

THE MOUNTAIN PORTICO.

Airs of Palestine, a Poem, by John Pierpont, Esq.

WELCOME as the caravan, that brought life and renovation, to the exhausted frames of Ah Bey and his followers, in the desert sands of Morocco—Sweet as the musick of the feathered songsters, that sweep through the groves of his beloved Semelilal, were the *Airs of Palestine*, to our enraptured ears. To the *American Reviewer*, who has been doomed to depend upon materials from abroad for the exercise of his trade—who has signed over the wild, uncultivated fields of science and of song, at home—who has languished for the time, when he might proudly claim, for his countrymen, a name and place, in the great Republic of Letters—this *domestick Poem*, will bring a transport of delight, unfelt before. But let not the enthusiasm of patriotic feelings, seduce us into forgetfulness of our office. We are no panegyrist—we are stern, impartial critics, whom no selfish motive can influence, to disregard the dictates of truth and justice; but if the ore of our Poet should yield, in the crucible of analysis, a pure, a rich, original, elementary metal, we may be permitted to boast, that that metal comes from an *American mine*—we may be indulged in the pride of proclaiming, that the Poet is our compatriot.

The object of the Poem is to shew the influence and power of Sacred Musick. In his method of treating this subject, the author has followed no beaten track: he has been *ipse sui moduli factor*. The Bible is the Helicon, at which his Muse has quaffed the rich draughts of holy inspiration—his lyre, like the harp of David is strung to the glory of the great Jehovah.—With an invention wholly original, and an imagination truly poetical, the author has chosen that epoch of the world, when, by the Almighty Fiat, the bond which linked mankind together, was severed, and themselves dispersed, to introduce his subject, as the only tie that could bring them again into communion, and stand in the place of unity of language. This introduction is, in the highest degree, arduous and imposing. We are disposed to regard, with enthusiastick reverence, that power by whose universal influence, the curse of Babel is half averted, and all created beings own one common intelligence—and with souls thus properly attuned to harmony, we feel the magick of every chord that vibrates to the poet's touch. After briefly relating the event, to which we have alluded, and describing the wrath of the offended Majesty of Heaven, at the daring presumption of man, the poet adds:—“Yet, round the Avenger's brow, that frown'd above,
Play'd Mercy's beams—the lambent light of Love.”

Musick was the gift of this Heavenly mercy—how sublime a subject, then, for the poet's pen! But in this vast, unbounded field, various paths presented themselves, to the step of the traveller: it was necessary to stop, and survey the prospect—to pause, and breath the freshness of the “mountain air.” A thousand beauties caught his eye, at every turn—a thousand melodies were wafted to his listening ear, by every breeze. On one hand, the tuneful pipe of Maro wooed him to Italian groves; on the other, the lofty strains of Homer's Lyre, tempted him to seek the shores of Greece. In this variety of temptation—in this perplexity of choice, the poet, burning with the fire of devotion, bursts out into a flame of eloquence and piety, exquisitely beautiful.

“No—no—a lonelier traveller path be mine: Greece and her charms I leave, for Palestine.
There purer streams through happier valleys flow;
And sweeter flowers on holier mountains blow.
I love to breath where Gillead shed her balm—
I love to walk on Jordan's banks of palm—
I love to wet my foot in Hermon's dews—
I love the promptings of Isaiah's muse:—
In Carmel's holy grots I'll court repose,
And deck my mossy couch with Sharon's deathless rose.”

The repetition of the comparative degree in the epithets, of the first and second couplets, gives the force of *antithesis*, to expressions having no necessary contrast in their meaning; and thus, we think, the author has produced a new and striking beauty. The four succeeding lines are inexpressibly sweet, and the closing Alexandrine, adds a dignity and sublimity to the passage, which we challenge the Bards of the present age to surpass. He has shown not less taste than judgement in his selection of subjects, from the inexhaustible variety that attracts the eye of a poet, in reading the Bible.—The passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, and the song of praise raised by Moses and his followers, for their miraculous escape—the pathetic farewell of this holy patriarch to his Jews—his death—are sung in rich and swelling strains. There are scenes

in the Bible, which possess, in themselves, so much of the “very soul of song,” that it is difficult, for any power of language, to render them more poetical; and yet the reader may almost fancy that he hears the roaring of the trumpets, and thunders on Mount Sinai; or the still small voice that spoke to the prophet Elijah, on Mount Horeb.

In the following passage, the imagination of the poet could have but little room to play—he is describing a fact as related by the Evangelist—but we doubt whether the brightest fictions of fancy, could elicit more vivid flashes—

“While thus the Shepherds watch'd the host of night
O'er heaven's blue concave flash'd a sudden light.
Th' unrolling glory spread its folds divine
O'er the green hills and vales of Palestine;

And lo! descending angels, hovering there,
Stretch'd their loose wings, and in the purple air,
Hung o'er the sleepless guardians of the fold:—
When that high anthem, clear and strong,
And bold,
On wavy paths of trembling ether ran:

“Glory to God:—benevolence to man;
Peace to the world: and in full concert came
From silver tubes, and harps of golden frame,
The loud and sweet response, whose choral strains,
Linger'd and languish'd on Judea's plains.
Yon living lamps, charm'd from their chambers blue,
By airs so heavenly, from the skies withdrew:

All? All but one, that hung and burn'd alone,
And with mild lustre over Bethlehem shone.
Chaldea's sages saw that orb afar
Glow unextinguish'd—'twas Salvation's Star.”

The song of Jesus and his disciples, on the night preceding the Crucifixion, form another of the poet's subjects—one line alone will show that his inspiration comes from Apollo's self:

“And silence leads her downy footed hours”
But our author has not confined himself to the Bible: There are other holy airs, than those that breathe on Carmel's hill—there are other flowers, than those that bloom in Sharon's valley. Though we are not disposed to regard any of the stories, related by M. de Chateaubriand, as any thing more than mere fanciful illustrations of his *Beauties of Christianity*; yet some of the incidents which he has furnished, may be considered as legitimate subjects, for a poem designed to show the influence of sacred musick. The poet is not answerable for the veracity of a fanatic priest, who would attribute to some of the Catholic Missionaries, even more miraculous powers, than those that were granted to the cotemporary disciples of the Saviour himself. Those who have read Chateaubriand's celebrated work, will remember the following, among the numerous miracles, wrought by the Missionaries, at Paraguay.—The Boat arrives in La Plata, amidst a horde of savages—The Missionary and his neophytes begin the *Gregorian chant*:

“Those unknown strains the forest war-whoop hush:
Huntsmen and warriors from their cabins rush,
Heed not the foe, that yells defiance nigh;
See not the deer, that dashes wildly by,
Drop from their hand the bow and rattling quiver,
Crowd to the shore, and plunge into the river—
Breast the green waves th' enchanted bark that toss,
Leap o'er her sides, and kneel before the cross:
While warm tears, mingling with baptismal waters,
Wash from the soul the stain of savage slaughters.”

Another incident is also taken from Chateaubriand—and, whether truth or fiction, certainly no incident could possess stronger susceptibility of poetick embellishment.—A lonely pilgrim, wandering thro' the woods, in musing, melancholy mood, is startled at the appearance of a Serpent just in the act of darting upon him, with his envenomed fangs—fear held him, for a moment, in suspense, till suddenly recollecting the magick power of musick, he seizes his flute,

“And meets his foe upon enchanted ground—
See! as the plaintive melody is flung,
The lightnings flash fades on the Serpent's tongue;
The uncoiling reptile, o'er each shining fold,
Throws changeful clouds of azure, green and gold:
A softer lustre twinkles in his eye;
His neck is burnish'd with a glossier dye;

His slippery scales grow smoother to the sight,
And his relaxing circles roll in light.
Slowly the charm retires;—with waving sides,
Along its track, the graceful listener glides,
While musick throws her silver cloud around,
And bears her votary off in majick folds of sound.”

In the remaining scenes of the poem, the author has given the reins to his imagination; and has shown, that if he had taste and judgment to select, he had also genius to invent. The scene, which his fancy has painted from “Caledonia's hill,” is particularly fine—the conceptions are bold and original—the expressions strong and vigorous—and the description in the highest degree poetical. Can there be a finer picture of a youthful minstrel, roused from his slumbers, by the huntsman's “clamorous horn,” and eager to greet the beams of day, with his song of happiness?

“Lark-like, he mounts o'er grey rocks, thunder-riven
Lark-like, he cleaves the white mist, tempest-driven,
And Lark-like carols, as the cliff he climbs
Whose oaks were vocal with his earliest rhymes.”

And, who will read the following lines, and not feel the genial rays of a rising sun?
“—————heaven's gates unbar,
And on the world a tide of glory rushes,
Burns on the hill, and down the valley blushes.”

Indeed the whole of this Highland scenery, is one continued blaze of poetick fire—every line breathes the melody of musick—every image has its appropriate metaphor. Night descends, with
“The dew drops dripping from her dusky wings”
The majestick oaks,
“Toss their old arms, and challenge every storm.”

And when he has led his “youthful minstrel,” in the gloom of night, to an old and Gothic church, to seek a shelter from the threatening storm—o a church, in which the mouldering hand of time had just spared enough, to raise the reverence of superstition; where
“The cross is crumbled, and the crossier crush'd.”
—where fancy sees a Ghost, in every form, and hears a spirit, on every blast; the poet, fired with the sublimity of his conceptions, rises at once to the majesty of song—
“Yes! 'tis some Spirit that those skies deform,
And wraps in billowy clouds that hill of storms.
Yes! 'tis a Spirit in those vaults that dwells,
Illumes that hall, & murmurs in those cells.
Yes, 'tis some Spirit on the blast that rides,
And wakes the eternal tumult of the tides.”

“That Mighty Spirit once from Teman came;
Clouds were his chariot, and his coursers flame.
Bow'd the perpetual hills;—the rivers fled;
Green ocean trembled to his deepest bed;
Earth shrunk aghast:—eternal mountains burn'd,
And his red axle thunder'd as it turn'd.”

The author concludes with an address to the Deity, modest, pious, and appropriate—we have before observed, that, as the production of an American, we have read this poem with delight; but, though we should draw upon our backs, the whole host of English and Scotch critics and Reviewers, we are not afraid to go still farther, and pronounce that no poet of the present day, of any country, has evinced stronger powers of genius, clearer perceptions, a more chastened fancy, or a more correct and refined taste. It may be objected, that he has deviated from the rigid rules of poetry, the occasional introduction of an Alexandrine, and the frequent use of final dissyllables; thus changing the measure, and impairing the heroic gravity of pentameter verse. But we do not consider this, by any means, a defect; on the contrary, it gives a pleasing variety, and relieves that monotony, which will sometimes fatigue the reader, even in the most sublime productions. We have remarked the frequent variation of the caesura, as a striking beauty in the poem before us—it forces the reader to understand what he is reading, and it prevents the possibility of his running into the *sing-song school-boy whine*, which seems so naturally to belong to those poems, where the pause constantly occurs upon the same syllable. Nothing can be more disgusting than alliteration when too often repeated, or when it seems to be the effect of labour and study—but when it occurs simply, naturally and unaffectedly, when the sense is not strained to produce it, we look upon it as a pleasing embellishment.

FROM SOUTH AMERICA.
(Translated from the *Freeman's Journal*.)
Gregor M Gregor, General of Brigade in the Republican Armies, and Commander in Chief of that of the Centre.
To the inhabitants of Barcelona!
BARCELONENSE!

Liberty, offspring of Heaven, has descended upon the heights of Occuman, and Chorony—and her voice, terrible to tyrants, has resounded through the deep valleys of Aragua, over the vast plains of the Ypire and the Oronoko, and in the silent caverns, where innocence and modesty sought shelter from the Spaniards among tigers. At her cry, the most powerful bulwarks of despotism crumbled into dust. Their armies were scattered like heaps of sand driven before the hurricane—and neither the strongest, most courageous, or best disciplined of them all, were able to make a stand for a moment in the advantageous post of the Alacran, without being completely destroyed. But few obstacles remain for you to overcome—the operation of mere force and courage is brought to an end—and already is the time to begin the exercise of wisdom and virtue. Let a brazen wall divide the past transactions from those which are before us; every thing forgiven, feel no other hatred but that of Despotism, nor any other attachment but that to Liberty.

Barcelonaese!
You will have the reward and honor of being the first to assist in the furtherance of this illustrious transaction. Give to the people of Venezuela, the most splendid example of republican liberality, patriotism, union, and brotherly concord. Let them see that the instructions of experience have not been lost upon you: in short, let us endeavor to lay the foundation upon firm principles, of a government, free and beneficial, qualified to raise our country to that exalted rank of power and happiness, which nature spontaneously would have guided it to, but for the stupid and deplorable sway of the Spaniards.

Head-Quarters, at the Carito, September 11, 1819.
(Signed) GREGOR M'GREGOR.

Important from South America.
Mr. M'Fadon, who came passenger in the Highflyer, 32 days from Boquilla de Piedras, has politely communicated to the Editors of the Baltimore Patriot the following important intelligence:

The fort Montebland, which commands the King's Road, near the cities of Orizavi and Cordova, was captured Nov. 15th, by a force of two thousand five hundred Spanish royalists, by means of treachery. Several attacks were repulsed by the fort; but two companies of royalists, throwing down their arms, and rushing into the fort under pretence of joining the patriots, having arms put in their hands by the latter, in the night rose upon them, and in conjunction with the troops without subdued the garrison.

Gen. Vittoria, the patriot commander of the province, was in his turn besieging the royalists—he had a force blockading the cities of Xalapa, Orizava and Cordova.

The royalists were advancing from Vera Cruz, 1000 strong, upon Boquilla, which is garrisoned by only 75 men, and would probably have to surrender.

The Port of Guzalcos was attacked in the Month of October last, by General Teran, who was defeated with the loss of 400 men.—Wm. D. Robinson, Esq. was killed among them.

Shark eat Shark.—It will be seen by an article from the Trinidad Courant in our columns to-day, that the British are preying upon each other, being in the course of events, debarred from pirating upon their neighbors. An obsolete law has been revived, which gives some of them a legitimate right to seize & convert to their own use, the property of others. We are told by a master of a vessel arrived at this port, a few days since, from the West Indies, that the officers of government enter on board British merchantmen, and demand to know the number of British sailors in the crews, at the same time intimating their intention to impress them. The masters of the vessels, fearful of the result if they tell the truth, represent their crews to be composed mostly of foreigners. The confession, thus insidiously obtained, is made use of to procure the confiscation of the vessels, for a violation of the navigation laws. “And so they wrap it up!”
Providence Patriot.

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