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THE ATLANTIC CABLE.

BEFORE this issue of our paper is in the hands of our readers they will have become familiar with the fact that the Atlantic Cable is at length successfully laid. Still we cannot forbear congratulating them upon the accomplishment of this wonderful achievement—in some respects the greatest which man, in his restless energy, ever attempted. The hidden depths of the Atlantic are now the highway of speech, swift as thought, between the Old World and the New. Let us hope that the pulsations of that mysterious cord which forms the bond of union will ever breathe peace and good will among the nations. We, like others, look upon it as a happy omen that one of the first messages which came through the cable, when laid, was the announcement of a treaty of peace between Austria and Prussia.

THE GARDENS OF THE HESPERIDES.

ANCIENT and modern literature are filled with allusions to these famous Gardens, yet few are acquainted with their real history, beyond the little respecting them that is learned at school, or what is to be found in any classical dictionary. But there is scarcely a doubt, that they were a reality, and not the mere invention of mythology and fable. Indeed, we are not acquainted with any subject of classical enquiry more interesting than these celebrated and romantic gardens, or garden rather, of which so many authors have written in prose and verse. Mythology informs us that the Hesperides were three or more nymphs, the daughters of Hesperus, who were appointed to guard the golden apples which Juno gave to Jupiter on the day of their nuptials; that they dwelt in an inaccessible garden filled with the most delicious fruits, and that one of the labours of Hercules was to obtain some of the apples of the Hesperides. So much for fiction; but the existence of these gardens is shown on more reliable authority than Heathen mythology. On one point all writers agree, namely, that they were situated in Africa; some placing them on the slopes of Mount Atlas; some describing them as one of the oases or verdant islands of luxuriant vegetation which are to be found in the African deserts; but the more generally received opinion has been that they were situated near the city of Hesperis or Berenice in Cyrenaica, a country of Africa, and afterwards a dependency of Egypt under the Ptolemies.

We have been led to this subject by the perusal of a manuscript, placed in our hands by a friend of its author, now deceased. It is the journal of a British officer who had accompanied his regiment to several parts of the world, and who had a strong literary turn. His chief study, however, seems to have been

archæology; and having been quartered at Gibraltar about thirty years ago, he determined to visit the ruins of Berenice, having in view his favourite pursuit. He accordingly took passage for Tripoli, and thence to Bengazi, a wretched Arab town or village, which now partly covers the space upon which Berenice or Hesperis once stood. The beautiful plain which surrounded it still remains, but of the city itself nothing is to be seen above ground; but extensive remains of buildings still exist, at a depth of a few feet from the surface of the plain. All that was above, and much that was below, has been used by the Arabs in the erection of their houses for many ages; and great is the grief and disgust of our journalist for the sacrilege and mischief thereby perpetrated. Many a noble frieze and cornice, he laments, and many an elegant capital has disappeared under the destroying hands of these tasteless barbarians, who must needs deface the materials which they do not know how to appreciate, before using them in the construction of their own wretched domiciles. We think, on the whole, our author is rather too bitter in his anathemas against his Ishmaelite foes. Their ignorance is as much their misfortune as their fault. He owes them something for having, as we understand him, received from one of their Sheiks the following striking Arabian fable, in which the changes which time may be supposed to effect in the character and appearance of a country, are graphically expressed:

"I passed by a very large and populous city, and enquired of one of its inhabitants by whom it was founded. Oh, replied the man, this is a very ancient city! we have no idea how long it may have been in existence; and our ancestors were on this point as ignorant as ourselves. On visiting the same place five hundred years afterwards, I could not perceive a single trace of the city; and asked a countryman whom I saw cutting clover, where it stood and how long it had been destroyed. What nonsense are you asking me? said the person whom I addressed; these lands have never been any otherwise than you now see them. Why, returned I, was there not formerly here a magnificent and populous city? We have never seen one, replied the man, and our fathers have never mentioned to us anything of the kind. Five hundred years afterwards, as I passed by the spot, I found that the sea had covered it; and perceiving on the bank a party of fishermen, I asked them how long it had been overflowed. It is strange, answered they, that you should ask us such a question as this, for the place has been at all times exactly as it is now. What, said I, was there not dry land in this spot where the sea is at present? Certainly not, that we know of, answered the fishermen, and we never heard our fathers speak of any such circumstance. Again I passed by the place, after a similar lapse of time: the sea had disappeared, and I enquired of a man whom I met, at what period this change had taken place. He made me the same answer as the others had done before; and, at length, on returning after a lapse of another five hundred years, I found that it was occupied by a flourishing city, more populous and more rich in magnificent buildings than that which I had formerly seen. When I enquired of its inhabitants concerning its origin, I was told that it lost itself in the darkness of antiquity. We have not the least idea, they said, when it was founded, and our forefathers knew no more of its origin than ourselves."

It is not a little strange, that the journal, in another place, gives, almost word for word, an anecdote, the incident related in which Lady Duff Gordon, in her late work on Egypt, declares

to have occurred within her own knowledge, at a recent period. The human intellect seems stereotyped in the East.

We will not attempt to follow our military archæologist through his long and learned discussion in support of his views concerning the locality, character and history of the Gardens of the Hesperides. His chief authority is the Geographer and Mathematician, Scylax, who, living in the age of Darius, the son of Hyatarpes, about five centuries and a half before the Christian era, describes them with the minuteness of an eye-witness; Hesiod, Apollidorus, Daodorus, Quintilian, Apollonius, Virgil, Ovid, Statius, Philostratus, Pliny, and many other poets, and sages, far too learned and awful for ourselves and our readers, are quoted at much length. The truth is, that our departed friend was somewhat of a pedant. It is sufficient for our purpose to say, that he fully satisfied himself that the objects of his search had their site in the neighbourhood of the ancient Berenice and the modern Bengazi. He found in the plain a large number of natural pits or chasms, of several hundred feet in extent, surrounded on all sides by perpendicular walls of solid rock, rising often to the height of seventy to a hundred feet, the bottom containing soil of the richest quality, and used by the Greeks and Arabs as gardens and orchards in which the fruits and flowers of the country grow in luxurious splendour. The resemblance to the Gardens of the Hesperides is perfect, but there is none of those now existing equal in extent to those which contained the golden apples, and which Scylax declares to have been about the fifth of a mile across; but there may be such places on the plain, though not discovered by our traveller, and several of considerable dimensions are now filled with water. In other respects, the similarity is remarkable; the modern, like the ancient gardens, being "thickly filled with fruit-trees and apparently inaccessible from without." The geographical features also coincide in every point. The journalist made another discovery; nothing less than the veritable *locus in quo* of the renowned Lethe. On again referring to his school recollections or the Dictionary, the reader will find that the Lethe, or river of Oblivion, was one of the rivers of Tartarus, whose waters the souls of the dead drank, after a certain probation, and which caused them to forget all the incidents of the past, as if such things had never been. We wonder if they forgot their creditors who certainly did not always forget them? The less poetical of the ancient writers, however, inform us that Lethe is a river of Africa, which runs under the ground, and at some distance reappears above the surface; which circumstance gave birth to the fiction just mentioned. The author of the journal having been told that there was a subterranean stream near Bengazi, visited the spot, which turned out to be an immense cave at the depth of about eighty feet below the level of the plain, containing a large body of water which was reported to run far into the bowels of the earth; but from the jealousy or whim of the Turkish authorities, he was not permitted to penetrate it. But he learned that the course of the stream had been followed in boats to a considerable distance from the mouth of the cave, and the depth of the water was found to be as much as thirty feet. As we have said, we shall not trouble our readers with the erudite arguments on these two subjects which fill many pages of the journal, but shall be content, if what we have extracted from it will enable them to form some conception of the sober facts, out of which poetry and fable have created two of the most celebrated romances of ancient literature.