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MISCELLANEOUS.

AN EASTERN STORY—FROM A RARE MANUSCRIPT.

BY J. G. WILKINSON, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "TOPOGRAPHY OF THEBES, AND GENERAL VIEWS OF EGYPT."

During the tedious hours that too often intervene in the domestic seclusion of Eastern life, a relief from its monotony is not unfrequently sought by the sultan and sultana, in resorting to an apartment which overlooks the court, commanding a distinct view of the ingress and egress of all who approach or leave the palace. Here, reclined on her ottoman, and shaded by curtains and blinds, the favorite can observe, without being observed; while the sultan, luxuriously laid on a couch, in a more remote part of the chamber, resigns himself, with closed eyes, to the *dolce far niente*, his sultana informing him of all who make their entrances or exits, and giving him her comments thereupon.

In one of these chambers reclined the Sultan Mustapha and his sultana, who, though little known in history, were greatly esteemed by their subjects for their wisdom; but above all, for that affability which, perhaps, is not the least proof of it in monarchs, though it is the one most easily yet rarely practised. While the sultana opened *her* lustrous eyes, in the hope of discovering some object to amuse her vacant mind, and the sultan closed *his*, from indolence, an individual, crossing the court, and entering the palace, excited her curiosity.

This man had long followed the occupation of a fisherman, and supported a large family by the sale of what he caught; he was clever, and well versed in all that cunning which is so common in the East, and to which, necessity frequently obliged him to have recourse. He had the good fortune to catch a khereet, of a size rarely met with in that species; and, thinking it a pity that so fine a fish should be cut into small portions for the market, to suit the convenience of ordinary customers, he resolved on presenting it to his sovereign; and repaired with this proud specimen of his sport, to the royal palace. No sooner had he entered the door beneath the sitting-room of the sultan, than he was summoned to appear before him, and to explain the object of his visit.

"Fortune," said the fisherman, "has given me this fine khereet, which appeared to me of such uncommon size and beauty, that I scrupled to send it to the market; and, knowing that no one's table was so well suited to receive it as your majesty's I have brought it here to lay it at your feet, and to beg you to accept it."

"Makbool, makbool—the gift is welcome," said the sultan. "Here are a hundred gold mahboobs; take them and prosper."

The grateful and delighted fisherman kissed the ground before him, and retired; but, scarcely had he left the room, when the sultana upbraided her husband, for his extravagant generosity.

"How," said she, "could you think of giving the man a hundred mahboobs for a paltry fish! A hundred mahboobs! Would not one be much more than it is worth! Had you given him five, the present would have been a noble one, and he would have had cause to bless you, and to pray that your life may be long; but to throw away a hundred mahboobs in such a manner is absurd. I have no patience with you; men have no discretion. Do call him back, and take them from him. I desire that you do."

"How," said the sultan, "can I take away a gift? it would be unworthy of a monarch."

"Not at all; has not he who gives, a right to reclaim his gift?"

"A right! yes, but how mean would it be. Would it not be said that Sultan Mustapha was capricious, and did not know his own mind?"

"Well, then," said the sultana, "make some excuse; but take back the money you must."

"Yet what excuse can I make; what can I say?"

"Say! oh, ask him if the fish is a male or a female; and if he answers a male, say I wanted a female; and if he tells you it is a female, say you wanted a male."

The fisherman was sent for, and brought back.

"Tell me," said the sultan, "is that fish a male, or a female?"

"I beg your majesty's pardon, it would be a disgrace is my beard if I spoke an untruth; this kind of fish to both male and female."

The sultan could say no more; the fisherman saved his hundred mahboobs, and the plans of the angry sultana were defeated. But, seeing that the fisherman was aware of the snare that had been laid for him, and admiring the ingenious manner in which he had extricated himself, the sultan doubled the present; and once more dismissed him with good wishes for his prosperity. The indignation of the sulana was excessive; all complaint, however, was vain, and she was silent. The fisherman walked slowly across the court, carrying the sack which contained the money on his shoulder; but, hearing one of the gold coins fall upon the hard ground, he stopped to look for it; and, after searching for some time, found it, and then proceeded on his way.

"Look," said the sultana, "observe the avarice of that wretch; one mahboob fell from his bag, and, not contented with the hundred and ninety nine that remained, he has had the meanness to stop to pick it up, and even to toil in searching far it. Could he not have left it for some of our servants who might chance to pass that way, and find it? What a vile monster! Do call him back, and take it all away from him. I would have him bastinadoed; he really deserves any punishment; the stick would be too lenient for such a sordid creature. By your head! I——"

"Well, well, you shall be satisfied. I really do think his meanness deserves a severe punishment, and the money shall be taken from him."

The fisherman was sent for, and brought again into the royal presence.

"Why," said the sultan, "could you not leave that one mahboob which fell to the ground, and rest contented with the hundred and ninety nine that remained! Could you not spare it for some one of my servants who, accidentally passing that way, might have found it, and blessed me for his good luck! Are you so covetous! and that, too, after all my liberality to you!"

"It was originally my intention," replied the fisherman, "to have done as you suggest. I was actually pursuing my way, resolved to leave the coin where it fell, when it occurred to me that your majesty's sacred head and revered name were inscribed upon it; and I thought that if any one happened inadvertently to put his foot upon it, and trample upon that blessed head and name, the fault would have been mine; and I should never have forgiven myself for my neglect in leaving it on the ground."

With this reply, the sultan was delighted; and, inwardly commending his quickness, he presented him with another two hundred mahboobs. Then, convinced of his folly in permitting the imprudent interference of the queen, he issued a proclamation, that no man for the future should on any account listen to the advice of his wife; a proclamation which, if rumour be true, is said to have decressed his popularity with the wives rather more than it increased it with the husbands throughout his empire, and to have led to insurrection in public, and insubordination in private.

THE ASPEN,—FROM WEISFLOG.

BY LORD ALBERT CONYNGHAM.

Why quivers the aspen when not a breath
disturbs the summer head whilst other trees
are enjoying repose, and affording the bless-
ings of shade, it alone knows no rest.

Pride was its bane!

At that dread hour when our Redeemer
suffered, the sun hid its light, and all nature
quaked.

The wild beasts of the forest cowered in
their dens; not a bird twittered; not an in-
sect buzzed or chirped; the voice of the
breeze was hushed in the sultry air, and
man awaited in alarm the event.

The trees, shrubs, and flowers, felt the
awfulness of that hour, and sympathised
with each other upon it in their own mys-
terious language.

The lofty cedar of Lebanon (*Pinus cedrus*)
rustled forth a melancholy sound, and cloth-
ed its branches in deeper green, in sign of
mourning.

"Alas! all is now over!" gently murmured
the *Salix Babylonica*, and swept the Eu-
phrates with its mourning branches.

The vine-dresser in his vineyard saw that
the vine wept; hence, when its fruit was
gathered, he called the produce *Lacrymæ
Christi*.

A balmy fragrance arose on the Golgotha
the—*Hesperis tristis* (sweet-smelling night
stock) offered it up, to refresh the suffering
Son of man.

The *Iris Susiana* said to the cypress,
"From this day will I attire myself in a
garb of mourning."—"And I," replied the
cypress, "will henceforth take up my abode
among the tombs, in memory of this hour."

A form flitted through the gloom—it was
Astaroth, the angel of death, on his way to
the cross; and when a voice was heard to
exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou
forsaken me!" every branch, leaf, and flow-
er, trembled.

The *Populus* alone, a tall, proud tree,
stood unmoved on the Golgotha.

"What are thy sufferings to us!" it cried;
"we plants need no atonement; we are not
fallen!"

But the angel of death who heard this
boast, breathed upon the haughty tree, and
the unfortunate *Populus* was struck as with
a palsy.

Its leaves drooped; never from that mo-
ment have its branches found rest; and it is
called me *Populus Tremulosa*, or the aspen,
to this day.

From the Saturday News & Literary Gazette.

NAPOLEON IN THE CHARACTER OF A CRITIC.

BY ALEXANDER DIMITRY.

The French press has lately issued a work of high character—a volume, edited by Marchand, one of the executors of Napoleon's will; and embracing, besides an able commentary on the Wars of Cæsar, literary criticisms, and philosophical miscellanies. An extract from the work may not be without interest to the readers of the News. It embodies an ingenious parallel between Homer and Virgil—if parallel that may be called, in which all the praise is on the one, and the censure on the other side.

The excerpt is of a most absorbing interest; and though college predilections will reconcile but few to the idea of Virgil being set up as a foil to Homer, it must be confessed that he has been made the proximate cause of a interesting judgment on the merits of the blind man of Scio. Is the partiality of Napoleon for Homer, the offspring of real admiration? or is it, perchance, but a mere imitation of the attested reverence paid by Alexander to the god-like poet? I should suppose the former, from the motives on which Napoleon rested his preference of the Meonian Bard. There is a difference, however, in the taste of the two great polemarchs of ancient and modern days. Alexander revelled in the sublimity of the Iliad, while Napoleon delighted in the diversity of the Odyssey. The former always kept the Iliad under his pillow, in his conquest of Asia—the latter devoted all his spare moments to the Odyssey, during his campaigns in Egypt.—However the case may be, the extract, considering the source from which it comes, is an important literary award—alike deserving the attention of the critic and the scholar.

After the collection of the Rhapsodies by Pisistratus, came the panegyrics of Polybius, occasionally relieving the dryness of his theories of war, with strictures on the excellence of old Homer; and now, after a period of nearly two thousand years, we have the comment of Napoleon—the practical warrior—on the demerits of the Æneid. He does not cavil about the meaning of a note, or weigh the authority of a gloss. He stops not to examine whether the cyclic poets warrant Virgil in the arrangement of his second book;—whether he be indebted to Palaphætus or Gergithius—to the ante Homeric or post-Homeric writers, for the materials of his poem;—whether Euripides supplied the features of Dido's majestic mien, or Apollonius Rhodius lent her the fiercer passions of his Medea. He sets up no inquiry into the nature and origin of the materials; but examines the manner merely in which they are wrought up by the poet. He views the whole subject with a soldier's eye. Restricting it, in the true spirit of Fluellen's criticism, to the "disciplines of war;" he dashes through all the erudite intricacies of the commentators—solves the Gordian knot with a sword, and tries Virgil on the metre of his second book, which all the scholiasts, headed by the learned Heyne, held up as his masterpiece.

In this examination, however, Napoleon himself is not free from censure. Though frequently making palpable hits at Virgil, he now and then charges him with gratuitous errors. The charge, for instance, of Virgil's mentioning Æneas alone of the many warriors of Troy, may be plausibly explained away. The wooden horse was introduced after a hard fought battle around the city walls. Such a battle could not have been sustained without considerable thinning of the Trojan ranks. Many a leader must have lain, if not among the dead, among the wounded, at least. The very nature of ancient warfare—the hand to hand contest—would justify the supposition; and when we consider the character of the conflict between the Greeks and Trojans—a conflict, in which the latter fought *pro aris et focis*, and all that man can value—the inference is lawful that it must have been peculiarly murderous, numbering a great majority of the Trojan chiefs among the killed and disabled. This, if it were true that Virgil mentions Æneas to the exclusion of other heroes, might be advanced as a not unsatisfactory reason of his silence. But the fact is not as assumed by the great exile. Virgil positively mentions Choræbus and Iphitus—Pelias and Hypanis, Ripheus the just, and Pantehus, the warlike priest of Apollo. Another, and equally as valid objection, is the toppling of the tower on the heads of the Greeks. We cannot but look upon it as almost puerile—if not indicative of a carping intent. Napoleon had, no doubt, forgotten that Æneas expressly says—that the work of eversion began there, where time had already exercised its wasting power on the joints of the stones:

Qua summæ labantes
Juncturas tabulata dabant.

The allusion to Agamemnon's journal might reasonably be viewed as a case of constructive anachronism. For while even Homer's acquaintance with the art of writing is a question among the most competent archæologists, there is little doubt that neither the defenders, nor assailants of Troy had reached the advanced degree of civilization, which would presuppose the existence of that art. This allusion may have been intentionally made, with the twofold object, perhaps, of enhancing Homer's claims to admiration as a strategist, and depreciating Virgil to the level of a "college professor." Such a spirit would be entirely in keeping with Napoleon's peculiar aversion to all lawyers and professors. Such a one is but a *regent de college—un marchand de paroles!* was a favourite and contemptuous exclamation of his, whenever mere literary men were spoken of in his presence. Whether for censure or for praise, the comparison does not over much credit to the subduer of kings. If for the former, he has not even the merit of originality. Lamothe, a learned French critic, and a most determined antagonist of the ancients, had long ago waged a relentless war against Virgil. If in the latter case, Polybius has left but little to be said of Homer in the way of eulogy. Many a passage of his histories conveys the amplest praise of Homer's accuracy. There is one, in particular, where speaking of Ulysses—and Ulysses is Homer—he lauds his perfect knowledge of all the requisites of warfare, and pronounces him, most a soldier-like man—*hegemonikotaton ton andra*—not only skilled in the management of naval affairs, but also in all the qualities respecting the practices of war on land."*

NAPOLEON'S OPINIONS OF HOMER & VIRGIL.

The second book of the Æneid is looked upon as Virgil's masterpiece. Viewed as a model of style, it deserves the estimation in which it is held; but considered on the score of *facts*, it cannot escape criticism.

The wooden horse might have been a popular tradition; but this tradition is ridiculous, and altogether unworty of an epic poem.—Nothing like it is seen in the Iliad, in which every thing is in conformity with truth as well as the rules of warfare. How can we suppose the Trojans so very stupid as not to send a smack to the island of Tenedos, and ascertain whether the thousand ships of the Greeks had harboured there or actually set sail? But the harbour of Tenedos could be easily descried from the height of Ilium's towers. How shall we believe the wilful incarceration of Ulysses and the flower of the Grecian host, in the womb of the wooden horse—that is giving themselves up, bound hand and foot, to their inexorable foe? Supposing that this horse contained one hundred warriors only; it must have been of an unwieldy bulk, and could not, within any probability, have been brought in one day from the camp on the sea-shore, to the walls of Troy. When we reflect that they had two streams to cross, the probability wholly disappears.

The entire episode of Simon is unlikely and absurd; neither the resources of poetry employed, nor the insidiousness of speech attributed to Simon, can, in the least, extenuate that absurdity. Yet the horse must be introduced on the very day of the departure of the host, within the walls of the city; for otherwise the fact of the thousand vessels of the Greeks remaining concealed, at so short a distance from Troy, would appear still more incredible.

The beautiful and highly wrought episode of Laocoon carries its recommendation in itself; but it can in no way diminish the fatuity of the conduct of the Trojans. They could, after all, have left the horse in the camp, for a few days, in its original position; and have ascertained whether the enemy's fleet had departed, before throwing down the walls of the city to admit the steed.

The warriors, pent up in the wooden horse, and to whom Simon opened the gates, came out only when every one slumbered around—in a dark night—when the Grecian fleet had already landed the army. This, therefore, could scarcely have taken place before one in the morning, the warders could not have fallen asleep, and Simon have let down the bars, before that time. The whole of the second book, therefore, of the destruction of Troy is hemmed in between one of the morning and early dawn—in other words in the space of two or three hours! Troy could not have been taken, sacked, and burnt, in less than a fortnight. Troy contained an army. That army did not retreat. It must, therefore, have defended itself through every avenue. Æneas, who lived in his father's palace, in a grove only half a league from Troy, is informed of the capture and conflagration of the city by the apparition of Hector's ghost! Had Anchises' palace been even two leagues distant from the city, the noise and tumult of the striving soldiery—the heat of the burning of the very first houses—would have awakened both man and brute. Ilium did not fall in one night—especially in the shorter portion of the night—and had half the army, which was there to defend it, actually evacuated the place, the Grecian forces could not *materially* speaking, have taken possession of the city and burned it, before a lapse of several days. Æneas was not the only warrior of Troy; yet Virgil mentions him alone. Of the many heroes, whose brilliant feats are scattered over the Iliad, each for his own part, must have defended his quarters. A tower—

Turrim in præcipiti stantem, summisque, sub tra
Eductam tectis—

A tower, the lofty summit of which defied the skies, and seemed to cleave the clouds, must, beyond doubt, have been built of stone. We cannot understand how Æneas could, in a few moments, and with the mere assistance of iron levers, have hurled it on the heads of the assailants.

Had Homer handled the taking of Troy, he would not have viewed it like the storming of fort. The necessary period of time would have been devoted to the subject—eight days and eight nights, at least, would have been allowed. When we read the Iliad we feel, at every line, that Homer has worn the harness of war—and not, as commentators say, passed his life in the schools of Scio. When we turn to the Æneid, we feel that the work was written by a college professor, who never *performed* any thing. We cannot, indeed, see Virgil's reason for beginning and ending the destruction of Troy in a few hours. In that short measure of time he even contrives to gather all the wealth of the city in central storehouses. The dwelling of Anchises was near Troy; for during those brief hours, and in spite of the conflict, Æneas visits it at different intervals. Scipto spent seventeen days in burning Carthage, deserted by its inhabitants; it required eleven days to burn down Moscow, though mainly made up of wooden tenements; and of a city of that extent, it would have asked several days for an army to take full possession, Troy was a large city; so much so that the Greek army, which numbered a hundred thousand men, never attempted to invest its walls.

When Æneas returns to Ilium, on that very night, he finds Ulysses performing the duty of an orderly, and watching over the plundered treasures of Pergamus—

Custodes lecti Phœnix et dirus Ulysses
Prædam asservabant.

This single operation—the gathering of the wealth rescued from the flames—could not have been performed in less than fifteen days, and, it is not in the hour of confusion, consequent on the capture of a stormed city that men think of hoarding treasures in central magazines.

Day beams, at length, and Æneas returns to his companions:—

Sic demum socios, consumpta nocte, reviso.

Thus, from one to four o'clock in the morning, Æneas was in Troy—fought all the engagements which he relates—defended the palace of Priam—subverted the citadel of Troy—returned to the city after Creusa—found it under perfect subjection—offering no resistance, no fight—entirely occupied by the enemy—wholly consumed by the flames—and the storehouses already closed! This is not the march of epic poetry, nor the manner, after which, Homer progresses with the Iliad. The journal of Agamennon could not have been more exact, both on the score of distances and time, and the likelihood of military operations, than is that master-piece itself. As to the third book of Virgil, it is absolutely but a copy of the Odyssey. The fourth is any thing but comparable to that of Homer, in which every day is marked—each action has its origin, progress, and close, and is not heaped up and confounded in one general narrative!

*Pol. His. Lib. ix. § 42.

CHRIST AS.

More than eighteen hundred years have gone by, since the Son of God descended, to redeem a fallen race. He did not come in the effulgence of superna glory, clad in dazzling robes, and attended by cherubims. The heavenly being assumed a mortal form—the infant Saviour was "wrapt in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." The return of his natal day is past, and the mind averts to the sublime and affecting events, which marked his career. The flocks of Bethlehem are at rest, guarded by the watchful shepherds, and the Angel of the Lord descends with his glad tidings—a celestial host suddenly appear, and exclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will towards man!" A star shines forth in the east, and the wise men are guided by its light, to the abiding place of him who was "born King of the Jews." We hear the voice of maternal anguish, sorrowing for her youngest born, slaughtered by the cruel Herod. We see the Baptist emerging from the Judean desert, and we hear his awful voice "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make his paths straight!" We see the dove coming down through the silvery cloud, and we hear the voice proclaiming this is my beloved son." We behold the transfiguration on the high mountain; the triumphant entry into Jerusalem; the sorrowful prostration in the garden of Gethsamene; the kiss of the betrayer. We see the son of man standing in solemn silence before his accusers; we see him nailed to the cross, and we hear his last cry of agony, "lama sabacthani!" A fearful scene succeeds: the veil of the temple is rent; the earth heaves, the sheeted dead arise from the sepulchres, and walk about the streets of Jerusalem! A little while, and we behold Him who was crucified, restored to life, and attended by his disciples. He gives them his last charge, and ascends to Heaven, his great work of salvation being acomplished.

MILITARY COURT.

Correspondence of the Baltimore Patriot.

FREDERICK, Md., Jan. 6, 1836.

Present—Major Gen. A. Macomb, *President;*
Brig. Gen. Atkinson, } *Associates;*
" " Brady, }
Capt. S. Cooper, *Judge Advocate.*

Continuation of proceedings in relation to the failure of the Seminole and Creek Campaigns, conducted by Generals Gaines and Scott.

At 11 o'clock, A. M., the President announced the Court to be in readiness to proceed to business; when Gen. Scott offered several depositions in relation to the Seminole and Creek campaigns. During their reading by the Judge Advocate, Maj. Gen. Gaines, attended by his late staff, entered the room and took their seats. In a few moments after, Gen. Gaines arose and announced to the Court that in obedience to the orders of the War Department, he had repaired thither to attend upon the Court during the investigation of the causes of the campaigns against the Seminole Indians. He requested the Judge Advocate to read Order No. 69 of the War Department. The Judge Advocate replied that there were two orders, both of which, at the suggestion of Gen. Gaines, were read. The General then remarked that he protested against the proceedings being conducted in the present manner, as it was evident that the Court had been, and were then, proceeding upon *ex parte* testimony. He said that no one individual was in this case entitled to summon and interrogate witnesses for the purpose of condemning others:—that he was as much a party to the business before the Court, as any other officer, and he, therefore, claimed the right to cross-examine witnesses wherever the interrogatories were calculated to affect his course of conduct and character. He would thank the Judge Advocate to read the 91st article of war.

During the delivery of these remarks, Gen. Gaines was frequently interrupted by the President of the Court, who objected in the strongest terms to the General's interfering with the proceedings of the Court, and requested him to take his seat. Gen. Gaines persisted that the Court had no authority to receive testimony in the manner they were doing. The President observed that the Court were determined to investigate the affair in their own way. The General reiterated his objection, when the President requested the Court to be cleared, while they consulted upon the subject. In about twenty minutes, the Jude Advocate notified the parties that the Court were in readiness to deliver their final opinion, and after being reseated the President addressed Gen. Gaines, nearly as follows:

Major General Gaines: The Court have decided, after the most mature deliberation, that your protest to the present mode of proceeding cannot be regarded. The Court will give you every opportunity hereafter to peruse the evidence which has been recorded, and they will afford you every aid in their power in the interrogation and cross examination of witnesses. But until the present case of Gen. Scott is disposed of, they are determined to adhere to their present mode of procedure, and they cannot allow their proceedings to be interrupted.

Lieut. Morris, U. S. A. Acting Commissary at Tampa Bay from February till April, being called and sworn on the part of Gen. Scott, was proceeding to answer certain interrogatories in reference to the quantity of hard bread and bacon [which, by the bye, has become very stale and flat] that arrived during those months. As the Lieutenant was about to refer to a memorandum which, with other papers, he held in his hand, Gen. Scott abruptly drew one of the papers from him, and remarked that it was a paper which witness had once sent to him as *the* account, and he should insist upon its upon its being received in evidence, although the witness might answer the question before him in what manner he pleased. The account was filed in accordance with the wish of Gen. Scott.

Lieut. Morris was further interrogated in relation to the difficulty of building ovens for baking hard bread, which he stated to be in consequence of a misunderstanding between the volunteers who were ordered to execute the work, and the commanding officer at the post. Another question was put to the Lieutenant concerning the reasons which he heard assigned for the non fulfilment of Gen. Scott's order; and in answer, said that he had received a letter from his brother in New Orleans, which he since des-