

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

NUMBER I.

JULY, 1851.

ARTICLE I.

DOMESTIC LITERATURE.

Tallulah and other Poems. By HENRY R. JACKSON.
Savannah, Ga. Jno. M. Cooper, Publisher, 1850.

POETRY is both the beginning and the climax of a nation's literature. It not only reduces the jargon of a half-formed language to harmony, but, when thus harmonized, adduces from it its highest and most perfect combinations. As the same spirit of God that arranged and beautified the primal chaos—separated also, from its unintelligent order, its last and highest work, man—so the genius of the poet not only combines, into a harmonious language, the rude accents of a semi-barbarous people, but exalts, so to speak, upon that language, when formed, its noblest and highest monument—the drama, or the epic.

The historical facts that prove this proposition are curious and interesting. The oldest literature in the world is the Jewish. Of that literature, Moses was (instrumentally) the father. But Moses was not only a poet, but the very prince of poets. The Song of Miriam at the Red Sea, and his Farewell to Israel on the plains of Moab, have never been surpassed. But he is the author, either by origin or translation, of the book of Job. The style, age, general character, and especially its incorporation into the Holy Scriptures, all indicate Moses as its author,

VOL. V.—No. 1.

1

And what a poem! Carlyle considers it the greatest poetical production in existence. Thus did a Divine law-giver, and a finished scholar, of olden times, cast the charms of poetry over the most venerable literature of the world.

The records of Grecian and Roman literature are even more to our purpose. The fabulous legends of Mercury, Apollo and Orpheus, all indicate that the rude language of Greece was harmonized by bards that even preceded the great Homer. However this may be, the latter carried that language to a perfection, in his immortal Iliad, that it never surpassed afterwards. The earliest writers, too, in the stately Latin, were the poets Ennius, Plautus and Terence. These formed that beautiful vehicle of thought which was afterwards to be carried to its highest perfection, by the genius of Lucan and Virgil. Nor are similar facts less noticeable in the origin and progress of modern languages. According to Talvi, one of the first, if not the very first literary production in the Russian language, was Igor's expedition against the Polovtzi, an epic poem of the twelfth century. It is a well known fact that, in Provence and Normandy, the Troubadours and Trouveurs, wandering bards, celebrating either the adventures of lovers or the feats of heroes, were among the first to elicit from barbaric confusion the elements of that beautiful tongue, the French. In Spain, too, the Life of Cid Ruy Diaz, an irregular, but spirited poem, was the first literary star that shed light upon the soft dialect of the afterwards haughty Dons of Castile and Arragon. Ciallo d'Alcamo, Guinizelli, Arrezzo and Cavalcante preceded, in Italian literature, even the more illustrious names of Dante and Petrarch. It was these last, however, that harmonized, elevated and almost canonized the modern language of this classic peninsula. In English, William Langland and Chaucer were the first architects in that splendid temple, which the genius of Milton and Shakespeare has consecrated forever.

Thus is it historically true, that poetry is at once the beginning and the climax of a nation's literature. The spirit of literature seeks this as its earliest form, and, even after passing through various changes, consecrates itself forever in poetic imagery, as its highest and holiest dwell-

ling-place. Should any be disposed to inquire into the cause of this phenomenon, the matter is perfectly plain. History, which is the record of national events; and philosophy, which is a careful inquiry into the causes and relations of things, must necessarily be slower in their developement than poetry. It is only by a long succession of national changes, and a careful collection of difficult facts, that the historian and philosopher can obtain the materials on which to proceed. The case is widely different with the poet. The settlement of new countries, the conflict of leaders, the feats of the daring, the gallantry of lovers, and, above all, nature—infinite nature—these are all materials at hand, and the imagination has only to combine and arrange them into tales or narratives, to give them thrilling and irresistible effect.

The history of American literature is somewhat at variance with the facts stated above. In our country, poetry has been neither the pioneer, nor the perfection of our writing. Theology, philosophy, eloquence, jurisprudence, and even metaphysics, have gone before it; and, even at present, it may be placed in the rear of history and romance. This fact is curious and may need an explanation. The colonists of this country differed in many respects from the early settlers of other lands. They were not a set of semi-barbarians with a rude language, but polished and refined Englishmen, bringing with them a language already in a state of the highest cultivation. Theirs was not an origination, but a transference of society. The rudeness, in this case, was all in nature; and they applied the appropriate remedy, the axe and the plough. Probably no nation that has ever existed has accomplished so much as the American people in the same length of time. They have dispossessed a race of barbarians of a magnificent soil; they have converted that soil from a wilderness into a land of fields and gardens; they have originated a great and splendid government; and they have already, from being an infant nation, rushed forward to the very head of political influence and power. Surely our's has been a land of giants and of gigantic enterprises. It was natural, under these circumstances, that a practical literature should have preceded that which is chiefly imaginative and entertaining. And such has been the case;

and, even to the present day, America is anticipating the advent of her poet—the appearance, yet future, of some illustrious bard she does not now possess.

Let us, however, not despise the poets that we have. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton, those suns of the poetic firmament, all had their morning stars; and, at the present time, there is in America quite a galaxy of poetic luminaries. Bryant, Longfellow, Emerson, Poe, Willis and Lowell are certainly names not to be despised. Nor should we overlook the fame of Mrs. Sigourney, Miss Gould, and other like minstrels of the gentler sex. And these are all things around us. They are the tickings of time's watch-wheel at the present moment—they are the manifestation of the spirit that we ourselves breathe—they indicate, certainly, a change passing over us, from the purely practical to the divinely meditative—from axe and hammer-sounds to the Æolian breathings of the lyre and the lute.

Possibly it would be well, just here, to note an imperfection, certainly a marked feature, in our forming poetry. By whatever cause, Boston has become the Parnassus of America. There the muses congregate—there poetry is published and appreciated. And we are happy to learn, too, that the firm of Ticknor, Reed and Fields, recently so acrimoniously satirized in the *Emporium*, by the author of "Parnassus in Pillory," is not in the habit of meeting the advancing bard with the copper-lip reply—"It won't sell, sir—it won't sell, sir." They have ascertained that poetry—yes, poetry—is a marketable article even in America. And the patronage which these liberal publishers have given to home genius, has encouraged and enabled a number of aspiring minds, around that city, to cultivate the friendship of the muses. Hence there is a literary halo around that pilgrim metropolis that no other city in our country enjoys. Now, the evil to which we allude is just this—that in no spot on our continent is there so strong a German influence as at and around Boston. Transcendentalism, in spirit, and latitudinarianism, in form, are manifest in the poems and literary writings of their best authors. The design of the poet should be to indicate feelings and emotions that are natural to man. And, as both good and bad men may be in extreme conditions, he may describe such emotions as swelling into storms, or

abating into the greatest imaginable composure. But, when he goes beyond these bounds and forces us across the limit of humanity—when he desires us to put off our natural impulses, and to put on a sort of spirit-robe to understand him—we confess that, like Paul, we begin to doubt whether either he or ourselves be in or out of the body! We are suspended in mid heaven by a sort of magical cobweb, and we are ready almost to question personal identity. But, for a work of this sort, you must *make* a language. Words that have been employed for ages, to express such feelings and emotions as are common to man, will not answer to convey proper ideas when you wish to express (if it be possible) feelings and emotions that are absolutely superhuman. Here, you must rear a Babel—you must roll Pelion on Ossa, or you utterly fail. And, really, it is mortifying to see how our mother English, the sainted language of Milton and Shakespeare, of Addison and Pope, is made to assume a thousand grotesque and even ridiculous aspects in the hands of such overstrained philosophical writers. Poor Carlyle—our Saxon ancestors will certainly have a hard settlement with him, for letting so many Germans into the pure temple of their classic and elegant language!

But it is time to turn to a poet of entirely different character. Henry R. Jackson, whose name stands at the head of this article, is a Georgian by birth, a native of Athens, and the son of Dr. Henry Jackson, former Professor in the University; by profession he is a lawyer, and he now fills the office of Judge in the Eastern Circuit of Georgia. During the Mexican campaign he held the post of Colonel in the Georgia regiment. The mournful exit of many of the members of that regiment, has called forth one of his most beautiful and touching pieces. So much for the author; as to the work, no one we think can read it, without being impressed with the fact, that he is under the spell of one of nature's genuine minstrels. His harp is evidently not stolen, nor does he hold it by hire; it has been neither Germanized nor Babelized, but rings to the clear tones of the human soul as a bell does to an elastic atmosphere. There is no discord, none whatever. The feeling is conceived—deeply conceived—and is beautifully and naturally expressed. We see here no such phrases

as "cloud-barks with bellying sails," and "every-dayness of this work-day world," disfiguring the simple transparency of a genuinely classic style. The Tallulah, which is the longest of the poems, is a work of very high merit. The bard has placed himself on the awful precipice that overhangs that frightful cataract; he inhales, as far as nature will allow, the spirit of terrible grandeur around him; he associates the past and the future with the objects of his present meditation. Under these circumstances he attempts to describe the awful chasm and roar beneath him, and to give its solemn lessons to the world. He launches at once into the sublime, and never lowers the elevation of the strain, until he sounds the last note. It may be seriously questioned whether even the best poets of our age have succeeded as well in the uniform maintenance of a succession of grand and glowing ideas. This piece alone is enough to wreath the brow of our young Judge with the laurel of permanent poetic fame. It will never cease to be admired, we are sure, while taste and genius can be appreciated. Nor does our author lose spirit, when he condescends to walk over "the red old hills of Georgia," to listen to the plaintive notes of the "whip-poor-will;" to sit down under the "dog-wood tree," or to stand in the desolation of a "deserted homestead." Every where, whether bowing at the feet of a venerated sire—soothing the sorrows of a widowed mother—standing at the grave of a loved sister—looking up into the abbey-like vault of Bonaventure—or eating his crust and ham with the hardy settler of New Georgia—every where he is heart and hand with all around him—full of sympathy—full of pathos—full of *human nature*. All that such a bard requires to be extensively popular is, a *hearing*. And yet we suspect, if the truth were known, that there are thousands of Georgians who scarcely know that such a poet has been, and is among them! Yea more, we suspect, that on the book-counter the fair hand often passes over "Tallulah and other poems," to fix itself upon the "yellow cover" of some work of Alexander Dumas, George Sand, or other like novelist!

Having thus introduced our author, and his unpretending little work to public notice, we now proceed to the main design of this article, Domestic Literature. What-

ever may be the cause or causes, the fact is undeniable, that the South, a tract of country almost as large as half of Europe, inhabited by an intelligent and high-minded people, possessed of wealth and means, the South has not as yet produced what may be called a literature! If we possessed at this moment only the books that are strictly indigenous, what would they amount to? Probably, too, at least two-thirds of what may pass for Southern literature has been produced by *adopted* citizens! Our almost absolute destitution on this subject may be gained from a few simple questions: for the millions of children and youth around us, have we produced a Spelling-book? have we furnished for them a Reader? a Geography? a Grammar? a History? Is there now in all the schools from Baltimore to Texas, a solitary book that the South has produced? Is there in all the colleges in the same extent of country, a solitary text-book written by a Southerner? If our history is told, the Yankees must tell it! If our pronunciation and spelling are fixed, the Yankees must fix them! If even the price of a bale of cotton is decided upon, we must go to Davies to learn that its value is \$430! Thus do we live, and move, and have our literary and educational existence, in Northern thinking and Northern writing! It is enough to make the very blood boil at the heart, to have to record these facts. We are ashamed of them, and would hide them from human gaze, did we not believe that the best interests of the South require their exposure.

But let us come to other facts, for if the South has never made a school book, she has possibly done some thing better. Let us ask then, what has Virginia, the oldest State in the Republic—a patriotic—a great State—what has she done to create a literature? She has furnished a few histories of herself recently, and some very good biographies. What has South Carolina done? She has produced a very creditable history, a few theological works of some pretension, and a few works of fiction. These States are probably considerably ahead in authorship of any others in the Southern sisterhood. We may, too, have done them injustice in the above answers. But we approach a State in which our information is more accurate. What has Georgia done? The following is about the

amount of our self-produced literature: a History of the State in two volumes by McCall; a respectable Work of Fiction by Judge Clayton; the Life and Madness of Tasso by R. H. Wilde; a small fragment of poetry by the same; the Statistics of Georgia, recently published by Rev. R. White; these Poems of Judge Jackson; and various compilations and digests of State laws! It is possible that Georgia may also lay claim to the writings of her most distinguished daughter in the literary world, Miss McIntosh. Though in the great metropolis, she is yet a native of our soil; and at least a part of her glory should be shed on us. This is about the sum total of our literature! We have besides this, a good many published sermons, reports, speeches, &c. &c. Now is this an adequate literature, for a State passing into the middle part of her second century, inhabited by a thrifty and intelligent population, possessed of a great number of excellent academies, maintaining five flourishing colleges, and exhibiting in *every other respect* the signs of rapid and powerful progression? To this question there is and can be but one answer—IT IS NOT. Nor have we in our State a solitary Review, Magazine, or any thing of the sort. There is also a strange reluctance to aid our neighbors, who are attempting something of this sort, to furnish able and well prepared articles, for even those Reviews that are open to us, and which are inviting our co-operation!

We have been a good deal entertained lately, in running a parallel between ancient Sparta and our Southern country. The Spartans were fine agriculturists, fixed patriots and invincible soldiers; but they have not left, we believe, a solitary luminary in the literature of Greece. Athens, close by, had a galaxy of poets, orators and philosophers. But Sparta wholly employed herself in carrying out her present selfish interests, under the laws of Lycurgus. Is not this too striking a picture of our boasted South at present? We are an agricultural—a patriotic, a brave people—we have raised great generals and great statesmen; but where are our poets and philosophers, our historians and writers?

The cause of this state of things cannot be found in the influence of slavery. Athens and Rome, at the very acme of literary fame, were surrounded by an almost infinite

multitude of slaves. Indeed, there is much in the independence, the leisure, the spirit usually associated with the possession of slaves, to encourage and expedite literary enterprize. Enter the country mansion of one of our wealthy farmers—you see books, reviews, papers and sometimes paintings and sculpture—you see an intelligent mind poring over the literature of the day—well informed on all national subjects—possessing both leisure and wealth. What facilities are here for the cultivation of history, philosophy, poetry, &c. ? Nor can the cause of this state of things be found in any general mental torpor peculiar to the South. The Southern is an energetic, active, stirring mind ; on all political subjects what restless and ceaseless activity do we exhibit ? Nor are we apathetic in religion, but a fervent and earnest people. Nor are we indifferent in trade, internal improvement, or the establishment and extension of schools. It is almost exclusively on *this one subject* that we slumber, showing evidently, that it has either been entirely overlooked, or that it has some peculiar difficulties.

There is much force in both of these suppositions. We have no idea that the South has at all appreciated the full value of a domestic and flourishing literature. There is often an outcry against the number of new publications—a spirit to thrust off the influx of the foreign literature, that is poured upon us by Northern publishers—a prejudice even against book-making altogether. We have not fully entered into a right conception of what would and must be our condition, did we possess active authors, publishers, and readers. A native and flourishing literature would be “life from the dead” throughout the entire structure of our whole society ; it would quicken genius, diffuse knowledge, encourage effort, counteract vice and consecrate many an idle hour to noble and good ends. Its effects upon our young men would be most happy. Instead of plunging them, as soon as they get a diploma, and even earlier, into the whirlpool of politics, we should then take them to the Arcadian groves and Castilian fountains of a more retired and peaceful life. But we have not appreciated all this as we ought ; our thoughts have been appropriated too exclusively to Government on the one hand, and cotton on the other. We have not begun as yet to lay

our literary schemes—to make our literary estimates—to appropriate our literary outlay. We leave this great interest to chance and the future. In the mean time, our Yankee brethren, seeing our neglect, are anticipating our action, or even suppressing it, by an ample supply of all sorts and kinds of books, pamphlets and magazines.

We sincerely hope that this subject, distinctively and pre-eminently—as an interest in which the whole South is concerned—will receive from public men and public bodies, the attention which it deserves. It seems to us that our country, divided as it is into separate State sovereignties, has peculiar advantages for literary enterprise. Why may not a State Legislature foster this, as it does all other local interests? It establishes colleges, encourages academies, adopts plans for common school education, co-operates with various companies in creating banks, manufactories and railroads. Why may it not go a step farther, and cast its wing of protection in some way over native authors? Shall it be left to tyrants and despots alone to encourage literary men, while republican Governments—that above all others demand a literature peculiar to their character—pass them by in cold neglect? It is becoming quite a common opinion among some British reviewers, that if we are not careful, as a nation, foreign literature will poison the very spirit of republicanism that now exists among us! What is the remedy then—what, but the creation throughout our vast republic of an American literature of the highest order?

But literary enterprise at the South is encompassed with very many disadvantages; one of the greatest is, the non-existence from Baltimore to New Orleans, of a solitary publishing firm. An author must contract, if he can, with a New York, or Boston, or Philadelphia house. There are very many chances, that he will meet with no favorable conditions; he must publish at his own expense, and necessarily suffer a great loss. Who will publish on such terms? Why, many a man would sooner throw his manuscripts into the fire, than have them go to the world with the sure prospect of encumbering his estate. But cannot the whole South—the wealthy South—support at least one publishing house? The motive to this, apart from authorship, is immensely strong. We declare it as

our solemn conviction, that such houses as Harper & Brothers, Appleton & Co., &c., exert a stronger influence upon the tastes, manners, habits and character of our people, than even their local institutions. We have sometimes had our hair almost to stand on end, when considering the mammoth power of a single New York publisher. And ought not that power to be distributed? Ought not the South, so peculiar in the structure of her society—so much the apple of discord in the Union—ought not the South to possess a portion of that power?

It has been intimated, sometimes, that New York, or some such place, is the natural market for books; and that, unless published there, they cannot get into circulation. There is some force in this statement at present, we will admit. But if we had a southern book-market, as we have a cotton-market, there could be no force in the remark whatever. Were there a solitary house of respectable means and patronage at the South—and were these authors to furnish such house with good and useful books—the book-trade would issue from such establishment in all possible directions. Buyers must go where an article is to be had; it being in all cases the production which creates the market. We get flour from Baltimore or New York. Why? Because it is there produced. They obtain tobacco from Richmond, cotton from Charleston and Savannah, and sugar from New Orleans. Why? Because these articles are produced in these various localities. Now if the South produced authors—and if she had a publishing firm of standing—would we not at once have a book-market? London is the great literary market of Great Britain: but is there not a very lucrative trade of this sort carried on in Edinburgh and other large towns? And as to the re-publication of foreign literature, why may not that be done in the South as well as elsewhere? Can nobody select foreign literature for us but Harper and Brothers, the Carters, or some such like firm in New York? But we have said enough—possibly too much—on this subject. Some, perhaps, will consider us as croaking—some as visionary—some as sectional. We wish to be neither. We have looked over this subject for years—we have revolved it in our mind, in the light of the past and the future—we have associated it with all the great movements of the age.

And we declare it as our solemn and fixed conviction, that the South can never be respected abroad—prosperous at home—and truly great—without a literature of her own. She must have not only her own schools and colleges, but her own books and authors—not simply her own newspapers, but her own reviews—not *a* literature, but *her own* literature. This will make her nobly independent—this will cast around her a defence better than fortresses—more powerful than armies. This will give her the consciousness of importance—will create genuine self-respect—and will make her to stand an equal among equals in the family of nations.

ARTICLE II.

VALIDITY OF POPISH BAPTISM.

[This article, which will be followed by others, in consecutive numbers of the *Review*, is a re-publication of a series of articles which appeared, in 1846, in the columns of the *Watchman and Observer*. They are now collected and re-published, not with a design to revive the controversy which occasioned them, but at the desire of many who are anxious to see them before the public in a more permanent and accessible form.—Eds. S. P. R.]

The remarks which appeared in the *Princeton Review*, the July number of the past year, [1845,] upon the decision of the Assembly, in regard to the validity of Romish baptism, deserve a more elaborate reply than they have yet received. The distinguished reputation of the scholar to whom they are ascribed, and the evident ability with which they are written—for, whatever may be said of the *soundness* of the argument, the *ingenuity* and *skill* with which it is put cannot be denied—entitle them to special consideration. And as the presumption is, that they embody the *strongest* objections which *can* be proposed to the decision in question, a refutation of them is likely to be a complete and triumphant defence of the action of the Assembly. Under ordinary circumstances, it might be