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LITERARY NOTICES.

NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, No. LXXIV.: Boston.—This number contains twelve articles, on subjects sufficiently varied to suit every taste. We will endeavor to make the extracts we have room for, display the general excellence of the papers whence they are culled.

*Observations on Greece*, by Mr. Anderson, one of the Secretaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions—furnish the Reviewers occasion to descant upon the benefits that may be derived to the Greeks from the efforts of Americans to further the cause of education in that country.—Mr. Anderson sailed from Boston for Malta towards the close of 1828, with a view of ascertaining, among other things, what kind of efforts it was incumbent on the board that deputed him, to make for the improvement of liberated Greece. In the performance of this duty he visited the Peloponnesus and the Islands; and the little volume which records his observations, is pronounced to be one of "uncommon interest and sterling value."

As to the cause of education and improvement in Greece, and the claims of that cause upon this country we will let the Reviewer speak for himself:

But why, we shall be asked, all this zeal about the emancipation and the improvement of Greece? Why this enthusiasm to build up, on that particular spot, a free and prosperous State? It is conceded, that the attempt to restore the Greeks to their ancient ascendancy in the world, would be the idlest dream of classical fanaticism. Why then attempt to do anything with them? To these questions, which probably express the feelings even now of a majority of men, on the subject of Grecian affairs, we shall return a brief answer.

We desire, hope, and attempt to promote the improvement of Greece, because a combination of circumstances exists on her soil, which is necessary for the foundation of a free State; and without which such a State cannot be founded. We doubt not there is a soil more fertile in the Sandwich Islands and Australasia. There too is sandal wood, and the bread-fruit, and a tropical climate. There are delightful spots on the shores of the sea of Azof, and beyond the Caspian; and we doubt not a fine territory for a settlement might be selected in the interior of Brazil, without encroaching on Dr. Francia. But this is not enough to create the foundation of a State. There must be a strong moral principle animating the population already existing on the chosen spot, or attracting to it an oppressed and persecuted people looking out, like the fathers of America, for a new abode. Such a principle exists in Greece. The renown of its inhabitants in ancient times enters largely into that principle, though not exclusively. It is not that the Greeks for themselves, or their friends for them, expect to revive the glories of Miltiades and Plato, but the consciousness of treading the very spots, which were trod by these men and their countrymen, and the actual survey of the shores, the mountains, and the rivers immortalized in their writings, or by their exploits:—the aspect of the beautiful ruins of the wonderful fabrics of their fathers; the substantial identity of their language with the language of classic Greece; the re-action upon themselves of the enthusiasm of the world around them,—all these constitute a moral principle adequate with other influences to form a bond of union to a people.

What in the name of Heaven, brought our fathers to New England; protected and preserved them here, and built them up into the prosperous commonwealth, of which we are citizens? Was it the inviting aspect of our coast, frowning with its black and inhospitable rocks, except as they were covered deep with wintry glaciers and overhanging snows? Was it the tempting expanse of pine woods; or the weary waste of intervening seas? Was it honor, adventure, or wealth, that attracted the pilgrims? No, but in the utter failure of all the mere natural temptations; in a destitution, like that of the tomb, of all the lights and comforts of mere worldly existence, there was a moral principle at the foundation of the enterprise, which piloted the forlorn hope of our fathers across the Atlantic.

It is this principle, which has given vitality to the

cause of Greece at home and abroad: at home, in the hearts of her children; and abroad, in the hearts of her friends. This supported her population under the iron mace of the Turkish despotism; and cheered her friends under the sneers and evil auguries of those statesmen, who draw their rules of policy exclusively from the head. Operating in both these ways, it was the indomitable force, with which the war of opinion was carried on and brought to its successful issue in their favor. How few years have passed, since it was currently believed and proclaimed, that the cause of Greece was desperate; that she was already sacrificed and lost! Such was perhaps the general opinion, at the time when the armies of Egypt were raging unopposed through the Morea, the Turkish fleet encircled its coasts, and her wretched inhabitants had no allies, but her enthusiastic friends in Europe and America. In two years, that fleet was annihilated by the squadrons of three great rival powers, which never before all coalesced for one object; those armies, like a congregation of felons, were quietly deported to the banks of the Nile from whence they came; and to this day, and after all the developments, which time and the explanations of Minister and parliamentary inquiries have thrown upon the subject, there is no intelligible solution of the mysterious manner, in which the interference of the allies was begun, pursued, and accomplished, but that which ascribes it to the irresistible agency of the public opinion of the world. That public opinion had its chief foundation in the historical associations of Greece.

God forbid that we should count for nothing the spectacle of a Christian people struggling for liberty, independent of any associations with olden time. Nor do we say, that there is no other natural source of the moral principle, on which a nation is to be reared up. We say only, that the national descent of the Greeks is such a principle. It has sufficient energy for the purpose; that energy has been evinced, and warrants us to look forward, as we do, to the perfecting of the work, which has already so auspiciously begun.

Education will be one of the most efficient agents of its farther promotion. The good which will be effected by spreading the means of education in Greece, is inestimable. There is no moral calculus, by which it can be estimated. A village school on one of the islands; a spelling-book in the recesses of Arcadia; the labors of one judicious teacher in the most humble corner of this field, at the present juncture of the fate of Greece,—taking her affairs at this tide, which is now rolling in, swelling up, and leading her on to civilization, liberty, and long lost arts,—may be the instrument of working out greater good than can be set forth or conceived. The names of the learned Greeks are embalmed in history who fled from their country on the capture of Constantinople, and brought the philosophy and literature of their forefathers into Italy. A like renown awaits the benevolent and pious men, who shall take the lead in carrying back to Greece the improvements of Western Europe and America.

*Reform in England* is the next article—written before the decision on the bill was known here. It is a sequel to the article in the July number, which excited so much attention on both sides of the Atlantic; and its speculations—which proceed on the assumption that the bill would pass—will be read with even added interest, now that after having been rejected, the same measure substantially is again to be passed upon. The conclusions of the writer—and they are stated with great force—are, that a reformed House of Commons elected after an appeal by the King to the people, "for the purpose of ascertaining their sense" upon the question, must produce essential alterations in the British constitution.—These are topics, however, which, in these notices, we generally seek to avoid—though it is justly enough contended in this case, that the question of Reform in England, is so far an American question, as that our greatest commercial connexions being with that nation, we are deeply interested in all that touches her welfare, and the stability of her institutions. The effect upon our own prosperity, of political commotions in those states of Europe with which we have most intercourse, cannot be more strikingly illustrated than by the fact, now for the first time prominently brought to our notice in this article of the Review,—that owing to the sense of insecurity produced by the Revolution of July in

Paris, "the export of our cotton to France, which in the year ending Sept. 1830, was two hundred thousand, seven hundred and ninety-one bales," sunk in the year ending Sept. 1831, to one hundred twenty-seven thousand, seventy-nine bales, a decline of one-third." How much more calamitous to us would be a state of commotion and civil discord in England?

Pass we to a gentler theme, *The Defence of Poetry*, in which, after introducing us to Sir Philip Sydney, his "Arcadia," and his "Defence of Poetry," the Reviewer descants upon the influence of natural scenery and climate upon the character of poetical composition, with particular reference to the scenery of our own happy and beautiful land, and thus in conclusion exhorts our native poets to sing of national objects, and in a national strain.

We repeat, then, that we wish our native poets would give a more national character to their writings. In order to effect this they have only to write more naturally, to write from their own feelings and impressions, from the influence of what they see around them, and not from any preconceived notions of what poetry ought to be, caught by reading many books, and imitating many models. This is peculiarly true in descriptions of natural scenery. In these, let us have no more sky-larks and nightingales. For us they only warble in books. A painter might as well introduce an elephant or a rhinoceros into a New England landscape. We would not restrict our poets in the choice of their subjects, or the scenes of of their story; but when they sing under an American sky, and describe a native landscape, let the description be graphic, as if it had been seen and not imagined. We wish too, to see the figures and imagery of poetry a little more characteristic, as if drawn from nature, and not from books. Of this we have constantly recurring examples in the language of our North American Indians. Our readers will all recollect the last words of Pushmataha, the Choctaw Chief, who died at Washington in the year 1824. 'I shali die, but you will return to your brethren. As you go along the paths, you will see the flowers, and hear the birds; but Pushmataha will see them and hear them no more. When you come to your home, they will ask you, where is Pushmataha? and you will say to them, He is no more. They will hear the tidings like the sound of the fall of a mighty oak in the stillness of the wood.' More attention on the part of our writers, to these particulars, would give a new and delightful expression to the face of our poetry. But the difficulty is, that instead of coming forward as bold, original thinkers, they have imbibed the degenerate spirit of modern English poetry. They have hitherto been imitators either of decidedly bad, or of, at best, very indifferent models. It has been the fashion to write strong lines,—to aim at point and antithesis. This has made writers turgid and extravagant. Instead of ideas, they give us merely the signs of ideas. They erect a great bridge of words pompous and imposing, where there is hardly a drop of thought to trickle beneath. Is not he, who apostrophizes the clouds, 'Ye posters of the wakeless air!'—quite as extravagant as the Spanish poet, who calls a star, a 'burning doubloon of the celestial bank?' *Doblon ardiente del celeste banco*!

The spirit of imitation has spread far and wide. But a few years ago, what an aping of Lord Byron exhibited itself throughout the country! It was not an imitation of the brighter characteristics of his intellect, but a mimicry of his sullen misanthropy and irreligious gloom. We do not wish to make a bugbear of Lord Byron's name, nor figuratively to disturb his bones; still we cannot but express our belief, that no writer has done half so much to corrupt the literary taste as well as the moral principle of our country, as the author of Childe Harold. Minds that could not understand his beauties, could imitate his great and glaring defects. Sou's that could not fathom his depths, could grasp the straw and bubbles that floated upon the agitated surface, until at length every city, town and village had its little Byron, its self-tormenting scoffer at morality, its gloomy misanthropist in song. Happily, this noxious influence has been in some measure checked and counteracted by the writings of Wordsworth, whose pure and gentle philosophy has been gradually gaining the ascendancy over the bold and visionary speculations of an unhealthy imagination. The sobriety, and, if we may use the expression, the republican simplicity of his poetry, are in unison with our moral and political doctrines. But even Wordsworth, with