

Every one familiar with the woods, knows how easily a wild bee can be tracked to its hive in the forest. If you take four bees from a city hive, carry them to as many points of the compass within any distance that can be managed in an afternoon's drive, and then let them free, each bee will soar up into the air, and afterward shoot, as straight as an arrow, in the direction of its home, where, in due time, you will find it again. The instinct of dogs and horses, in finding their way back to their kennels and stables, when their owners, though endowed with reason, are hopelessly lost, has been proved by too many well authenticated instances to be doubted. The observation of instinct would be a pleasing and instructive recreation; and it is surprising that more persons do not devote their attention to it. To those living in the country the opportunities are so frequent, that the neglect of them seems little short of crime. A man is always better for being brought into sympathy with the brute creation. The study of the habits of animals and birds enlarges the heart and gives breadth to the intellect, as well as stores the memory with a vast variety of curious and instructive facts. Audubon was as single hearted and reverent as he was wise and entertaining.—*Phil. Ledger.*

## VIII. Papers on Classical Subjects.

### 1. THE PICTURESQUE USAGES OF THE ANCIENT GREEKS.

#### GAMES AND FESTIVALS.

Among all the features, which distinguish the institutions of antiquity, there is none which takes a more prominent place than flowers and the boughs of trees, a fact which evinces an admiration of the products of nature far beyond that which marks the character of the Anglo-Saxon race. In their gayest games and most solemn festivals these beautiful offsprings of the earth had some prominent place assigned to them. At the Olympic Games, at which all Greece assembled, the prize of the victor was a wreath of wild olive. At the Pythian, the victor was crowned with a wreath of laurel; at the Isthmian, a garland of pine leaves was all that was awarded; and at the Nemean, a crown of olive. So slight were these rewards, and of so little real value, that, but for the great glory of winning them, they were not worth contending for. There is something, however, both poetical and picturesque in the institution of such rewards of merit. They are as far as possible removed from any idea of grossness. There is nothing low or mean attaching to them, whilst they seem to us to have a tendency to imbue the mind with a love of nature, and to influence its attachments or affections towards objects perhaps the most common, but, of all others, among the most beautiful, that have come from the hand of the Creator. Crown us with a wreath of wild olive, and we will henceforth venerate the tree that has brought us so much glory. We will survey it with the deepest affection, whilst those who are aware that it is a wreath of it that constitutes the victor's crown at the Olympic Games, will associate with it all that is honourable in the minds of men, and glorious in the annals of contending heroes.

Besides the garland of laurel, at the Pythian Games, apples, consecrated to Apollo, were given. At an earlier period than the time of which we are writing, however, garlands of palm or of beech were awarded to the victors. Some say that gold or silver was also given, but this was subsequently exchanged for the wreath. At these games both a musical and a poetical contention took place. The songs consisted of five parts, in which the contest between Apollo and the Python was supposed to be represented. The first indicated the preparation for battle; the second, the advance towards it; the third, the combat itself, and the god's own exhortation to himself to be courageous; the fourth, the insulting sarcasms of the god over the vanquished Python; and fifth, the hiss of the dying serpent. Others have given a somewhat different division to the parts of this song, and have even made Apollo dance with joy at the close of his victory. But whether the god so far forgot his immortality as to descend to such a weak exhibition of himself on the occasion of his triumph, we will not venture to decide. All that we wish to show is, the natural connexion which song and poetry take with the garlands of flowers and wreaths of laurel and myrtle. In the Greek mind they seem to have been intimately blended. The one seldom appears without the other, and the connexion seems not only to be natural, but beautiful; and to heighten the picturesque, which so eminently distinguishes many of the institutions of the ancient Greeks.

With the mythological origin of these public games the picturesque is also closely associated. The Olympic are instituted to commemorate the victory of Jupiter over the giants, and he himself is represented at Olympia with a crown like olive branches, his mantle covered with flowers, especially the lily, and an eagle perched on the top of the sceptre of cypress which he holds in his hand. The Pythian are celebrated in honour of Apollo, for having overcome the serpent. The Nemean, in memory of the death of Opheltes, which was the

prelude to all the misfortunes which befel the Theban champions; or, perhaps, rather to commemorate the victory of Hercules over the Nemean lion; and the Isthmian, in honour of Melicertes, who, with Ino, threw himself into the sea, and was rescued by Neptune, and enrolled among his divinities. In all these events we discover the poetical invention of the classic Greek mind. They all belong to the extraordinary or lofty ideal, meriting commemoration from the great events they are supposed to recall, and inspiring with a love of glory those who would enter their lists to contend for the prizes, so valueless in themselves, which they hold forth as the reward of the victors. The exercises practised in these games, however, seem to us scarcely equal to the importance with which they were invested. They were leaping, running, throwing, boxing, wrestling, and horse and chariot racing. These were the physical exercises, and they are wonderfully at variance with the lofty conceptions which the very name of the Olympic Games is apt to suggest, when seen through the retrospective vista of years which have elapsed since they were in the palmy days of their celebration. With us, all these exercises hold, if not an indifferent, a very subordinate rank in public estimation. Our successful champions in the pugilistic ring do not receive a niche of immortality in the historic temple of fame. We erect no statues to them in an Olympian wood, consecrated to Jupiter. No walls are demolished to allow them to re-enter their native city amid the deafening acclamations of the people, after a *mill* in which broken ribs and black eyes have been the most striking evidences of its grandeur. They may return as victors; but alas! they are only known as Tom Cribb, Jack Lanigan, or by some name which may be supposed to indicate the more prominent qualities by which their style of fighting is characterized. But let us not compare the public exercises of the Greeks with those of the Saxon, lest Jupiter frown and Britain smile at the actual resemblance that is between them. We may observe, however, that it is not our habit to invest any pleasurable exercises with an important character. We do not erect it into a solemnity in which either great honour or glory is to be obtained, should the prize contended for be won. Not so the Greeks. They began and ended their games with a sacrifice; and they who obtained the victory, especially in the Olympic, were universally honoured. At Sparta, they were assigned a post in the army near the person of the King. In some cities they were not only presented with rewards, but had the first places at all games and shows, and were maintained at the public charge. If any one was conqueror in all the exercises, he was considered superior to mortals, and his actions were recognised as wonders. Nor were these all the honours and privileges which it brought them. By the laws of Solon, one hundred drachms were allowed from the public treasury to every Athenian who obtained a prize in the Isthmian Games; and five hundred to the victor in the Olympic. Subsequently, these were maintained in the Prytaneum, so that no pecuniary reward, however great, could equal that of the simple olive or the laurel crown contended for at the Olympic Games of ancient Greece.

From the celebration of the Games it is but a step to that of the Greek Festivals, and here these stand alone in originality of invention and gaiety of solemnization. They may be regarded as marvels of the picturesque in the usages of an ancient people; but in some of them there is much to revolt, whilst there is a good deal to admire. In many the fruits of the earth, and the olive and the laurel, have their due prominence. Of all the other Grecian cities we will select Athens for the celebration of its festivals. Here the Panathenaea, first instituted by Erichthonius, and afterwards revived by Theseus, were solemnized with great magnificence; the lesser every third, and the greater every fifth year. In the former were three games, managed by ten presidents, elected from the ten tribes of Athens, and to hold their office during four years. On the first day was a race with torches, in which both footmen and horsemen contended. On the second, was a gymnastic exercise; and on the third, a musical contention, instituted by Pericles. This might have been adopted from a practice at the Pythian Games, at which poets and the votaries of the fine arts generally contended. Be this as it may, however, the subject proposed at the Panathenaea, by Pericles, was the eulogium of Harmodius, Aristogiton, and Thersibulus, who had rescued the republic from the yoke of the tyrants by whom it was oppressed. Besides these, there was a sham sea-fight. The victors in these games were rewarded with a vessel of oil and a crown of olives, which grew in the Academy. There was, likewise, a dance called Pyrrhichia, performed by boys in armour, who represented, to the sound of the flute, the battle of Minerva with the Titans. At these games no man was permitted to be present in dyed garments, under a penalty to be imposed by the president of the games. Lastly, a sumptuous sacrifice was offered, to which every Athenian borough contributed an ox, and of the flesh that remained a public entertainment was made to the whole assembly. The greater festival was similarly celebrated, but marked by greater splendour and magnificence. In addition to all that entered into the rites of the lesser, there was a procession, in which the sacred garment of Minerva was carried. This vesture was woven by a select number of virgins, and had described upon it the