

THE HOMERIC AGE.

The tired way-farer of to-day sometimes imagines a golden past, and fondly recalls the fifth act of a drama whose scenery was the heavens and earth, and the actors illustrious mortals. Some think of those far-distant days as mysterious hieroglyphics, strange and unaccountable; others as dreamy marvels and fable-given. But let him who can, turn aside, and give his hours to that land of strong men and iron character, now known only in story,—to that elegant people and marble splendor of the city of wisdom,—to those Grecian skies where modern beauty-lovers resort,—and the old Greek isles where incense perpetually smoked on alters consecrated to the heavenly synod. To such as care to turn away from the bustling now, and seek the retired then, there are cool retreats, and refreshing waters, where heated energies may calm, and thirsty lips moisten. Also, profit and treasures of intellectual wealth, and rich examples are found to help and fertilize the mind.—But the multitude are not thus influenced. Drawn on by the great human tide, they look beyond, but never behind. For them there are no pleasures in remote days, when epic song drew infant breath, and romance had reign over the Greek heart. With such the cry is—no toil for daily bread, and care not for the old theories, the sweat of Olympic sports, the tales of Spartan Leonidas, the talk of colloquial Plato, and polished atticisms—or whether the theatre had green curtains, and how many Atheniums were on the street corners,—we think of to-day, and look up to-morrow. This prevails with not a few intelligent, but practical men.

There were no modern doctrines and improvements in that spring-time of intellectual glory, nor the thousand-and-one inventions of an ingenious age. No Manchester thrived on the water-courses of the green valleys, or by the great cities, with myriad looms and busy shuttles working for the million. But we read of those who wove the sea-purple threads of wool all the day, and prepared the vesture. Nor were there heard the shrill notes of steam amid hills, and around the temples—but had not Greece her Calliope? We know not that dinners were served in the nabob style of modern fashion-lovers, but dinner was as indispensable to ancient as to latter-day stomachs. Quite minutely are we informed as to the nature of the feast and the dishes. Boiled goose, served up in sauce, satisfied the keen appetite of

the old epicureans, and why not our turkey-lovers? Pickled livers, with a potage of pigeons, delighted Theban gourmards—and why not modern clubs? We are not informed as to whether pumpkin pies served as desert, but roasted poppy seed, mixed with a hock of pork baked in honey, was a common dish. The land of song had no Deake or Raleigh, instrumental in polluting the pure atmosphere and classic promenades with fumerous mouths,—nor were the public enlightened on “the confessions of an opium-eater,”—so that we presume the entertainment did not conclude with those unwise, sense-gratifying pleasures of latter-day civilization. Those Greeks were not puny and sallow, but given to a healthy vigor, and generous circulation of blood. Perhaps the Greek idea of a public dinner was not Americanized. At any rate, it is improbable that on the following day, the newspapers announced that “the tables literally groaned with the delicacies of the season”—for where were Faust and Hoe at that period?

While winter keeps the fashion-devotees and voluptuaries of the present age in “brown stone front” and marble houses, the summer heat bears them to sea-shore resorts, and far away to the green valleys and picturesque scenery of a mountain home. But the Greek mammomites had summer vacations, and watering places, and quiet seats, remote from dusty streets and undisturbed by the hum of crowded cities. There was no sea-washed Newport, or healing Saratoga, or Baden, in the category of Theban and Athenian pleasure rolls, but there were cool groves, and famous walks, and inspiring scenery, and isles of the deep, to while away estual hours. Where the blue Egean laved the shore, a princely Newport had the ocean-breeze, and the smooth beach. Healing waters—waters of forgetfulness and inspiration—gushed forth from Parnassian heights; and on adjacent hills and groves were the villas where tired throngs resorted.

The Greek theology was a harmonious faith. One church code satisfied the heart, and Jesus was the spiritual Bishop. No unhealthy qualms of conscience, or stinging remorse over an unregenerate heart, soured the temper, or brought on hypochondria. The age was not blessed with divinity schools and orthodox quills to lay bare Polytheism, and expose the pseudo-tenets of the Jovine disciples.—The heavens and the earth were their

testaments. The thunder was the voice of their Great Father; and earth had mansions on mountain-tops and caverns in the deeps, where his activities dwelt, and obeyed his nod. Whether that graft upon the old tree of evil, which has now blossomed in its youth—that last work of the Parent of Darkness—entered “the land of genius and of lovely women,” and invisible hands rapped on tables, and chairs danced, the historians of the age have not informed us. Nevertheless, the manes sometimes made a flying visit to the abodes of men, and held colloquies. Had ingenuity been as largely developed in the Greek brain as in Yankeeedom, there might have been Salem tribunals, and worse than “scarlet-letter” penalties enforced.

While we know not futurity, and can only move forward by a gradual march, it is possible to return to other days, and view the ancient world. The distant in-time throws off its vagueness, and the old marvels, myths and wonders of the past mingle with the present. We are indeed remote from the days of Homer. But through the gates of poetry and history we may visit them, still fresh and vivid to the inner eye. We are ushered into the age of mythic glory, free thought, fertile conceit,—an age of heroism and sensualistic beauty.

WINTER SCENES.

The following from the Chicago Journal is worthy of being placed beside the winter sketches of Jacob Abbott and N. P. Willis:

That old red sleigh, with its long box that never was full, for down in the straw, wrapped in the robes, or on one or another of the four seats it contained, there was always room for one more. What a group of bright young faces there used to be in it! Faces in hoods, in caps, and in blankets; hearts that have loved since; hearts that have broken; hearts that have mouldered. And away we went over the hill, and through the vale, under the moonlight, and under the cloud; when the stars were looking down; when the sun kindled the world into a great white jewel; but those days have gone forever away, and the sweet old necklace of bells, big in the middle of the string, and growing small by degrees, has lost its power over the pulses.

In that old sleigh, brides have gone away before now—those that were married to manhood, those that were “mar-