

THE ELGIN MARBLES.

INTEREST IN GREECE IN THE PROPOSED RESTITUTION.

Athens Dispatch to the London Standard.

The question of the restitution of the Elgin marbles is at present greatly agitating public opinion in this country. Mr. Frederic Harrison's strongly-worded appeal in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, for the return of those priceless fragments to the Greek Nation as an act of justice, and the article to a similar effect in the *Standard* of the 5th inst., have revived a grievance which has been practically dormant for more than half a century. During that period the Hellenes have been too fully occupied in founding and consolidating their national existence to spare much attention to the relics of a past glory. But now that they have obtained their independence and proved their capacity to stand alone, they are naturally anxious to gather around them those records of their country's history to which, in their opinion, they can lay a just claim.

There is no question that, as regards the Elgin marbles, the Greeks make out a very strong case. They argue that the Earl of Elgin received his authorization to dismantle the Acropolis, not from the Greek people, but from an invader hardly less iconoclastic than the Goths and Vandals; that now that the Acropolis has reverted to its rightful owners, all that it contained, or that it was arbitrarily despoiled of, should return with it; and they can point to contemporary opinion on the matter, including Lord Byron's denunciation of "the Pictish Peer," as proof that the removal was condemned even at a time when it was most possible to set up for it a plausible excuse. As to the argument that the marbles are safer and better preserved at the British Museum, that plea was, no doubt, forcible enough in the days when Greece was overrun by Turkish troops and a scene of continual conflict. But it does not hold good now that the Greeks are an independent nation, and have proved their right to be reckoned with.

The Greek people, at any rate, have no misgivings in this direction, and they are accordingly making the most of the recent awakening of the British conscience. On Thursday last I informed you that the hope of a restitution of the Elgin fragments had aroused the keenest interest. The question has now gone beyond the stage of discussion, and has entered that of action. The Municipal Council of Athens has decided to make a formal appeal to the British Government and Parliament for the return of the marbles and metopes to the Parthenon, and to convey an expression of thanks to Mr. Frederic Harrison and the *Standard* for their initiative in the matter. The Greeks have great confidence in the sense of justice of the English people, and are already looking forward to the result of the petition with some degree of hope. If they are not disappointed, there will be strong revival among them of their former enthusiasm for England.

The New York Times

Published: December 29, 1890

Copyright © The New York Times