

Literature, &c.

British Magazines for October.

From Blackwood's Magazine.

THIERRY'S HISTORY OF THE GAULS.*

'Tis a pleasant thing to turn from the present, with its turmoil and its noise, its clank of engines and its pallid artisans, its political strife and its social disorganization, to the calm and quiet records of the past—to the contemplation of bygone greatness; of kingdoms which have passed away,—of cities whose site is marked only by the mouldering column and the time worn wall—of men with whose name the world once rang, but whose very tombs are now unknown. If there is anything calculated to enlarge the mind, it is this; for it is only by a careful study of the past that we come to know how duly to appreciate the present. Without this we magnify the present; we imagine that the future will be like unto it; we form our ideas, we base our calculations upon it alone; we forget the maxim of the Eastern sage, that "this too shall pass away." It is by the study of history that we overcome this otherwise inevitable tendency; we learn from it that other nations have been as great as we, and that they are now forgotten—that a former civilization, a fair and costly edifice which seemed to be perfect of its kind, has crumbled before the assaults of time, and left not a trace behind. There is a still small voice issuing forth from the ruins of Babylon, which will teach more to the thinking mind than all the dogmas and theories of modern speculators.

When we turn to the study of ancient history, our attention is immediately riveted on the mighty name of Rome. Even the history of Greece cannot compare with it in interest. Greece was always great in the arts, and for long she was eminent in arms; but the arms of her citizens were too often turned against each other; and the mind gets fatigued and perplexed in attempting to follow the endless maze of politics, and the constant succession of unimportant wars. There are, indeed, many splendid episodes in her history, such as the Persian war, the retreat of the Ten Thousand, a few actions in the Peloponnesian contest, the whole of the Theban campaigns of Epaminondas; but the intervening periods have but a faint interest to the general reader, till we come down to the period of the Macedonian monarchy. This, indeed, is the great act in the drama of Grecian history. Who can peruse without interest the accounts of the glorious reign of Alexander; of that man who, issuing from the mountains of Macedonia, riveted the fetters of despotism on Greece, which had grown unworthy of freedom, and carried his victorious arms over the fertile plains of Palestine, till he stood a conqueror amidst the palaces of Persepolis, and finally only on the frontiers of Hindostan, arrested in his progress not by the arms of his enemies but by the revolt of his soldiers? He flung a halo of glory around the last days of Greece, like the bright light of a meteor, whose course he resembled equally in the rapidity and brilliancy of his career. With him dies the interest of Grecian story: the intrigues and disputes of his successors, destitute of general interest, served but to pave the way for the progress of a mightier power.

Of greater interest even than this is the history of Rome. Her conquests were not merely the glorious and dazzling achievements of one man, which owed their existence to his talents, and crumbled to pieces at his death; they were slow and gradual in their progress—the effects of a deep and firm policy; they were not made in a day, but they endured for a thousand years. No country presents such interest to the politician and the soldier. To the one, the rise and progress of her constitution; her internal struggles; the balance of political power in the state; her policy, her principles of government; the administration and treatment of the many nations which composed her vast empire, must ever be the subject of deep and careful study: while to the other the campaigns of Hannibal, the wars of Cæsar, and the long line of her military annals, present a wild field for investigation and instruction—an inexhaustible topic for philosophic reflection.

But there is one subject connected with the progress of the Roman empire which has been unduly neglected, and without a perfect understanding of which we cannot justly appreciate either the civil or military policy of that state. We mean the history of the nations who came in contact with her—viz the Carthaginians, the Gauls, the Spaniards. The ancient historians belonged exclusively to Greece or Rome; they looked upon all other nations except themselves as barbarous; and they never related their history except incidentally, and in so far as it was connected with that of these two countries. Modern historians, following in their track, and attracted by the splendour of their names, deviated not from the beaten path; and a thick veil still hung over the semi-barbarous neighbors and enemies of Rome. The history of no one of these nations was more interesting, or in many points involved in greater obscurity than that of the GAULS.

Nowhere amongst the ancient writers could any connected account of the origin or progress of this nation be found; scattered notices of them alone could be discovered interspersed incidentally amongst other matter, and these notices were frequently inconsistent.

* Histoire des Gaulois, par M. Amadee Thierry. Paris.

This is particularly the case as regards their early history; in later times when they came into more immediate contact with the Romans, a more connected and minute account of them has been preserved. In the lively pages of Livy, and in the more accurate narrative of Polybius, a considerable mass of information on this subject may be found; while a clear light has been thrown on many parts of their latter history by the narrative of Appian, the lives of Plutarch, and, above all, by the Commentaries of Cæsar. But all this information, scattered over a multiplicity of authors, could give us no conception of their history as a people. An author was still wanting to collect all these together, so as to present us with something like a continuous history. But to do this was no easy task: the materials were scanty and often contradictory,—they were all written in a spirit hostile to the Gauls; a deep vein of prejudice and national partiality ran high and tarnished them all; the motives of that people were misrepresented, their actions falsified; the historians often understood little of their institutions and their character. From such materials it required no common man to be able to deduce a clear and impartial narrative; it required great talent and deep research—the accuracy of the scholar and the spirit of the philosopher, the acuteness of the critic joined to the eye of the painter. Such a man has been found in Amadee Thierry. His History of the Gauls is a work of rare merit—a work which must ever be in the hand of every one who would understand the history of antiquity.

To whatever country of the ancient world we turn, we find that the Gaul has preceded us, either as the savage conqueror or the little less savage mercenary. Issuing originally from the East, that boundless cradle of the human race, we soon find him contending with the German for his morass, with the Spaniard for his gold—traversing the sands of Africa, and pillaging the plains of Greece—founding a kingdom in the midst of Asiatic luxury, and bearing his conquering lance beneath the Capitol of Rome. But a mightier spirit soon rose to rule the storm. In vain the courage of the Gaul, allied with the power of Carthage, and directed by the genius of Hannibal, maintained for years a desperate and doubtful contest in the heart of Italy. The power of Rome kept steadily advancing: Greece soon fell beneath her conquering arm; and the fleets of Carthage no longer ruled the wave. The Spaniard, after many a hard fought field, at last sank into sullen submission; and the Galatians, degenerating under the influence of Asiatic manners, proved unequal to the contest; the Gaul, instead of invading the land of the foreigner, could with difficulty maintain his own; and soon the eagle of the Capitol spread its wings over a Transalpine province. But the free spirit of the Gaul now made a mighty effort to rend asunder the bonds which encircled it; and a countless multitude, after ravaging Spain, poured down into Italy: the Roman empire rocked to its foundation, when Marius, hastening over from his African conquests, saved his country by the glorious and bloody victory of Aquæ Sextiæ. Yet a little while and the legions of Rome, under the orders of Cæsar, traversing with fire and sword their country, retaliated on the Gaul the calamities he had often inflicted on others, subdued his proud spirit, and forged for him, amidst seas of blood, those fetters which were finally riveted by the policy of Augustus. Such is a brief outline of the heart stirring story of this singular and interesting race.

One of the most interesting parts of Thierry's work is the Introduction. He there gives a brief view of the Gaulish race: its division into two great branches, the Gaul and the Kimry, and the periods into which the history of this people naturally divides itself. A considerable part of it is taken up in proving that this people do in reality consist of two great branches, the Gaul and the Kimry. This, we think, he has clearly and satisfactorily shown, by evidences drawn both from the language and from the historical accounts which have been preserved to us regarding them. His character of the Gauls as a people is ably and well given; but here we must let him speak for himself:—

"The salient characteristics of the Gaulish family—those which distinguish it the most, in my opinion, from the other races of men—may be thus summed up:—A personal bravery unequalled amongst the people of antiquity; a spirit frank, impetuous, open to every impression, eminently intelligent; but joined to that, an extreme frivolity, want of constancy, a marked repugnance to the ideas of discipline and order so strong in the German race, much ostentation—in fine, a perpetual disunion, the consequences of excessive vanity. If we wish to compare, in a few words, the Gaulish family with that German family to whom we have just alluded, we may say that the personal sentiment, the individual I, is too much developed amongst the former, and that amongst the latter it is not sufficiently so. Thus we find, in every page of Gaulish story, original characters who strongly excite and concentrate upon themselves our sympathy, causing us to forget the masses; whilst, in the history of the Germans, it is generally the masses who produce the effect. Such is the general character of the people of the Gaulish blood; but in that character itself, an observation of facts leads us to recognize two distinct shades corresponding to two distinct branches of the family, or to use the expression consecrated by history, to two distinct races. One of these races—that which I designate by the name of the Gauls—presents in the most marked manner all the natural dispositions, all the faults and all the virtues of the family; to it belong, in their purest state, the individual types of the Gaul. The

other, the Kimry, less active, less spiritual perhaps, possesses in return more weight and stability; it is in its bosom principally that we remark the institutions of classification and order; it is there that the ideas of theocracy and monarchy longest maintain their sway."—(l. iv. vi.)

How important and how little attended to is this character of the different races of men! How perfectly is it preserved under all situations and under all circumstances! No lapse of time can change, no distance can efface it. Nowhere do we see this more distinctly than in America: there how marked is the difference of the Spanish race in the South and the Anglo-Saxon in the North! And from this we may draw a deeply important practical lesson; viz the danger of attempting to force on one race institutions fitted to another. Under a free government, the Anglo-Saxon in the north flourished and increased, and became a mighty people. Under a despotic sway, the Spaniard in the south was slowly but surely treading that path which would ultimately have led to national greatness, when a revolution, nourished by English gold, and rendered victorious by English arms, inflicted what was to him the curse of free institutions. Under their influence, commerce has fled from the shores of New Spain; the gold mines of Peru lie unworked; population has retrograded; the fertile land has returned to a state of nature; and anarchy, usurping the place of government, has involved the country in ruin and desolation. Nor is this the only instance of the effect of free institutions on the Spanish race. In Old Spain the same experiment has been tried, and has produced the same result. Under this withering effect, the empire of Spain and the Indies has passed away; the mother country, torn by internal dissensions, has fallen from her proud estate, and can with difficulty drag on a precarious existence amidst all the tumult and blood of incessant revolutions. How long will it be ere we learn that free institutions are the Amreeta cup of nations—the greatest of all blessings or the greatest of all curses, according to the race on which it is conferred.

(To be Continued.)

From the Dublin University Magazine.

CEYLON.

[From a review of several works on this island, in the above-named periodical, we make the following selections.]

We have taken up these works mainly for their strange adventures and wild sports in the East; but before we notice them we must say a word or two on the importance and rising interest of Ceylon,—a subject which we are glad to have the opportunity of introducing, though it be but briefly.

"Our power in India has," as Warren Hastings remarked, "often vibrated to the edge of perdition, and has been at all times suspended by a thread so fine, that the touch of chance might break or the breath of opinion dissolve it." This view is, we have reason to apprehend, applicable still; and should ever the disasters touch take place, the importance of Ceylon will be acknowledged by all. Were we driven from continental India, this island affords us not only the most favourable point for regaining the lost dominion, but would, together with Bombay and the Mauritius, secure us, in any case, the commerce of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, and the command of the Indian seas. Its value, in this respect, was seen by our predecessors, for, said a king of Portugal, "let all India be lost, so that Ceylon be saved." It is then the obvious duty of our government to make this island thoroughly our own; ours not merely by road-making and military establishments, but by effective civilization, by educating the people in industry and moral habits, teaching them true religion, and by colonization. All the interests of this possession are, we believe, safe in the hands of the distinguished nobleman now at the head of our colonies, and we advert to them only in connection with our object of making known its advantages to such as are about to emigrate. It is singular, while our colonists fly to the solitudes of Australia, or seek the snow-clad plains and gloomy pine-woods of Canada, they think not of the palm forests and cinnamon groves of Ceylon—of an island which, if it be not, as it is pretended to be, the paradise of the past, is certainly the Eden of our day; whose fragrance is scented nine leagues off at sea; where the climate is, over a great extent of it, favourable to Europeans and where winter is unknown. Large districts there are fit for agriculture, and while the cultivation of many of its products affords to emigrants of the better class a prospect of wealth, the poorest settler may count on immediate means of subsistence. Peacocks, and jungle-fowl resembling pheasants, buffaloes, and deer, are to be had for shooting; two crops of oranges may be gathered in the year, and honey is so abundant that it is made use of for seasoning meat, as salt in other countries. Far from having the burnt-up look and botch-smell of India, Ceylon is marked by its everlasting verdure; and the stranger on landing there finds himself in a climate which although near the line, is tempered by sea-breezes, and by being, in no part of it remote from a high-mountain range. To our painting of this fairy-land we may add that its very stones are precious. Rubies, sapphires, cinnamon-stone topaz, cat's-eye, bircon, being often found there of a very fine quality. Lastly, there is a pearl-fishery off its shores, which though, we believe, neither well managed nor understood has been long the source of considerable wealth. We are but slightly touching on a few of its capabilities, but shall notice them, as well as the draw-banks, a little more at length just now.

Ceylon is some what less—about a sixth—than Ireland; and while, like it (had we peace, it might support a population of twenty millions it frequently experienced famines at a period when its inhabitants did not amount to more than 150,000. The numbers there at present reach about a million and a half which, for the most fertile spot in the world is little more than desolation. In a few lines we shall glance at the history of the island, daily becoming of more importance to us. The origin of the names of most countries is but guessed at. In the earliest account we have of Ceylon it is called Sielan, or Diva, that is, the Island of Sielan; and the Singalese of the present day call it Lanko, Dwipa, or the island of Lanko—all, probably, variations of an early name. The natives are said to resemble the Rojpoos of India from whom they may be, as has been suggested descended. The appellation Singalese by which they are known, is, they say, derived from the word *Sinhala*, which means the blood of the Lion, and they have a fabulous tradition about their descent from that royal beast. The island was known to the Romans by the name of Taprobane, and is mentioned by Pliny and others as famed for its elephants. It appears from the account of Cosmo an Egyptian merchant, that in the time of Justinian that is in the sixth century, Ceylon was largely engaged in commerce with remote parts of the Indian ocean. It still exhibits traces of an early connection with China, and as it is well known that the exclusive policy of that empire and of Japan is of a comparatively modern date, we can easily understand that there were formerly much intercourse between these countries. Marco Polovisited Ceylon in the thirteenth century. He calls it the most beautiful of islands, tells of the pilgrims to Adam's Peak, and this account would describe it very well, even at present. Sir John Mandeville was there some two centuries after, and, it is said, gives a better account of its dimensions than any previous writer. The year 1505 is important in its annals. The son of the Viceroy of Goa, was driven into one of its ports by storm, and thus it became known to the Portuguese. Its commerce at that period had been long declining, as well from a series of invasions by Persians, Arabians, Malabars, as from internal dissensions. The Portuguese formed a settlement there in 1520, and soon after established themselves, held possession there for about a century; when the natives, to escape from their oppressions, made alliance with the Dutch. In the year 1653, the latter people had expelled the Portuguese, and established themselves in their place. The nations, however, made no impression beyond the maritime provinces, being a belt of about thirty miles round the island, the interior, called the kingdom of Kandy, remained unconquered. In 1796, during the Revolutionary war, Ceylon was taken by the English, who only succeeded the Dutch in their districts. The natives of the interior call themselves Kandians. They have fair courage, but are cunning and cruel, which, no doubt, arises in part from their having been long oppressed. Those of the maritime provinces are designated Singalese, and are a people of a gentle but feeble character. The English soon became involved in war with the Kandians, and in 1803 took Kandy, the capital of the kingdom of the same name. Our force was but small, and was menaced by greatly superior numbers, but would, it is believed, have been sufficient, had not the leader failed in firmness. Major Davis, for such was his name, thought fit to capitulate, and ordered his men to ground their arms. They replied that they would be butchered, but the order being repeated, they, evincing their sense of duty, obeyed, and were almost to a man, decapitated. Many of the officers on seeing this, took out their pistols and terminated their own lives. Major Davis, and a very few others survived. This treachery was, to the disgrace of our government, long unavenged. In 1812 there reigned in Kandy a monarch who will be for ever remembered for his cruelties. He name was Sree Wikrimè Rajah Singha. He had impaled several of his chiefs, and his Adikar, or first noble, fearing his displeasure, fled to the English. The king seized the Adikar's wife and children, with his brother and wife, and relatives, amounting in all to seventy persons, and sentenced them all to death. "The children," says an authentic report of the transaction, "were ordered to be decapitated before their mother's face, and their heads to be pounded with her own hands in a rice mortar. Which, to save herself from a diabolical torture and exposure, she submitted to attempt. The eldest boy shrank from the dread ordeal, and clung to his agonized parent for safety, but his youngest brother, stepping forward, encouraged him to submit to his fate, and placed himself before the executioner, by way of setting an example. The last of the children to be beheaded, was an infant at the breast, from which it was forcibly torn away, and its mother's milk was dripping from its innocent mouth as it was put into the hands of the grim executioner." The mother, having stones fastened to her feet, was pushed into a deep tank. Her sister-in-law met the same fate; and the Adikar's brother, though not supposed to have had the least connection with his flight, was at the same time beheaded. Happily for his people, this tyrant extended his atrocities to those under our protection. In 1814, ten Singalese merchants, belonging to the English provinces, were taken up while engaged on business in Kandy, and sent home mutilated, with the ears and noses fastened to their necks. An explanation was demanded—no answer was accorded; whereupon the governor, Sir Robert Brownrigg, marched a force into Kanady; took possession of the capital and kingdom, and relieved the people from such a king and his dynasty for ever. A treaty to this effect was entered into with the chiefs, and the