lent.
Thus was I reared on love alone, and bloom in beauty dressed,
For I am an only daughter, a maiden much caressed."

ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO.

THE WHITE ROSE OF THE MOUNTAIN.

By ANNE BEALE, Author of "The Queen o' the May," "Seven Years for Rachel," etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHEN the newly discovered sisters were returning to the house, after this long talk, they were met by Lord Hastings, who held a letter in his hand.

"The whole house is in tumult," he said, "owing to the unaccountable wanderings of its two primary planets, and I am come out like a true astronomer to trace the cause of their eccentricity. Breakfast is over, and I believe luncheon on the table—everybody but myself is either gone out riding or driving, and I have been traversing the grounds, north, south, east and west, in the hope of delivering this dispatch to Miss Llewellen, and asking her whether she has any messages to her aunt, who I may probably see to-morrow, or the next day."

Clare's face flushed crimson, and her voice faltered, as she took the letter, and asked why Lord Hastings was about to leave them.

A letter of business, he said, had called him into Dorsetshire, and he should be obliged, much against his inclination—and he bent his full, eloquent eye upon Clare as he spoke—to leave a place which contained one who knew how to rise superior to the throng of worldlings about her, and to distinguish genuine purity and excellence, even when veiled under a humble garb.

The path was narrow, and Gwenllean was walking behind, therefore she could not hear what Lord Hastings said. Clare felt confused, and longed to say that she could boast no merit in selecting Gwenllean from amongst the company, since she felt convinced that Nature had impelled them towards each other; but Gwenllean had insisted upon secrecy, and she was silent. She was pleased, however, to have gained Lord Hastings's approbation, and had he been one versed in reading a woman's mind from the expression of her countenance, he might have discovered, in the gratified look that was for a moment bent on him, a riddle that he had often puzzled over—whether Clare Llewellen had a heart at all, and whether she knew what it was to love.

Clare opened the seal of her letter, and as she read it, she uttered a sound something between astonishment and displeasure.

"Well, this is very provoking," she said. "A summons from my aunt, begging me to return immediately to her, to meet some hundred and fiftieth cousin that she expects from India, and whom I must endeavour to charm, for the sake of a hundred thousand lacs of rupees that he will leave behind him when he dies."

"A hundred thousand charms, in the eyes of the generality of the world," said Lord Hastings, "but Miss Llewellen would not care much for them, if I judge her rightly."

"Oh! vanity and ambition are the ruling passions of our sex," replied Clare, "and what can gratify them so easily as money? For example, I must start for Bath in a couple of days, at furthest, to comply with the request of a rich aunt, and to ingratiate myself with a very rich old nabob—but here are Mrs. Wynne, Lady Jones, Mr. Grant, and I know not who besides."

"Tell me," interrupted Lord Hastings, "when will there be any prospect of our seeing you at the Abbey? We are all looking forward to the—the happiness of having your aunt and you with us, and my mother begs me to get you to fix a day—or a period for your visit."

"Lord Hastings," said Clare earnestly, "God knows whether I may ever