

A PERICLESIAN RETROSPECT.



PERICLES is no longer a denizen of this world. This is one of the few moss-grown facts upon which the amiable race of chroniclers have agreed not to disagree, consequently, the mournful intelligence wasted to us through the long vista of centuries that have passed since the "Golden Age" of Greece, is in every respect worthy of implicit belief.

Pericles died—became a cherub—and was "gathered to his fathers," in the year B. C. 428. Notwithstanding the remoteness of the event, and the pianissimo influence of time in subduing our emotions, we naturally feel chagrined at being forced to concentrate our crocodile-ic pathos in the usual exponent of grief—an extensive Sahara like *mouchoir*—an expedient to which the American humorist had recourse while viewing the grave of his "revered parent," Adam, in the far-distant East.

Uncomplimentary, as it may seem to the memory of the brilliant Athenian, it is indisputably true, that the catastrophe extinguishing one of the brightest stars that ever rose above the Greek horizon, in no wise disarranged the machinery of the universe, nor (thanks, perhaps, to the scarcity of Joshuas) caused the sun of progression to "stand still."

Let us close our Israelitish eyes to the charms of the "golden-bovine," our ears to the aggressive sounds of modern civilization, and, deaf to the jangle of confused noises issuing from this great nineteenth century "work-shop" of a world—fly on the wings of fancy to Greece—the land of music and poetry, and the home of Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Anaxagoras and a host of other illustrious men. We will enter Athens at twilight, the hour best adapted to dreaming, and rest our practical selves on the rock of the Acropolis, in the shadow of the Pantheon. The pediments of the superb statue of Pallas Athene ornamenting the Pantheon, and supposed to be the chef-d'oeuvre of the immortal Phidias, are among the treasures of the British Museum, a fact eloquent of

the development of the national organ of acquisitiveness. It would not be a matter of much surprise, if, sometime in the future, an enterprising antiquarian were to unearth the core of that dramatic apple of Arcadian renown, whereby hung no less a tale than "Paradisé Lost." We will suppose the heat and tumult of the day over, and everything wrapped in that peaceful quiet peculiar to the hour when—"Day, like a Pilgrim reaches the western gate of heaven, and Evening stoops down to loosen the latches of his silver shoon."

How beautiful the city looks bathed in the soft colors of the glorious sunset! Now that the un-pharisaical sun no longer brings the ravages of time and weather into conspicuous prominence, the Corinthian facades of the houses look almost beautiful in the fading light. The streets are comparatively deserted, save by occasional groups of laughing children. The men are gathered picturesquely about the Doric columns of the Portico, listening enraptured to their beloved Socrates, while the women sit in the low door-ways chatting or hushing their children with some softly murmured Homeric, Sapphic or Pindaric fragment. The modern lullaby had not yet broken upon the ear of profundity—saturated infancy, and one cannot fancy the metaphysical eye-lids of Grecian baby-hood condescending to close to anything less than an epic set to slow music. Imagine "Young America" sauntering into dream land to the strains of Goethe's "Faust!"

It is not difficult to conceive juvenility of the Periclesian Age ignoring the usual preliminary *Ma* and *Pa*, and exercising its untrained vocal organs in an exhaustive analysis of the Eleatic, Pythagorean or Stoic philosophy. The time of Pericles stands out conspicuous among the ages of the world for the number of great men it produced.

The century before had been favored with the philosophy of Xenophanes—who founded the Eleatic school—and Pythagoras had come home from a sojourn in Egypt and Babylon impatient to astonish the Athenians—(ever ready to "hear something new") with that fantastic error—the Transmigration of Souls.