

LITERARY.

From the American Review.

Observations on the 1st. volume of Dr. Clarke's travels in Russia, Tartary and Turkey.

BY A RUSSIAN.

Continued.

We will now proceed to point out some passages in Dr. Clarke's book, in which he has betrayed the most open disregard for truth.

In March, 1800, Dr. Clarke arrived at St. Petersburg. His abode in the capital of Russia must have been of short duration, if we measure it by the chapter which he has appropriated to the subject. He left St. Petersburg on the 3d of April, and arrived at Moscow on the 8th of the same month—having consequently travelled, in less than six days, a distance of 500 English miles. He set out from Moscow the 30th day, after sojourning there nearly eight weeks. On the 7th of June we find him at Voronezh—a distance of 444 English miles (516 versts) from Moscow. Leaving Voronezh the 12th of the same month, Dr. C. arrived at Tsherkask, the capital of the Don Cossacks, on the 21st.—These two cities are 411 English miles (or 616 versts) distant from each other. He remained among the Don Cossacks twelve days,—viz: from his entrance into their territory at the village of Kasanskaja, to his arrival at the fortress of Rostof on the 27th of the same month. If we deduct two days spent at Kasanskaja, four at Tsherkask, and three at Oxal, we find that this *savant* went through the whole territory in question in three days;—a distance of 280 English miles. No more than eleven days were necessary for our expeditions—traveller to traverse the country of the Cossacks of the Black Sea (Tshernomorskije Cossaki), and to arrive in the Crimea—for he sailed from Taganrock on July 3d, and was at Yenishale on the 14th of that month. The distance which he overran, after landing on the Asiatic shore, until he reached the extremity of the Peninsula of Taman, is 363 English miles (544 versts), by the route he took. Two of the eleven days he stayed at Ekerinoder, the capital of the Cossacks of the Black Sea.

Of the whole time Dr. Clarke spent in the Russian dominions, nearly one half was passed in the Crimea. He arrived there the 14th July, and left it by the Isthmus of Perese about the 13th October.—Two of these three months he lived in the house of Dr. Pallas,—part of the time from choice, but more of it, in consequence of a serious indisposition.

By comparing the above dates we learn, that Dr. Clarke was about seven months and a half in Russia—from the 1st March to the 30th October 1800. If we deduct two months at Moscow, as many at Professor Pallas, and about three weeks at various other places, it will appear that the Doctor was no more than two months in travelling over a space of 2500 English miles.—We leave it to our readers to estimate the degree of correctness, with which he can have made observations, on the moral character of the Russian nation.

We have no hesitation in admitting, that there are some truths in the book before us. We will not deny that in the physical aspect of our country, many things must make a disagreeable impression on the mind of an Englishman. The roads do not resemble the turnpike-ways of England;—the inns are bad;—the habitations of the Russian peasants are not to be compared with cottages of English husbandmen. Nay more; the details of administration necessarily bear, in many instances, marks of the imperfections resulting from an unlimited form of government. If our author had been content to notice only defects of this description, without confounding the personal character of the sovereign, with the habitual spirit of the government,—without establishing upon solitary facts, general opinions injurious to the Russian nation, his book would have been received with applause even in Russia. For in all countries there are useful truths, which are to be learned only from strangers. But he has undertaken to speak of the manners of the people, and to appreciate the national character, without having given himself time to become acquainted even with their leading features.—He has presumed to explain the most secret motives of conduct, in those with whom he chanced to meet, on the suspicious testimony of such beings, as a *valet de place*, or on the suggestions of his own malice.—Is it then to be wondered at, that he has laid himself open to the double reproach, of having fallen into gross errors and continual contradictions?

In the preface, (p. ix.) the Russian government is accused of fostering, from a principle of policy, the ignorance of the rest of Europe, relatively to the state of the southern provinces of its empire—and of sedulously concealing the only tolerably correct charts, which exist, of the coasts of the Black Sea; and of the course of the rivers which fall into it. As this

accusation is frequently repeated, we shall notice it here, in order, as we think, to refute it, to the satisfaction of the candid reader.—When Dr. Clarke made his appearance in Russia, officers belonging to the staff of the army were occupied in Finland, in Poland, in the Crimea, and in several other portions of the empire, with making detailed draughts of these respective countries. The object of that undertaking was, to rectify the errors in the general map of the empire, or rather to prepare one which should be more correct. This map or atlas, composed of more than one hundred sheets, was published at St. Petersburg in 1805, at the expense of government, and is for sale on very moderate terms at the *depot imperial des cartes*. We will not take upon us to compare it with that of Sweden by Mr. Hermetin, but we can assure our readers, that it completely destroys Dr. Clarke's assertion, respecting the want of geographical charts. In the one to which we allude, the learned gentleman will not find the soundings of the coasts of the Crimea laid down; but he will meet with topographical details of the parts of the Russian monarchy, which have hitherto been least observed, sufficient to satisfy every man who travels for the purpose of acquiring a knowledge of the country, and not like the doctor at Achtiar, to search for the vulnerable points of the empire.

The empress Catherine II. is often subjected to the censure of Dr. Clarke. "There is nothing," says he, "in which the late Catherine employed so much artifice, as in keeping secret the history of her own people, and the wretched state of her empire." That this empress received with complacency, the flattery of the philosophers of her time, (many of whom enjoyed pensions from her bounty,) is an undoubted truth;—but it is absurd to suppose, that she entertained seriously, the notion of concealing from the rest of the world, the true state of the interior of Russia. Without breaking off all communication with other countries, and erecting on her frontiers a wall like that of China, the accomplishment of such a purpose would have been impossible.—It is moreover contradicted, by the constant efforts of the empress, to allure foreigners into her dominions. She took into her service, engineers from Holland, for the purpose of improving the internal navigation of Russia. By the labours of the officers, the courses of the navigable rivers throughout the empire were accurately traced.—The numerous individuals belonging to the British navy, who have at various times been in the service of Russia, must necessarily have made themselves acquainted with its coasts and sea-ports.

Lastly, the men of learning, who by order of the empress Catherine, travelled into the remote provinces of her empire, (the fruits of whose researches, were given to the world at her expense,) have thrown much light on the natural history of those very countries, through which Dr. Clarke galloped in such wonderful haste, though accompanied by a powerful escort.—To the mass of information produced by the legitimate means above stated, ought to be added the accounts, whether true or false, which have been given to the world by strangers, of all descriptions, who traversed Russia in every direction, and who insinuated themselves, under the disguise of *men of letters*, into the most distant corners of the country, for the purpose of pilfering a few pretended state secrets with which they might pay their court at home.

The reign of the empress Catharine II. is so far from being enveloped in mystery, that the most minute details of the many remarkable events with which it is crowded, have long been generally known. Her journey to the Crimea was made in the company of such men as Lord St. Helens, the Counts de Segur, and Cobentzel, and can have led into error none but the dulcet of observers, although there may have been found persons who affected to be deceived.* Indeed Dr. Clarke's book furnishes nothing new on the subject of this princess. There seems in the present day to remain but little difference of opinion respecting her great qualities, as well as her defects, and if the former have met with over-zealous admirers, it must be admitted, that the latter have not escaped the animadversions of censors abundantly.

The Empress's Journey to the Crimea furnishes some anecdotes worthy of being recorded, but which are not all to be met with in the memoirs of that time. We will present our readers with one of these, to show how little she was the dupes, of the exhibitions offered to her view by Prince Potemkin, during her progress. Descending the river Dnieper in a galley, the Empress and her attendants arrived at Kief, a town of which the interior appearance does not correspond with the beauty of its perspective. She desired to know the opinions, of the three foreign ambassadors who accompanied her, respecting the scene before them. Count Cobentzel was in raptures with the prospect.—M. de Segur contented himself with saying, that much might be made of it in the course of time.—Lord St. Helens declared that the country was detestable, and the prospect nothing extraordinary.—The Empress said with a smile "Count Cobentzel is a courier.—M. de Segur a polite man—and Mr. Fitzherbert a man of truth."

severe. To us it appears, that Russia cannot but place her in the rank of her most distinguished monarchs, as well as of the most able sovereigns that ever reigned over any country.

Dr. Clarke, in his short residence at St. Petersburg, gathers no information, which might not be picked up at the corner of every street in that capital. Without denying the existence of some of the abuses which he mentions in his first chapter, and without undertaking to justify them, we will content ourselves with noticing some errors, which appear to us to bear the stamp of misrepresentation. He takes great pains to inspire a belief, that his countrymen are peculiarly exposed to the vexations which he describes, and about which he is so querulous.—This assertion is incorrect.—The regulations of the police relative to dress, were extended to all the inhabitants, without a single exception; neither is it true, that the English suffered every where the same severe treatment. Dr. Clarke himself and his companion will more than once, furnish proof of the contrary.

With regard to the punishment which he states to have been inflicted on the author of the epigram, mentioned in page 5, (*cutting out his tongue*) we will simply observe, that for more than a century, there has not been one solitary instance of such an execution. Moreover, having ourselves resided in St. Petersburg during the whole of the late Emperor's reign, we assert without fear of contradiction, that, to this day, the author of that epigram remains unknown.

Before he has arrived at *Sarskocetlo*, which is only twenty-two versts from St. Petersburg, Dr. Clarke has had time to discover that on leaving the capital, a traveller "bids adieu to all thoughts of inns or even houses, with the common necessaries of bread and water." The road between this last city and Moscow, is constantly covered with travellers and wagners.—Of these the first have not always, like the Doctor, comfortable travelling carriages, and the latter, proceeding uniformly with the same horses, must necessarily stop somewhere at night, and refresh their cattle. Their wagners are loaded with merchandise, which they have engaged to transport from distant places, and they cannot consequently have room for many provisions. How then do they escape being starved?—Some idea may be formed of the prodigious number of these unhappy wagners by what is said, page 475.—"Nothing can be more striking than the spectacle afforded by those immense caravans, slowly advancing each in one direct line, by hundreds at a time, and presenting a picture of the internal commerce carried on by Russia throughout all parts of the empire." We think therefore that Dr. Clarke would have spoken more properly, had he said that good inns were rare on the high roads of Russia,—but this would have been too much in the usual language of discontented travellers.—He chose to say more.—Like those Russian noblemen who, according to his account, ask of the picture-mongers, *quelque chose d'éclatant*, he was determined to have, in his picture, only "splendid coloring."—We find him accordingly gravely assuring his readers, that in the midst of fields abounding with corn and pasturage, the Russian starves, and has not a drop of milk to distribute!

(To be continued.)

New-Orleans.

FROM THE WEEKLY REGISTER.

Sir—An extract has appeared in your paper, from a volume which I published some years ago, entitled "*Views of Louisiana*." The situation of that interesting city, New-Orleans, the future emporium of the west, will excuse me for publishing, through your paper, some further particulars respecting the embankments of the Mississippi. I have seen in the gazettes, and have heard in conversation, very considerable exaggerations, both of the injury sustained by that city, and of permanent disadvantages to which the people inhabiting the banks of the Mississippi must always be subject. The temporary suffering of the inhabitants of New-Orleans, and its vicinity will unquestionably be very great. The poorer class who inhabit the back streets, as well as all who reside in the suburbs, will suffer beyond any thing we can well conceive. The beautiful gardens on the road to the Bayou St. John, will be seriously injured, and hundreds of poor industrious people, who raise vegetables for the market, will be ruined. These misfortunes, however, the city of New-Orleans might in a few years repair, but she cannot so easily change the character which she will acquire abroad, of being unavoidably subject to the recurrence of so dreadful a calamity. It is this which will endanger her prosperity, much more than the floods of the river: and it is with a view of encountering the public opinion, on this subject, that I take the liberty of coming forward to suggest a few ideas, the result of my observations while in that country.

I will premise, however, that with respect to any unusual sickness being caused by the inundation, I do not think there is much to apprehend; the sickly season does not commence until the Mississippi has retired within its banks, and long before this time, the water which found its way through the crevasse, will sink, evaporate, or flow to the swamps; a few days are sufficient for this purpose. The principal cause of unhealthiness in Louisiana, is the quality of slime left on the banks of the river, the stagnant water between the double levees, and the miasma of the swamp; therefore, to assign such important effects to so slight a cause, as that of a few hundred acres of land, being covered for a time with fresh water, might almost appear absurd. I do not pretend that there is nothing to apprehend; great care must be taken when the river begins to subside, that the water be drained off before it can stagnate, and that the animal and vegetable exuvia, left around the city, be destroyed before the action of the sun can render it putrid. All this is of so little consequence, compared to the permanent causes of disease in Louisiana, that I do not apprehend from it any thing extraordinary. There is also a favorable circumstance, which will tend to lessen the danger; it is observed, as one of those providential dispensations which alleviate human calamities, that the moment the Mississippi begins to subside, there are daily showers, which wash the slime from the banks, freshen the air, and preserve the waters left by the river in a state of purity, until the greater part is evaporated or drained; and, as I have already observed, the city and its environs will be entirely dry, before the existence of that state of the atmosphere, in which there is a general prevalence of fevers. Thus much, as to the extent of the present and probable suffering to which the city of New-Orleans has been unhappily exposed. As to any permanent injury that must resolve itself into the simple question, whether the artificial banks of the Mississippi can be so secured as to prevent a recurrence of the calamity in future? Of this I never had the least doubt. It has only been a matter of astonishment to me, that so little should have been done towards an object so important; I could only account for it from that total want of public spirit which is observed in all colonies; it was not until after we had gained our independence, that we bethought ourselves of building noble bridges, of making vast turnpike roads, of digging canals, and effecting other national works; and surely it is not likely that such a government as Spain, would encourage public spirit in her colonies! In the volume, which I published, it was my endeavor to call the public attention to this very subject, but the unhappy feuds which prevailed, and the apathy to every thing which did not concern their interest as individuals, rendered it useless.—The closing scene of the last war, in which Louisiana covered herself with glory, has produced a total change in the character of the people; who begin to entertain a just pride of country, and public spirit will soon manifest itself in united efforts, for their safety and prosperity. That individual narrow feeling, which cares nothing for the suffering of others, provided self is safe, will soon, I trust, disappear for ever. The misfortune of New-Orleans will result in a benefit to her and to the state. An appeal to the senses, and to our dearest interests, is better attended to, than an appeal to the understanding. The eyes of the inhabitants, will soon be opened, and they will resolve to escape from that habitual security, fraught with so much evil, in which they have heretofore reposed; something will now be done in earnest, which will not only render the banks of the river safe against the floods, but even preserve the state from the visitations of disease.

The first thing to be done, is the formation of a company on the most extensive scale; numbers on the western waters, and through the United States, would readily join. A capital of several millions could be formed, though a much smaller sum would suffice, for securing the safety and health of the inhabitants on the river; but in doing this effectually, large tracts of the most valuable land would be reclaimed; and this ought to furnish an inducement to the general government to contribute to its aid. The first step, would be to open the large natural sluices, such as the Atchafalaya, which is now almost closed up, and which has been the principal cause of the great rise in the waters, for some years past, the next, will be to make a sufficient number of artificial sluices, so as to afford outlets at short intervals; there will then be less occasion for augmenting the embankments, but this should nevertheless, be attended to, as the chief dependence for security. Here I must repeat, that nothing is more practicable than the erection of complete and safe embankments; these works are yet in their rudest state here, and they afford ample proof of the facility with which those of sufficient strength may be accomplished. There is