

ning, a middle, and an end—as a syllogism—the Italian form is best fitted into two parts, of eight and six lines each. Milton, however, flows over from the first to the second portion of his metre, with the object of “giving that pervading sense of intense unity in which the excellence of the sonnet has always seemed to me mainly to exist. Instead of looking at this composition as a piece of architecture, making a whole out of three parts, I have been much in the habit of preferring the image of an orbicular body—a sphere or a dew-drop.” A little further in the same letter Wordsworth says of the Italian construction of the sonnet, “Russell’s upon ‘Philoctetes’ is a fine specimen: the first eight lines give the hardship of the case, the last six the consolation, or the *per contra*.”

The sonnet in question is entitled

SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN AT LEMNOS.

On this lone isle, whose rugged rocks affright
The cautious pilot, ten revolving years
Great Pæan’s son, unwonted erst to tears,
Wept o’er his wound: alike each rolling light
Of heaven he watched, and blamed its lingering flight;
By day the sea-mew screaming round his cave
Drove slumber from his eyes; the chiding wave
And savage howlings chased his dreams by night.
Hope still was his: in each low breeze that sighed
Through his rude grot he heard a coming ear,
In each white cloud a coming sail he spied;
Nor seldom listened to the fancied roar
Of Oeta’s torments, or the hoarser tide
That parts famed Trachis from the Kuboic shore.

The story of Philoctetes is too well known to repeat. It was the subject of a drama by Sophocles, and of a statue by Pythagoras. The latter was said to have been so expressive of pain as to move the spectators to tears. In the Berlin Museum is an exquisite gem, supposed to be a copy of the famous statue at Syracuse. “Troy cannot fall without his arrows” was the reason Ulysses and Neoptolemus took him from Lemnos by artifice.

The author of this sonnet, Thomas Russell, like many other young authors of his day, was regarded and hailed as a poetic genius of the highest rank. The fate of Alexander Smith has overtaken him, and will overtake more to come. The remarks of S. T. Coleridge on Poetic Promise can well be noted in this regard: “In the present age it is next to impossible to predict from specimens, however favourable, that a young man will turn out a great poet, or rather a poet at all. Poetic taste, dexterity in composition, and ingenious imitation often produce poems that are very promising in appearance. But genius, or the power of doing something new, is another thing.”

Russell was twenty-six years old when he died—either from consumption or a broken heart, or both. Southey called him “the best English sonnet-writer,” and Landor was extravagant in his praise. His sonnets, with few exceptions, are not known, except to specialists. That quoted above is certainly his best, and cannot be omitted from any proper collection, whatever may happen to the others. Henry Francis Cary wrote that the whole of it was exquisite, and Anna Seward called it “a fine and truly Miltonic sonnet.”

It is one of the examples that Mr. Theodore Watt could select in support of his wave theory—the octave and sestet being splendidly opposed, in which respect it is certainly not Miltonic; but the happy use of proper names in the final lines gives it that title, as Cary pointed out.

So far as our limited knowledge of sonnet literature permits a remark, no writer seems to have selected Euripides as the subject of memory; and it may also be remarked that American writers have seldom dealt with Greek subjects at all. Rome, Venus, and Egypt seem to be more in their line of poetic travel, so far as antiquity is concerned. Probably there are some hidden away in old magazines.

The next sonnet we select forces us to skip a couple of centuries in Greek chronology, and brings us to bucolic Bion, who has been preferred by some critics to Theocritus as a pastoral poet, and to his friend and mourner, Moschus. It is to the Idyllium of the latter poet on the death of Bion that Mr. Lang refers in his sonnet, and that we are indebted for all that is known of the poet.

BION.

The wail of Moschus on the mountains crying,
The Muses heard, and loved it long ago;
They heard the hollows of the hills replying,
They heard the weeping water’s overflow;
They winged the sacred strain—the song undying,
The song that all about the world must go—
When poets for a poet dead are sighing,
The minstrels for a minstrel friend laid low,
And dirge to dirge that answers, and the weeping
For Adonais by the summer sea,
The plaints for Lycidas, and Thyrsis (sleeping
Far from “the forest ground called Thessaly”)
These hold thy memory, Bion, in their keeping,
And are but echoes of the moan for thee.

The beauty of this sonnet is apparent, and the di-syllabic rhymes are peculiarly fitted to this elegiac strain. Its simplicity recalls the sweet plaint of Moschus, and the allusions to later dirges are felicitous. The charm of it is enhanced because (in the words of Moschus himself) “’tis our hard lot to hear dull bards grate out their harsh sonnets, flashy, rude, and vain.” If the Sicilian Muse still exists, she must certainly rejoice in Mr. Lang’s sonnet.

SAREPTA.

WHAT shall I give? To the hungry, give food; to the naked, clothes; to the sick, some comfort; to the sad, a word of consolation; to all you meet, a smile and a cheery greeting. Give forgiveness to your enemies; give patience to the fretful; give love to your households; and, above all, give your heart to God.

PARISIAN LITERARY NOTES.

“L’EDUCATION ATHÉNIENNE.” By Paul Girard (Hachette). This volume treats of education in Athens during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., that is, covers the most brilliant eras of Greece, the periods when she won her most renowned victories, and when her most celebrated philosophers, painters and sculptors flourished. Respecting physical education, the Greeks did not consider that the *summum bonum* of their ideal, but only an essential element, a preparation for the *mens sana*. Intellectual education rather was the aim.

The happiness, power, and greatness of the State were the cherished ends of every Athenian; hence why the State, to develop these, stepped in to direct and to complete the education of youth. In practice, however, M. Girard observes, the State never interfered till the youth had arrived at his eighteenth year. Then it became obligatory for him to receive military instruction, to be initiated into all the customs and institutions, to be made acquainted with all those sacred things that composed country. Parents had thus the fullest liberty in the bringing up of their sons to their eighteenth year.

School-boy strikers will be delighted to hear, that Grecian lads, whether at school or exercise grounds, enjoyed the fullest latitude. All lessons were short; none partook of the home-lessons martyrdom of 1889. The scholar could study when he pleased, and as he pleased, interspersing with this freedom of study games and recreation, which relaxed his mind and varied his work. Plato and Aristotle were opposed to these paradisaical methods, but their remonstrances were unheeded. May it not be owing to the absence of this *autoritaire* pedagogy that the Grecian youth excelled in arts and letters, because not cramped and constrained?

Grecian school programmes might not quite suit modern boys; but they suggest greater elasticity in subjects, and no brain over-pressure. The aim in Greece was, not so much to learn, as to learn how to learn. No attempt was made to turn out Grecian lads encyclopaedists, Admirable Crichtons, or big gooseberries. It was the nurse first taught the Grecian youth to lisp in numbers; she taught him selected songs and told him approved tales. That was a “real” school. All games were amusing and had a useful end. At the “Grammar” School the master or “grammatist” only taught the boy the three R’s, plus an elementary study of the poets. The schools were held in the open air, under trees or under the arches of a portico. Ventilation and light were thus secured.

Plato did not like teaching poetry to youth so early; on the other hand, youth as a rule is never injured by being rocked a little in illusions. Feeding youth on positive knowledge, when its age demands only to satisfy an ideal of its own creating, is not exempt from danger. Salutary brain activity cannot be engendered in youth cabin’d, cribb’d, confin’d, by the domain of hard facts. A generation of petit utilitarians would deprive life of its last shred of poesy. After the “grammatist” succeeded the professor of the flute and the cithar—the latter becoming just now a popular instrument. Music was, in the eyes of the Greeks, for a long period the most perfect form of intellectual culture, as it ever remained one of their most delicate pleasures. Gymnastic instruction included dancing, wrestling, jumping, running, throwing the spear, etc. Lastly came drawing, philology, science and philosophy. Then the youth was taken charge of by the military professor, and drilled and disciplined to bleed at Marathons and Leuctras.

“HENRIETTE,” by François Coppée (Lenierre). The author is known by his idylls, dating from 1875, by his brief stories or *contes*, published in 1882, while the opera has “Coppelia” in its repertory. He now expands into a novelist, for “Henriette” is a simple and clean romance wherein the popular poetic qualities of the author are dominant. M. Coppée describes the humble, with natural heart touches, while imparting nobility to modest worth. “Bernard” fought well in the 1870-1 war; on the return of peace he relapsed into vice and died. His widow, young, of sculptural beauty, and stoical character, never failed in her duty as a wife, less out of love for her worthless husband than out of respect for herself.

She escaped back-biting by the coldness of her temperament, but it prevented her at the same time from fathoming the depth of Colonel de Vois’ love, who offered himself as second husband. She receives the Colonel’s addresses with reserve; she is frightened by the repulsion of her son, Armand, towards a stepfather—for mother and son are one in affection. Armand, however, falls in love with a work girl, Henriette Perrin, and his mother becomes in turn jealous of his transferred affection. Henriette is very simple, although a Parisienne, and very chaste in her passion, though lowly. But Madame Bernard cannot see in her other thing than a little grisette, without virtue as without orthography, who has stolen her son’s heart, as she will later accuse her of killing him by typhoid fever, which has carried him off. The mother marries the Colonel; and the day she goes to the altar is that, when Henriette, refuged in an hospital, hears, for the first time of Armand’s death. She writes from her deathbed a touching letter to the mother, imploring pardon for the involuntary fault of loving her son—to which her heart alone was the accomplice. Did M. Coppée write the story to give this pretty letter? Mothers, censure the author for ranking maternal love as secondary in the plot. In the gamut of true-love, which note is first?

UNE COLONIE FÉODALE EN AMÉRIQUE. By R. de Saint-Père (Plon). This is an interesting history of the

colony Acadia, discovered by Sébastien Cabot in 1497, and where the French established themselves in 1598, holding its possession till 1713, when the peace of Utrecht led to its change of name to that of Nova Scotia. It is the scene of Longfellow’s “Evangeline.” The volume first appeared in 1877, but the present edition is double in size, by the introduction of comparisons between the then and now—the colonization systems of France and England. The author “labours” to prove, that the French colonists, by their more vigorous bodies, more energetic minds, and often superior industrial habits, proved better pioneers than the Anglo-Saxon. This special pleading and undisguised *chauvinism* rather mars the interest and the effect of the work. He attributes the success of French colonization in Northern America to the adoption of the feudal, the territorial, the social and the political systems prevailing in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But these systems failed in the mother country itself. The second part of the book is devoted to the history of Nova Scotia from the period of its passing out of French into English hands, and the fruitless efforts of the French to throw off the English rule. The question of Gallic *versus* Anglo-Saxon colonization is resolved a long time since. The French can take territory, but do not colonize it; the English do both.

LES NEGRES DE L’AFRIQUE SUSEQUATORIALE. By A. Hovelacque (Lecrosnier). The author is a professor in the Anthropological School, and deals with the manners, customs and usages of the inhabitants of Senegal, Guinea, the Soudan and the Upper Nile. France is occupied with the scheme of a Trans-Saharan railway, 1,250 miles long, destined to unite the Mediterranean with the Niger, and thus open up Algeria and Tunisia to the Soudanese, who are to people these possessions; to counterbalance—strange aim—the “European foreigners and Arabs in Algeria,” etc., while utilizing the Arabs as a lien with the Soudanese, and thus prevent all invasion of Algeria by the Central Africans, etc. Another day-dream. It is Ain-Séfra, in the department of Oran, that it is contemplated to form the head of the Timbuctoo-Niger Grand Trunk. At first it will be modelled on the lines of the Trans-Caucasian railway.

In Black Africa, M. Hovelacque states that woman—as in other savage countries—is only the first of slaves, though before her marriage she enjoys every liberty. Matrimony is only a ceremony of purchase, of which the price is paid in slaves and cattle. The husband is always at liberty to send back the wife to her parents, but on condition of restoring all the property he received with her. Polygamy is general, but the collective wives constitute a happy family, for hard work leaves them no time for quarrelling. Heritage is curious; property does not descend to a man’s own children, but to his sister’s children.

Slavery is not disliked by the slaves, and three are generally allowed to each free man. The head of a family is a despot, and the political system, a kind of oligarchic republicanism, where the sovereign is elected by the manhood vote, and then reigns as a true despot. Few of the people but practise an industry—potters and smiths are most in repute. Agriculture is not ignored, and in many cases the land is cultivated in common by the village, the produce—tobacco, ground nuts, cotton, etc.—being divided, following certain rules. The inhabitants are not pastoral. Their money consists of Indian shells, gold powder, copper rings, blade iron, and the sacrifice of human victims, not unfrequent. The negro is incapable of sustaining attention, has much imagination and no lack of vanity. He acquires foreign languages rapidly; has a natural inclination to thieving and a strong weakness for begging. M. Hovelacque deliberately states that missions cannot civilize the negroes, but commerce can. They belong to an intellectual and moral development distinct from Europeans, though in other respects not inferior to the mass of Europeans.

THE SIMPLON PASS.

IT is probable that before many years railroad engineering will have successfully overcome the great natural obstacles that have hitherto prevented direct railroad communication between Western Switzerland and Italy, and the Simplon route which has long been regarded as unrivalled as a mountain carriage road, will soon be noted for the length and number of its railway tunnels.

Knowing that the magnificent scenery of Switzerland can only be seen to advantage by walking or driving, and in view of the fact that perhaps the next time I visited that part of the country the novelty and discomfort of the mountain diligence would have given place to the railway carriage, I decided to cross the Alps into Italy by this route, and on a bright sunny morning in last July I climbed to the top of the Swiss Poste, as the huge conveyance drawn by eight horses is called, and leaving the town of Brieg, and the Rhone Valley, commenced my progress towards this interesting and remarkable Alpine Pass.

It may be safely affirmed that nothing short of ocular demonstration can furnish anything like an adequate idea of the wonders presented by a trip over this route, so awful and magnificent does nature here show herself.

The ascent begins almost immediately, and soon my fellow travellers and I were wondering in which direction the road would lead, so impassable did the rocky chain in front of us appear, but, with remarkable daring, human ingenuity seems to have achieved a work which would have seemed in a remoter age an idle speculation and the road soon showed itself winding like a serpent along the edge of the precipices.