

OUR TABLE.

ION—A TRAGEDY.

AMONG the late productions in the dramatic school of literature, we have seen nothing capable of affording a higher intellectual banquet than Serjeant Talfourd's Tragedy of *Ion*. Independently of its genuine poetic merit, and of the ennobling sentiments which sparkle through the whole current of the tale, like diamonds on a groundwork of frosted gold, the drama breathes throughout a tone of high-souled and fervent patriotism, which will of itself go far to raise its author's name to an elevated niche in the temple dedicated to earth's immortals.

There is in every heart a portion of native poetry, which, catching the electric fire from the "burning words" of some child of genius, bids the whole human framework thrill with its ready echo to the deep emotion his wizard pencil pictures, and in portraying his hero's character, our author has proved that he is one of those master spirits, and his pen, searching the heart, calls into active being the latent feelings which lie slumbering there. We feel, while the tale progresses to its close, that he has struck a chord which will vibrate for ages after the hand that woke it has passed away.

The tragedy presents a spectacle than which nothing can be more truly lofty: that of *Ion*, the foundling-boy, who, dreaming not of his high lineage, wins the love of his high born guardians by ever acting as becomes one who bears the impress of "nature's own nobility," who, when at length the mystery of his birth is cleared away, and he stands forth robed in the regal purple, with a soul rich in all the attributes of a kingly race, lays his life down—a life circled by all that to common mortals renders existence blessed—power, friendship, love—and bids the treasured ones of his heart rejoice that he can so pluck from the bosom of his country the barbed arrow that rankles there.

Although the greater portion of the *Dramatis personæ* may be looked upon only as aiding in the development of the character of *Ion*, yet each is perfect in his different walk, and many of them are truly beautiful. *Adrastus*, as the pitiless tyrant, whose better nature has been lost in the disappointment of his early years, but whose heart, when not steeled by despair and pride, is yet rich in noble traits, is a splendid creation of the poet's brain. *Ctesiphon*, the son of a murdered sire, panting after vengeance, but clothing even to himself, his private wrong under the garb of the public weal, is another magnificent conception; and *Clemanthe*, all love and tenderness, though scarcely fitted for a stage heroine, is a character of no common beauty.

It was our intention to have offered some extracts from the poem, but feeling how inadequate our disposable space is to render it justice, we for the present recommend the reader to the book itself, as up-

on a careful perusal only can its beauties be fully appreciated. We, however, reserve to ourselves the right of referring to, and extracting from it on some future occasion.

THE ATHENIAN CAPTIVE.

THIS is another tragedy by Serjeant Talfourd, and is far from being unworthy of its predecessor, although falling behind it in magnificence of design. The scene is Corinth, and the principal character, *Thoas*, has been taken captive in a battle between the Athenians and Corinthians. At the request of the son of the Corinthian King, he consents to remain a slave rather than to suffer death. Instigated by the wife of his tyrant-master he slays the old King in making his escape, and returns with the Athenian army, a conqueror to Corinth. The tragedy closes with the death of *Thoas*, and of the Corinthian Queen, who is discovered to be the mother of the captive. She throws herself from a rock in an agony of remorse for having caused her kingly husband's death,—and *Thoas*, urged by shame, stabs himself in presence of the assembled court, convened to consult the oracle for the purpose of discovering the murderer of the King. The book deserves perusal, and no lover of dramatic poetry should remain without a copy of *The Athenian Captive*.

THE ANNUALS.

AS usual at this season, these splendid productions of the press are struggling for the palm—rivaling each other in the beauty of finish and design. The engravings, particularly in the English editions, are truly magnificent, but we must confess that the tales are very seldom above mediocrity. We have quoted a short sketch from "*Finden's Tableaux*," the most beautiful of these winter flowers, as a fair specimen of the matter it generally contains. "*Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book*," "*The Imperial*," "*Forget-me-Not*," &c. &c. among the English, and the "*Gift*," "*Violet*," &c. &c. among the American Annuals, are beautiful specimens of the perfection to which printing, engraving and book-binding have been brought, as well on this continent as in England. Either of them is well calculated for a New Year's gift from a gallant swain to his lady-love, or as a token of remembrance and friendship from any one who can afford to be tastefully generous, at this season of gifts and good things.

The "*Pearls of the East*," which we have seen at the extensive bookstores of Messrs. Armour & Ramsay, is a pearl indeed, being different from the other, in so far that the engravings are coloured. The amateur in, and the admirer of the fine arts, cannot better employ a leisure hour than in the examination of these beautiful illustrated books.

An immense variety of books of a less costly description, although neatly "got up," suited for "New Year's gifts," may also be had at any of the book-stores.