

VARIOUS

THE MIRROR OF
LITERATURE,
AMUSEMENT, AND
INSTRUCTION. VOLUME
20, NO. 584.
(SUPPLEMENT TO VOL.
20)

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«Public Domain»

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PREFACE

The completion of the Twentieth Volume of this Miscellany presents us with another cause for self-gratulation, and thankful acknowledgement to the reading public. This continued and unimpaired success amidst a myriad of new-born aspirants, is the best proof of our maintenance of public esteem; and so long as our efforts are guided by the same singleness of purpose that first directed them we shall hope for a continuance of such favour. A multitude of contemporaries "whet each other;" "thinking nurseth thinking;" and, in like manner, reading nurseth reading, and awakens a spirit of inquiry, untiring and exhaustless, among all concerned in pursuit and wholesome gratification.

In a retrospect of the hundreds of competitors who have started for the prize of public patronage since our outset, we shall not, perhaps, be accused of vanity in placing to our own account the first appropriation of such means as may have contributed to the partial success of our contemporaries. We owe them nothing but good will; for we rather regard things poetically than politically, and we are anxious to inform and amuse the reader—not to perplex, by constantly reminding him of his uncheery lot in life.

Ten years' establishment in periodical literature may give us a sort of patriarchal feeling towards others; for, with one exception THE MIRROR is the oldest weekly journal of the metropolis. In this comparatively long career, our best energies have been directed to the progressive improvement of each department of the work. The plan of embellishment, which may be said to have originated with THE MIRROR, has been extended and improved, until few subjects are incapable of successful illustration in its pages; due regard being paid to nicety of execution, as well as attractive design. So much for the present, state of our "representative system."

The selection of materials for each sheet of THE MIRROR has been regulated by a desire to extend useful information, and to cultivate healthful indications of public taste. In a journal, like the present, mainly devoted to the accumulation of facts, errors and misstatements are inevitable; but, our own diligence, aided by sharp-sighted Correspondents, has, from time to time, guided us to accuracy in most cases, and directed fruitful inquiry upon matters of no ordinary interest or character. Scientific information, really made popular, and of ready, practical utility, has uniformly found admission in our pages; and, above all, subjects of natural history have received especial attention, in graphic illustrations—which part of our plan has been adopted by every cheap journal of the last four years; or, from the first pictorial description of the Zoological Gardens, before the publication of the catalogue by the Society; while it is a source of gratification to know that within the above period, natural history, from being almost confined to public museums and private cabinets, has become the most popular study and amusement of the present day.

Upon the continued cheapness of our little work, we do not intend to touch, more than by reference to the enlargement of the letter-press as commenced with the present volume. The alteration has, we believe, received general approbation; and, either with regard to the extent of the letter-press, or the condensed character of its subject-matter, we have still the satisfaction of knowing THE MIRROR to continue, as it has often been characterized by contemporaries, "the cheapest publication of the day." Its other merits we are content to leave to the discernment of each reader.

Our future volume will be conducted upon the plan of its predecessors, with such improvements as time and occasion may suggest. To one point, economy of space, we promise our best consideration; though we may not succeed in rivalling Mr. Newberry, who, the good humoured Geoffrey Crayon tells us, was the first that ever filled his mind with the idea of a good and great man. He published all the picture books of his day; and, out of his abundant love for children, he charged "nothing for either paper or print, and only a half-penny for the binding."¹ Rest unto his soul, say we.

This lengthened, but we hope not ill-timed reference to our whole course of Twenty Volumes has left us but little occasion to speak of the present portion, individually; although we trust this reference would be somewhat supererogatory, from the unusual number of Illustrations, and a copious Index to the main subjects, of the volume.

To conclude. We thank all Correspondents for their contributions, and invite their cordial co-operation with our ensuing efforts. So now "*plaudite! valete!*"

December 26, 1832.

¹ Bracebridge Hall, vol. i.

**NOTICES
OF
WASHINGTON IRVING, ESQ.
AND HIS WORKS**



Washington Irving was born, in the State of New York, in the year 1782, and is, consequently, in his fifty-first year. His early life cannot better be told than in his own graceful language, prefixed to the most celebrated of his writings as "the author's account of himself."

"I was always fond of visiting new scenes, and observing strange characters and manners. Even when a mere child I began my travels, and made many tours of discovery into foreign parts and unknown regions of my native city, to the frequent alarm of my parents, and the emolument of the town-crier. As I grew into boyhood I extended the range of my observations. My holiday afternoons

were spent in rambles about the surrounding country. I made myself familiar with all its places famous in history or fable. I knew every spot where a murder or robbery had been committed, or a ghost seen. I visited the neighbouring villages, and added greatly to my stock of knowledge, by noting their habits and customs, and conversing with their sages and great men. I even journeyed one long summer's day to the summit of the most distant hill, from whence I stretched my eye over many a mile of terra incognita, and was astonished to find how vast a globe I inhabited.

"This rambling propensity strengthened with my years. Books of voyages and travels became my passion, and in devouring their contents, I neglected the regular exercises of the school. How wistfully would I wander about the pier heads in fine weather, and watch the parting ships bound to distant climes; with what longing eyes would I gaze after their lessening sails; and waft myself in imagination to the ends of the earth.

"Farther reading and thinking, though they brought this vague inclination into more reasonable bounds, only served to make it more decided. I visited various parts of my own country; and had I been merely influenced by a love of fine scenery, I should have felt little desire to seek elsewhere its gratification; for on no country have the charms of nature been more prodigally lavished. Her mighty lakes, like oceans of liquid silver; her mountains, with their bright aerial tints; her valleys, teeming with wild fertility; her tremendous cataracts, thundering in their solitudes; her boundless plains, waving with spontaneous verdure; her broad, deep rivers, rolling in solemn silence to the ocean; her trackless forests, where vegetation puts forth all its magnificence; her skies, kindling with the magic of summer clouds and glorious sunshine:—no, never need an American look beyond his own country for the sublime and beautiful of natural scenery."²

Mr. Irving began his career, as an author, in periodical literature. His first work was a humorous journal, entitled "Salmagundi, or the Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, Esq. and Others," originally published in numbers in New York, where it met with a very flattering reception. The date of the first paper is Saturday, January 24, 1827.

Salmagundi has been several times reprinted in this country; and it may be acceptable to know, that the cheapest, if not the most elegant, edition may be purchased for twenty-pence. It would be difficult to explain the merits of Salmagundi to the reader, as they are of the most varied character; but, it may be remarked generally, that a vein of quaint humour and human kindness pervades these early papers, which will bring the reader and writer to the best possible terms.

This lively miscellany was followed by a humorous History of New York, with the somewhat droll *nom* of Dedrick Knickerbocker as its author. It possesses considerable merit, with a nice perception of the ludicrous; but, on its first appearance, this recommendation was generally overlooked, whether from the local interest of the subject, or the want of due judgment in its readers, it is difficult to determine.

About this period Mr. Irvine's name was heard in England, almost for the first time; his only claims to public notice resting entirely on Salmagundi, and the History of New York. He was indebted for his introduction to the acquaintance of European readers, to a young fellow-countryman of high attainments, who alludes to the above works and their author in the following terms:—"Mr. Irving has shown much talent and great humour in his Salmagundi and Knickerbocker, and they are exceedingly pleasant books, especially to one who understands the local allusions."

A few years subsequent to the publication of Knickerbocker, Mr. Irving visited England, or the "land of wonders," as he facetely terms our favoured isle. During his stay, he wrote a series of papers, illustrative of English manners, which were chiefly printed in America. These papers were afterwards published in a collected form, in England, under the title of "The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent." and dedicated to Sir Walter Scott, "in testimony of the admiration and affection of the author." In the advertisement to the Sketch-Book, Mr. Irving thus modestly refers to its origin:

² Sketch Book, vol. i.

"The author is aware of the austerity with which the writings of his countrymen have hitherto been treated by British critics: he is conscious too, that much of the contents of his papers can be interesting only in the eyes of American readers. It was not his intention, therefore, to have them reprinted in this country. He has, however, observed several of them from time to time inserted in periodical works of merit, and has understood that it was probable they would be republished in a collective form. He has been induced, therefore, to revise and bring them forward himself, that they may at least come correctly before the public. Should they be deemed of sufficient importance to attract the attention of critics, he solicits for them that courtesy and candour which a stranger has some right to claim, who presents himself at the threshold of a hospitable nation."

Mr. Irving's solicitations were not made in vain, as the rapid sale of several editions must have convinced him; while every journalist in the empire hailed the work as the most beautiful specimen of Transatlantic talent which had been recognised in this country.

The two volumes of the Sketch-Book appeared at different periods; and, at the conclusion of the second, we find the following apologetic postscript: "The author is conscious of the numerous faults and imperfections of his work; and, well aware how little he is disciplined and accomplished in the arts of authorship. His deficiencies are also increased by a diffidence arising from his peculiar situation. He finds himself writing in a strange land, and appearing before a public, which he has been accustomed, from childhood, to regard with the highest feelings of awe and reverence. He is full of solicitude to secure their approbation, yet finds that very solicitude continually embarrassing his powers, and depriving him of that ease and confidence which are necessary to successful exertion. Still the kindness with which he is treated encourages him to go on, hoping that, in time, he may acquire a steadier footing; and thus he proceeds, half venturing, half shrinking, surprised at his own good fortune, and wondering at his own temerity."

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