

XLVIII.—An Inquiry into the State of Literature and the Arts among the ancient Tuscans, by J. Mac Gregor, Esq.

IN the spirit of conjectural history, it has been a supposition of late, cherished by some among the learned and curious, that the noble piles, whose ruins remain at Pæstum, as well as the various existing monuments of the arts of antient Etruria, have been the product of science and improvement, not derived from Greece or the East, but the native growth of Italy; or, however, that, whether Italy received the arts from the lofty plains of Tartary, or from the submerged Atlantic continent, she had them before Greece, and at least assisted the Eastern nations in communicating them to that country.

This opinion, which appears to have originated with the Abbe Perron, and to have been widely propagated by the pen of the philosophic Bailli, is not, so far as I have been able to trace it, founded upon historical records; but as it has been very generally adopted, and not yet formally refuted, I have ventured to consider an historical discussion of the question respecting the remote civilization of the ancient Tuscans, a subject worthy of your attention on the present occasion.

With regard to the origin of this people, Herodotus informs us,* that they were a colony from Lydia, who emigrated under the conduct of Tyrrhenus, son of Atys, King of Lydia, about B. C. 700. “Almost all the writers of antiquity,” says Mr. Dunlop,† “though varying in particulars, have followed, in general, the tradition of Herodotus concerning the descent of the Etruscans. Cicero, Strabo, Velleius Paterculus, Seneca, Pliny, Plutarch, Servius, and Catullus, all affirm that they came from Lydia. The account of the departure of the colony by Herodotus is exceedingly plausible, and its truth appears to be corroborated, if not

* Lib. i. c. 7.

† *Hist. Roman Literature*, vol. i. p. 6-7.

confirmed, by certain resemblances in the language, religion, and pastimes of the Lydians, and of the ancient Etruscans. The manners, too, and customs of the Lydians, did not differ essentially from those of the Greeks; and the Princes of Lydia, like the Sovereigns of Persia, being accustomed to employ Phœnician or Egyptian sailors, the colony of Lydians which settled in Italy, might thus contain a mixture of such people, and present those appearances which have led some Antiquaries to consider the Etruscans as Phœnicians or Egyptians, while others have regarded them as Greeks."

The writers of the *Ancient Universal History* have exerted their usual diligence upon this subject. "Italy," say they, "in ancient times, was parceled out into many petty states. In after ages, when the Gauls settled in the western, and the Greeks in the eastern provinces, it was divided into three great parts, Gallia Cisalpina, Italy properly so called, and Magna Grecia. Italy comprehended Etruria, Umbria, Sabinum, Latium, Piscenum, the countries of the Vestini, Marrucini, Peligni, Marsi, Frentani, Samnites, Hirpini, Campani, and Piscentini. Etruria was divided into twelve tribes, each of which had their peculiar city whence they borrowed their names. The modern names of these cities are Bolsena, Chiusi, Perugia, Cortona, Arezzo, Civita, Castellana, Volterra, Grosseto, and Cervetero; Veii, Ceraë, and Tarquinii being in ruins. They had twelve other cities on the coast, and twelve or thirteen inland. The Etrurians were also called Tuscans, and by the Greeks Tyrrhenians; both Greek and Latin authors bring them from Lydia. When they arrived in Italy they took possession of the country of the Umbrians, whom they drove out. It lay between the Adriatic Sea and the Appenines; they possessed themselves afterwards of the territories of Nola and Capua, and of almost all the sea coast which from them took the name of Tyrrhenian. These countries they held until the invasion of the Gauls, by whom they were driven from the coast of the Hadriatic, and from Campania by the Latins, by which they were confined to the small territory which lies between the Macra and the Tiber, and is called by all the ancients, Hetruria."*

* Vol. xi.

Another learned writer informs us, that the first inhabitants of Italy appear to have been Illyrians or Thracians, Cantabrians, Celts, Pelasgians, and Etrurians. "The Celts," he adds, "may be imagined to have emigrated from Asia after the Iberians, and before the Thracians and Pelasgians, settling principally in Gaul, and spreading partly into Italy, under the name of Ausonians and Umbrians. The Etrurians and Umbrians were originally a branch of the Celts from Rhætia, as is shown by the similarity of the names of places as well as by remains of Tuscan art found in that part of the Tyrol; they are supposed to have entered Italy by Trent, about the year 1000, B. C., and to have afterwards improved their taste and workmanship, under Demaratus, of Corinth, who settled in Etruria, 663 B. C."*

Hitherto, our authorities, and they are ample, are unanimously against the notion of the Etrurians being aborigines of Italy, although the learned author of the article alluded to in the *Quarterly Review*, differs from Herodotus in regard to their foreign derivation. But, besides this copious attestation, there are difficulties of another nature to be surmounted by those who contend for their being "men of the soil;" they will have to fix the original locality of most of the numerous savage tribes who formerly occupied Italy, and who, from various causes incident to such a condition of life, were frequently compelled to change their abode.

Pliny, for instance, mentions that old Latium was successively occupied by the Aborigines, Pelasgi, Arcadians, Sicilians, Aruncanes, and Rutilians—that the Ligurians changed their seats *thirty* times—that Etruria often changed its name, and was successively occupied by the Umbrians, Pelasgians, and Lydians.† The same author informs us, that in Latium, which anciently extended from the Tiber to the Liris, fifty-three states have perished without leaving a trace behind; and, that according to the report of Mutianus, the consul, the Pomptine Marsh was once a dry plain, in which stood twenty three cities ‡ Amid

* *Quarterly Review*, vol. x. art. 12.—Supposed to be by the late Dr. Young.

† Lib. iii. ch. 5.

‡ Idem *Illedem*.

these political and natural dislocations, it seems impossible to fix, in the absence of positive history, the chorographical position of unsettled tribes whose remote antiquity deprives us of all particular knowledge of them.

The country in which the Lydians ultimately settled was the district of Italy proper, now known as the State of Tuscany, which extends from the mouth of the Tiber 150 miles westward, confining on the territories of Lucca and Genoa in that direction, with a breadth of nearly 100 miles inland. In their primitive state, however, they appear not to have been confined to the limits which preserve their name. Polybius states,* that the Tyrrhenians occupied part of Cisalpine Gaul beyond the Po. It would seem that they chiefly inhabited the west of Lombardy, but their settlements may be traced eastward to the shores of the Adriatic. They were dispossessed of their Transpadane territories by the Gauls, who vanquished them in the neighbourhood of the Tesino, about the year 600 B. C., when they founded Milan in the country of the Insubres.

After this, according to Polybius, they settled in Campania, in the country round Capua and Nola called then, the Phlegræan fields, where they gained great fame by their exploits. "Whatever," he adds, "we read in history concerning the ancient dynasties and fortunes of this people, must all be referred, not to the country which they possess at present, but to the plains just mentioned, whose fertility and extent afforded them the means of becoming great and powerful.

Here an historical difficulty occurs. From Herodotus, we learn that the Etruscans first settled in Tuscany before the Trojan war. After this, from other respectable authors, we find Etruscans in Lombardy beyond the Po, who possessed the country from Liguria, at the foot of the Western Alps, to the territories of the Veneti at the head of the Adriatic. Afterwards, according to Polybius and Livy, we find them in Campania Felix (*Campi Phlegræi*), a district situated 150 miles south of Etruria proper, or Tuscany, the intervening country being occupied by the Latins, the Volsci, and the Ausones. Thus we have a

* *Gen. Hist.* B. ii. ch. 2.

northern, middle, and southern Etruria, each at a great distance from the other, and whose relative positions Mr. Niebuhr has indicated in a map of the ancient nations of Italy, prefixed to the translation of his *Roman History*. Which of the three is the mother country as regards Italy, seems still problematical. Livy, however, says (Lib. v. c. 33), that the Rhætii and other Alpine tribes were Etruscans of the plain, who retired from the invading Gauls to the Alps. From history, we likewise learn, that obscure traditions existed respecting the capture of Pisa and the surrounding country, from the Umbri, by the Tyrrhenians, and this line of conquest seems to be pointed out by Pliny (iii. 8), who says, that the Umbri, the most ancient nation in Italy, were dispossessed by the Pelasgi; a term which will here appropriately apply to the Lydian emigrants, and the circumstance is corroborated by Dionysius and Strabo, who state, that the Tuscans acquired by conquest Falerii, Groviscæ, Alsium, Fescennium, and Saturnia. Further, as the account of Herodotus, respecting the Lydian migration, was universally received in the time of Livy, and as he enumerates eight Etruscan states (lib. xxviii. c. 45), who spontaneously forwarded the armaments of Scipio, all within the kingdom of Tuscany, it seems probable, that this kingdom was the original Etruria. If, on the contrary, they were a Celtic tribe, as supposed by the writer alluded to in the *Quarterly Review*, the probability would go in favour of Cisalpine Gaul. How they came to form important establishments in Campania is equally uncertain. Dionysius (lib. i. c. 25-29) says, that by Tyrrhenia, the Greeks understood all the western coast of Italy, from the Bay of Naples to beyond the Arno, thus including the cantons between the Vulturnus and the Tiber.

Velleius Paterculus informs us (lib. i. c. 7), that Capua and Nola were founded forty-eight years before Rome, by the Etruscans, who appear, from Strabo, to have also possessed twelve cities in this quarter. Again, Livy states (lib. iv. c. 37), that they were defeated by the Samnites at Vulturnum or Capua, in the year of the city 318, so that they must have possessed this district 366 years. After this date, the Campanian Tuscans disappear. From the Roman history, however, it

is evident, that neither the northern nor the southern Etruscans were the people with whom the early Romans contended for such a length of time ; and from whom they are said to have borrowed many pontifical and military institutions ; for they had no communication with states at a distance from the sphere of their military operations. Nor are the southern Etruscans to be identified with the northern horde, who were dislodged by the Gauls in the reign of Ancus Martius, for the former are noticed as seated in Campania 154 years before the invasion of the Gauls. The question of the primitive seat of the Etruscans in Italy, appears, upon the whole, to be one of difficulty. The tenour of ancient history seems to favour the claim of Tuscany to this distinction, and that the others were colonies from thence ; the southern, in all probability, having gone by sea. But I am not satisfied, that these ever attained to that degree of political power and skill in the arts which Polybius supposes ; for the Greeks, who settled in this country in the eighth century B. C., were then prosperous and powerful. Nor do I think those specimens of art which have been found in this district an argument in favour of his opinion, because they were not necessarily manufactured on the spot. Besides, Polybius, who evinces such penetration as an historian of his own times, is to be read with caution, in regard to matters of remote antiquity, which he despised as fabulous. Leaving this intricacy, I proceed to a few observations on the state of their Literature.

On this head, Mr. Dunlop observes, from Lanzi, the most correct writer on the subject, that whatever may have been their descent, their religion, learning, language, and arts, must be referred to a Greek origin, and not to the Egyptians, as Gori and Caylus supposed. The period of Etruscan perfection in the arts, and the formation of those vases which we now admire, was posterior, he maintains, to the subjugation of Etruria by the Romans, and, at a time when an intercourse with Greece had rendered the Etruscans familiar with models of Grecian perfection. As to the language, he does not, indeed, deny, that all languages came originally from the East, and that many Greek words sprang from Hebrew roots ; but there are in the Etruscan tongue,

he asserts, such clear traces of Hellenism, or ancient Greek, particularly in the names of Gods and heroes, that it is impossible to ascribe its origin to any other source. In particular, he attempts to show, from the "inscriptions on the Eugubian Tables, that the Etruscan language was the Æolic Greek, since it has neither the monosyllables characteristic of northern tongues, nor the affixes and suffixes peculiar to oriental dialects.*

The diffusion of the language and arts of Greece may be naturally attributed to the numerous colonies, chiefly of Achæans of Peloponnesus, and of Dorians, who settled in Italy, about the commencement of the Roman æra. Mr. Mitford, in his *History of Greece*,† informs us, that the Ligurians were supposed a colony from Greece; and that Pisa and Ceraë, in Tuscany, Formiæ, Antium, Aricia, Ardea, Tibur, and Præneste, in Latium, and even Rome itself, were held to be Grecian towns. He observes, further, that "a colony of later date, and concerning which testimony is more ample and more precise, may have carried science and the arts into Tuscany, in a state of at least as much advancement as they seem ever to have attained there. It was led by Demaratus, of Corinth, upon occasion of the revolution of that city, through which the democratical party under Cypselus, became masters of the government, when the oligarchical chiefs, and particularly the family of the Bacchiads, of which Demaratus is said to have been one, found it necessary to seek settlements elsewhere. Demaratus found in Tarquinii, the principal city of Tuscany, a safe and honourable retreat for himself and dependents. He married a lady of high rank there, and died in the peaceable possession of wealth, then esteemed extraordinary. His son, Tarquinius Priscus, became King of Rome, by election of the Roman people. "The concurrence of testimonies," says Mr. Mitford, "both Greek and Roman, to these facts of so early an age, seems to go far towards proving one of two things; either that the Tuscans, and it might be added, the Romans, esteemed the Corinthians a kindred people, or that they found them a people superior to themselves in arts and general knowledge."

* *Hist. of Roman Literature*, v. i. pp. 15, 16, 17.

† Vol. ii. p. 277-8.

The writer of the article in the *Quarterly Review*, alluded to above, says, that "the Latin is evidently derived from the Celtic, mixed with Greek, because Rome, from its situation, would naturally receive much of the language of these various nations, and much of Greek from the south of Italy. Its character as a derivative language may be observed in the adoption of insulated terms, independently of the simpler words from which they are deduced." It thus appears, that the Greeks were a more influential people in Italy in the first age of Rome, than the Etrurians, and their language more prevalent than the Tuscan. Some imagine from the resemblance of the Etruscan letters to the Phœnician, and from the latter people having established factories round the coast of Italy in remote times, that the former were indebted to them for their alphabet, and the arts which they practised. But, Bochart expresses his belief, that the Etruscan arts were derived from Greece, and denies that there is any resemblance in the languages of Etruria and Phœnicia.*

The poverty of the Etruscan Literature is more particularly disclosed by the nature of their books, most of which were extant, and well known at Rome towards the close of the republic, and appear to have been of the most frivolous description. Cicero, and other Latin writers, who have the Greek authors perpetually in their mouths, scarcely allude to any except treatises on augury and divination; and the only titles of their books, recorded by Roman writers, are the *Libri Fatales*, *Libri Haruspicinæ*, *Sacra Acherontia*, *Fulgurales et Rituales Libri*. It is said, indeed, that the Etruscans cultivated a certain species of poetry, sung or declaimed during the pomp of sacrifices, or celebration of marriages. It is evident, however, that these Etruscan songs or hymns were of the very rudest description, and probably were never reduced into writing. Livy's account of their dramatic performances (lib. viii. sec. 2) shows that they did not excel the Greeks in the days of Thespis. Censorinus informs us, on the authority of Varro, that they had their chroniclers and historians. "In Tuscis Historiis quæ octavo, eorum seculo scripta sunt." But this eighth century of the Etruscans, accord-

* *Geographia Sacra* (De Coloniis, lib. i.)

ing to the chronology followed by Lanzi, would be as late as the sixth century of Rome; and, besides, it is evident from the context, that those pretended histories, were, in fact, mere registers of the foundations of cities, and the births and deaths of individuals. The celebrated Eugubian Tables (so called from having been dug up at Eugubium or Gubbio, a city of ancient Umbria A. D. 1444,) are no longer an argument for a very ancient knowledge of writing among the Etruscans. Five out of the seven are in the old Etruscan character, the others in modern Roman letters; notwithstanding which, Father Gori considers them all of equal antiquity, and to have been composed two generations before the Trojan war. It has been ascertained, however, that those in the Etruscan character were written towards the close of the sixth century of Rome, only a little before the others, in Latin, were composed. In support of this point, it may not be amiss to observe, that Mr. Swinton has proved, in a dissertation printed at Oxford, in 1746 (*De pris. Roman. Liter.*), that the Etruscan letters were used in Rome and in Latium *posterior* to the year of the city 245. The Eugubian Tables, in both languages, consist solely of ordinances for the performance of sacred rites, and religious ceremonies.

Another argument, against the opinion that the Etruscans were a literary people, is derived from the extreme ignorance of the Romans, in letters, during the first five centuries of their history. Dionysius Halicarnassus* informs us that the Romans, Latins, and all the neighbouring nations wrote on tablets of wood before the reign of Ancus Martius; and that the Greek characters were the first used by the Latins. He observes further, that the treaty between Tarquin the Proud and the Gabii was written in Latin words, but with Greek characters, on a wooden shield, covered with the skin of the ox that had been sacrificed on the occasion.

Pliny mentions,† that from ignorance of letters, the supreme officer among the Romans was ordered, by an ancient law, to mark the number of years by driving a nail into the Temple of Minerva; and that the same method of noting time was used by the Volscians, who fixed

* *Antiquit. Roman.* lib. i. c. 35.

† *Nat. Hist.* lib. vii. c. 60.

their nails in the Temple of the Tuscan Goddess, Nortia. In the twelve tables, he also informs us, mention is made only of the east and west points; some years afterwards the south was noted; and the consuls' crier called the hour of noon when he saw the sun between the rostra and Grecostrasis (the place where foreign ambassadors attended), from the door of the Senate-house, and proclaimed the last quarter when it was visible between the *columna Menia* and the jail. This could only be done on clear days, and yet there was no other mode known until the first Punic war. Marcus Val. Messala, in the year of the city 477, introduced an inaccurate sun-dial from Sicily, which was used for 99 years, until one more exact was procured by Martius Philippus, the Censor. Twenty years afterwards the water-clock was introduced, by Scipio Nasica.

The pursuit of letters was neither a native nor predominate taste among the Romans, they were naturalized in the soil of Rome by a few assiduous individuals, reared in the schools of Greece. The age in which Roman literature commenced was that of Lælius and Africanus. It is remarkable that there was no historian of Roman literature among the Romans themselves; particulars concerning it, as also judgments on works now lost, are to be collected from Cicero's writings, and the works of the latter classics, Pliny's *Nat. History*, *Institutes of Quintilian*, *Attic Nights*, &c. The first historical and chronological documents were the *Censor's Tables* and *Fasti Consulares*, which offices were not in existence before the expulsion of the kings. These are, probably, what Livy alludes to (lib iv. c. 20), where he says, "there were very ancient books of the magistrates written on linen, and deposited in the temple of Moneta, and often cited as authority by Licinius Macer.

The early Roman authors were mere translators from the Greek. Fabius Pictor, the most ancient Roman historian, is said by Dionysius to have written in Greek. The next historians were Ennius and Cato the Censor. Pliny informs us,* that Theopompus was the first who wrote an account of Rome, in which he mentioned only that it was taken

* Lib. iii, c. 5.

by the Gauls. Next to him was Clitarchus, who only mentioned an embassy to Alexander the Great. After him Theophrastus wrote a book of Roman history, which he sent to Nicodorus, archon of Athens, anno U. C. 460, but the only particular which Pliny knew of this work was, that it mentioned that Circeii, which was an island in Homer's time, was eight stadii in circumference.

Mr. Niebuhr, in the first volume of his *Roman History*, as translated by Mr. Walter, asserts that "the profane sciences of Etruria, medicine, natural philosophy, and astronomy, together with their numerals, which were afterwards adopted by the Romans, were native and unborrowed, or introduced from the north, the abode of the Gods.* That their alphabet came directly to them, and not through the medium of the Greeks; and that they were acquainted with the art of writing from the most remote times.† That the Literature of the Etruscans was not refined by the Grecians.‡ That they had ancient historical works among them, with which Cato, the elder, and Varro were acquainted, and from which the Emperor Claudius composed his twenty books of Tyrrhenian History."§

I have conjoined these assertions, as the answers will have more force, collectively than singly, and as his reasons are purely negative, I shall draw what I have to say in reply chiefly from the context of his own narrative. Besides, in matters which belong to a period beyond the æra of authentic history, positive evidence cannot be expected either *pro* or *con*. Passing over, therefore, any investigation respecting the northern abode of the Gods, as a *terra incognita*, we find, in the first place, the following observation at p. 129. "The pretenders to philosophical observation have overlooked the fact, that there exists no instance of a people really savage, who have spontaneously advanced to civilization, and, that wherever it has been forced upon them from abroad, a physical destruction of the race has been the consequence, as in the case of the tribes of New California, and the Hottentots of the missions." As it is the opinion among philosophers, that savage ignorance resulted from extent of wandering, it follows from this mode of

*. Page 91.

†. Page 22-90.

‡. Page 90.

§. Page 22.

reasoning, that the Etruscans were either extrinsically enlightened, or were the original stock of mankind, supernaturally illumined. But it is also contradictory of the express declaration of Sallust and Virgil, that the Aborigines of Italy were savages, living in hordes, without laws, or agriculture, subsisting by the chase or upon wild fruits. At pp. 88, 89, he further observes, "It is useless to attempt denying, that, however peculiar may have been the Etruscan science of architecture, all their improvements in statuary were communicated by the Greeks. The antique statues, which are still preserved, evince their original rudeness; the Greeks alone were inspired with the idea of exhibiting the human form in life and beauty. A spark of their genius kindled the sensitive spirit of a sensitive people. This is further proved by the Greek mythology, in many of the most splendid Etruscan works of art. The Tuscans, also, when once enlightened, embodied their own conceptions, with a feeling altogether Grecian. From the use of Grecian mythology in the arts, we may infer their intimacy with the Greek poets. The fables of Thebes and Ilium would not have been presented to the eye, if the mind of the spectator had not been previously familiarized with them by poetry. The whole of the west, even Carthage, was open to Grecian literature." At page 109, "the Greeks, however, diffused their sciences, their literature, and even the civic use of their language, far beyond the countries in their immediate vicinity, *throughout all Italy.*" These, to say the least, are extraordinary admissions in the face of a declaration that "the literature of the Etruscans was not refined by the Grecian."

The expression, that their alphabet came *directly* to them, and not through the medium of the Greeks, is obscure, unless it means that it was sent by the gods; but at page 90 he is more explicit. "The Etruscan alphabet," he there informs us, "was formed like the Greek, from that which, among the many originally different Asiatic, was universally adopted throughout Europe in a variety of imitations." Here also is an admission that the Etruscan and Greek languages were cognate branches of the same stock; but it would occupy too much time to attempt to shew the extent of the obligations of the Etruscans

to the Greeks, in regard to their alphabetical characters. Of the nature of their ancient historical books, we have become pretty well acquainted from the researches of Mr. Dunlop. Many of these, in possession of the Romans, no doubt perished in the conflagration of Rome, in the year of the city 229, as stated by Livy; others, probably, when it was burnt by the Gauls. Yet, says Mr. Niebuhr, page 23, "in Cato's time the historical monuments, consisting of books and of ancient monumental inscriptions on stone or brass had neither wholly perished nor become unintelligible. Whatever, therefore, is stated upon the authority of Cato, deserves the highest attention; and when stated as his positive assertion, the most implicit credit." The works of Cato to which Mr. Niebuhr here refers are, the 2d and 3d books of his *Origines* which treated of the neighbouring cities of Italy, and perhaps part of the first, which contained a history of the Roman monarchy. But, as only a few fragments of the *Origines* have come down to us, and even these are considered supposititious, where is the use of referring us to them or quoting them as authority? Mr. Niebuhr proceeds, "the Social war and contests in the times of Sylla, destroyed the sources whence Cato drew his materials. These dreadful devastations which successively visited every part of Italy, and buried its most ancient cities in ruins, must have annihilated memorials of every description. In some districts the population was totally changed. The ancient Etruscans perished together with their science and Literature; the nobles, who had led the common cause, fell by the sword; those who deserted it became altogether Roman. The majority of the population lost all their landed property, and sank into poverty, under foreign and cruel masters and colonists, whose oppression robbed their degraded descendants of every patriotic recollection, as well as of their language and national characteristics. Nor is this the only reason why the later and peculiarly Roman historians are silent respecting the early history of Italy. The nations had become extinct, in whose original diversities Italy had formerly enjoyed multiplied varieties of social life; and though the Etruscan and Oscan language continued for a long time to be spoken in the secluded districts, the books and memorials

were almost generally unintelligible, or sunk into oblivion, in the time of Augustus." It thus appears from his own showing, that forty years before the time of Varro, no original materials existed for a history of Etruria, and that consequently the only sources of information available to later writers were the *Origines* of Cato. He, indeed, mentions Etruscan annals (Note to p. 22), with which Varro, he says, was acquainted, and from which he supposes the Emperor Claudius wrote his Tyrrhenian history; but unfortunately he compares these (p. 77) to the Indian Puranas, which are acknowledged forgeries.

So far, I think, Mr. Niebuhr has failed to prove that the literature of the Etruscans was indigenous; that they had carried it to any extent, or that their small improvement in it, was not the consequence of their intercourse with their Greek neighbours. Instead, therefore, of listening to this author, whose work, in the language of his translator, "is mainly formed of hypotheses and conjectures, and who leaves us to conjecture what his conjectures are,"* it will be safer to follow the Latin classic writers pointed out by Mr. Mitford, who observes, "upon this subject, however, it seems enough for the historian, that neither Cicero, with all his partiality for Italy, and all his diligence, and all his means of inquiry, nor Horace, with all his desire to gratify his Etruscan patron, nor Virgil, nor Livy, nor Pliny, had the least suspicion that their fellow-countrymen had any claim to the priority in science and art, which it has been proposed by some learned moderns to attribute to them."†

A few circumstances now come in course to be mentioned, in order to show their political weakness, and rude notions of the arts of civil life.

It is vaguely stated by Niebuhr,‡ and others, that the Etruscans were a great naval power when the Greeks first came among them. Herodotus, and Thucydides,§ indeed notice a naval engagement between the combined fleets of Carthage and Etruria and that of the Phocæans, in the first books of their respective histories, as happening in the reign

* Translator's Preface.

‡ *Roman History*, i., p. 85-6.

† *History of Greece*, v. ii., p. 291.

§ *Lib. i.*, c. 167.

of Cyrus, or Cambyses, and also that the latter with twenty vessels defeated the fleet of their enemies consisting of sixty ships. There must, therefore, have been a great inferiority on the side of the latter, either in the size of their vessels or in naval skill. It appears, however, from Herodotus that the Etruscan vessels in this engagement belonged only to the town of Cære, in Tuscany. It appears further, that the Etrurian maritime states were then dreaded by the Greeks as piratical, in consequence of which, as much as from apprehension of the Carthaginians, the Phocæans traded in the Tyrrhenian sea in armed vessels. In the year of the city 278 Cuma solicited the protection of Hiero, king of Syracuse, against them, who destroyed the whole of their ships without opposition, the Etruscans attempting to avert this loss only by bribing the commanders. Twenty-one years after this, when the Syracusans invaded Ilva and Corsica, no Tyrrhenian ships opposed them; and sixty-nine years later still, their coasts were unprotected when plundered by Dionysius, the elder.

No trace of naval power is found among them during the wars of the Romans against the towns on the coast, and they possessed no vessel during the first Punic war, since the Romans were destitute of them. The first quinquereme which fell into their hands, which served as a model for the construction of similar vessels, was taken by Appius Claudius, in his passage from Messana to Rhegium, after the reduction of Etruria.

In early times the Etruscans seem to have been equally insignificant as a military power. If we take for granted, a circumstance, which it would be difficult to disprove, namely, that Æneas conducted a colony of Trojans into Italy,* we have a strong instance of the military imbe-

* Strabo and some others maintain that Æneas never left his country, but rebuilt Troy, where he reigned, and his posterity after him. Homer, who lived 400 years after the war of Troy, says (Il. xx. v. 30, &c.), that the Gods destined Æneas to reign over the Trojans. Dionysius Halicarnassus, however, explained this passage, by saying, that Homer meant the Trojans who had gone over to Italy with Æneas, and not the actual inhabitants of Troy. Livy, Virgil, and other Latin authors, describe the arrival of Æneas as indubitable. The former represents him as having married Lavinia, daughter of the king of the Latins, in whose honour he built Lavinium. That Alba was built by his son, Ascanius, on the Alban Mount, close to the river Albula, which afterwards changed its name to Tiber, in

cility of the Etrurians in the heroic ages, for Livy (lib. i. sec. 3) says, that only thirty years after the death of Æneas, neither the Etrurians nor any of the neighbouring nations durst attempt any thing against the Latins. We have the same authority, that Romulus could never muster more than 300 horse and 3000 infantry, a rabble of shepherds and vagabonds from various tribes, a lawless horde who chose to settle on the Palatine hill, whence they made inroads on the neighbouring country, yet the Etrurians were not strong enough to dislodge this handful of freebooters; and as Rome was not surrounded by a stone wall until the time of Lucius Tarquinius, it appears they were able to maintain themselves without this advantage for the space of 137 years, a great proof of the equally savage state of their neighbours. Again we find that Porsenna, King of Etruria, or, according to Niebuhr, only king of a tribe, was unable, with the assistance of other states, his neighbours, to restore Tarquinius Superbus, by force of arms, although in all probability the deposed King had a powerful faction within the city in his favour. Still later, in the early period of the republic, Livy mentions that the Fabian family alone, consisting of 306 patricians, and probably of 3600 vassals and clients, made war, at their own expense, against the state of Veii, the most powerful in Etruria.

The religion of the Etrurians was cruel in the extreme; they practised human sacrifices, which was abhorrent to the spirit of the religion of Rome. Their divinities were of the rudest sort. In the days of our forefathers, says Pliny,* there were no statues of brass or marble, or of foreign workmanship. The temples contained the likenesses of themselves and ancestors, in wax, including only the head and neck, which

consequence of Tiberinus, the 9th in descent from Æneas having been drowned in it; and that from the race of the Alban kings the Romans are descended. Much evidence has been brought forward by Bochart, and Mr. Wood, in his "*Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer*," to prove the scholium of Dionysius wrong, but Dr. Gillies, after a careful examination of this evidence, thinks the matter too doubtful to contradict the popular opinion of the Trojan origin of the Romans.—Even Niebuhr, the professed historian of ancient Italy, leaves this point, as he does every other of intricacy, just where he found it, by declaring it to be "a native national story on a par with every other event of the mythic age."—Vol. i. p. 143.

* Lib. xxxv. c. 2.

were carried in procession at the funerals of particular families, and arranged in the sepulchres. It appears, however, that they were gradually allured by the enticing fictions of the Grecian mythology, for, according to Livy, the principal Gods of the Vientians removed to Rome were, the Pythian Apollo, and Imperial Juno ; and the Novensiles which the Sabines brought with them were, Lara, Vesta, Minerva, Feronia, Concord, Faith, Fortune, Chance, and Health, all of Greek extraction.

The priests of Etruria were given to the frivolous pursuit of augury chiefly by the Haruspicium, a mode which, among savages, may have led to human sacrifices. But there were other methods. "The Etrurians," says Mr. Niebuhr, "shared the glory of many branches of sooth-saying with other nations of Italy, especially the Marsi. The science of lightening was their peculiar secret, This, like every other department of divination, was taught in the schools of the priests."* "The priests taught that they knew, even without experience, by observing the signs of the foundation of any state, how many sæcula it should last, and of what duration each would be." There was no oracle as in Greece, where the priest might enquire personally of the God, but they divined the will of Heaven, by *lots*, made of billets of wood, rudely inscribed, which were drawn by a boy." "The Romans borrowed from them the art of divination, but the infallible source of this knowledge seems to have remained as a national property of the Etruscans, from the day in which Tages, a subterranean dwarf, rose and instructed them in this science."† These passages are important, in as much as they show that the Etruscans, in the first age of Rome, were as uncivilized as the Scandinavians in the days of Odin. In ingenuity and imagination, it is far below the grossest system of northern mythology, and is indicative of a low state, both of civil and moral virtue.

It is said that the Romans borrowed from the Etruscans, their pontifical and royal ensigns, the pomp of their triumphs, and their martial music. On this point, Mr. Niebuhr is more cautious than some other writers, accompanying the expression of his belief of these reports by

* *Rom. Hist.* v. i. p. 95.

† *Id.* p. 94.

the qualifying phrases, "*it can not be doubted,*" "*according to well-known tradition,*"* instead of leaving them to take their chance with the reader for being grounded on authority. We do read, however, upon good authority, that before the capture of the *Greek* city, Tarentum, in the two hundred and ninety-first year of Rome, the Romans exhibited in their triumphs only the broken arms of the Samnites, the empty cars of the Gauls, and herds of cattle, and, that upon such occasions, their Generals, among whom was the great Camillus, practised the savage custom of painting their bodies red.† In those days too, trophies were hung outside the door.

There is nothing, surely, in all this indicative of refinement. Besides, as Sallust mentions,‡ that the Romans borrowed from their allies, and even their enemies, whatever they thought useful, it will be difficult to apportion the extent of their obligations to any one people, and it will also prove, that few as the wants of a rude people are, the Etruscans were then incapable of supplying them. That they were poor in regard to the elegancies of life, appears from the fact, that the Romans found, for the first time, the plunder of an opulent city, at the capture of Tarentum. Livy expressly states, that £129,000. was a sum not to be expected from the plunder of any city in Italy in those days. If such was *then* the poverty of the Greek cities, what must have been the condition of the Italian? These observations go far to disprove the opinion that the ancient Etruscans were a commercial people. The ancient Romans, and probably the Etrurians, according to Niebuhr, imported not only articles of luxury, as stuffs, purple, silver and gold; but likewise necessities as lead, tin, and corn. Their exports were only slaves, iron, and copper. They had only copper coin. Such commodities were not fitted for distant land carriage; the foreign traders must therefore have been the Carthaginians, notwithstanding what Niebuhr supposes, namely, that "*Etruria must have been the emporium of trade between the sea, the rest of Italy, and the remotest barbarian nations, to whom there was a safe and sacred road across the Alps!*"—P. 87.

Here, however, this writer is at issue with Livy, who styles these

* Vol. i. p. 97.

† Pliny, lib. xxxiii. c. 7.

‡ Cataline's Conspiracy.

mountains the "*pathless Alps*," and says, that there did not exist even a tradition, that they had been climbed over previous to the invasion of the Gauls, under Bellovesus, anno U. C. 364.*

In the beginning of the fourth century of the city, the Romans had to send into Greece for a code of jurisprudence, Etruria not being able to furnish a system of judicial or legislative enactments, adequate to such an infant state of society. Such are some of the circumstances reported in the early history of this people which show their gross ignorance in literature and science until the time when they began to make foreign conquests, and, by inference, the Etruscans, with whom, during this long period, they never ceased to be engaged in important transactions. Many more, known to us all as schoolboys, might be gleaned from the same sources, if necessary. But there is another view of this part of our subject which we must not omit to notice, namely, that the whole of the first age of Rome, which extends to the extinction of monarchy, is accounted, by some of the best Latin authors, fabulous, an opinion to which Niebuhr subscribes, who styles the history of the Kings a *poetic fiction*.† Plutarch,‡ Solinus, and St. Austin§ all express the discordance prevalent in their days respecting the æra and the founder of Rome; but the observations of Sir Isaac Newton on this point are deserving of particular attention. "When the Greeks and Latins were forming their technical chronology, there were great disputes about the antiquity of Rome. The Greeks made it much older than the Olympiads. Some of them said it was built by Æneas; others by Romus the grandson of Latinus King of the Aborigines; others by Romus, son of Ulysses; or of Ascanius; or of Italus. Some of the Latins agreed with the Greeks, that it was built by Romulus, son or grandson of Æneas. Timæus Siculus and Nænius the poet were of this opinion. Hitherto nothing certain was agreed upon; but about one hundred and fifty years after the time of Alexander the Great, they began to say that Rome was built a second time by Romulus, in the fifteenth age after the destruction of Troy, reckoning the age at about thirty-one years."

* Lib. v. c. 34.

§ Apud. Ant. Un. His. vol. xi.

† Vol. i. p. 188-9.

¶ Chronology, p. 128.

‡ Life of Romulus.

This passage is of value as showing the uncertain nature of the traditions before the time of Cato the Censor, who flourished about this distance of time from the death of Alexander. Even Niebuhr acknowledges thus much, although probably he was not aware of the admission. It has been already noticed, that he considers the history of the monarchy a *poetic fable*, composed from old songs which used to be sung at convivial entertainments. In other parts of the same volume are the following remarks. "When historians arose, history was alone attended to; but monuments and records were not consulted. The Roman records were certainly from the earliest times meagre in comparison with those of the Greeks. Their laws were for a long time only engraven on oak, and were entirely burnt when the Gauls took Rome. The only ancient document recorded of the whole period of the monarchy is the league of Servius Tullius with the Latin, and of the last Tarquinius with the Gabii."* Not only the Annals of the Kings, but every narrative of those times were completely destroyed."† "The sacred ceremonies of the Roman religion rest upon gratuitous interpretation."‡ Here his meaning appears to be that the *derivation* of these ceremonies was uncertain. "The Etruscan annals, from which Varro copied, were nothing but a legendary priestly literature."§ "The *annals* of the Pontifices, and the *Fasti Triumphales*, did not commence until the battle of the Regillus" || (the beginning of the Commonwealth). "The Pontifical annals falsified history in favour of the patricians."¶ "The Consular Fasti, and those of the monarchy, are suspicious."** "The received Fasti, of the 4th and 5th centuries, are full of striking inaccuracies."†† "The Libri Fatales enjoined human sacrifice." "The Sibylline book, purchased by Tarquin, perished in the conflagration of the capital."

"The keepers of the Sibylline books seldom ventured to open them. We know not in what language they were written; probably, in Greek, as Greece was ransacked for traditions to supply the place of those which were burnt; in which case the priests could know nothing of them, as they durst not admit an interpreter to a knowledge of their contents."

* Page 185.

† Page 187.

‡ Page 175.

§ Page 362.

|| Page 382.

¶ Page 190.

** Page 201.

†† Page 202.

But how does he astonish the reader when, in the face of such concessions, he asserts that many historical monuments, consisting of books, and inscriptions on *stone* or *brass*, existed, and were intelligible in the time of Cato, and continued even until that of Sylla.* Still more when, on the authority of Dionysius, Xanthus, a Lydian historian of no certain age or character, and the *Native Annals of Etruria*, he contradicts Herodotus and the other respectable authors who coincide with him in deriving the Etruscans from Lesser Asia;† when he refers to early native annals written before Greek literature predominated;‡ to the Sibylline books, which he says were read by Dionysius;§ and to the sacred books of the Etruscans, the *Libri Rituales* for the Etruscan origin of the whole of the primitive constitution of Rome. ||

This author seems to go abroad in quest of any obscure writer or tradition to support what may be termed his *new theory of ancient transactions*, accepting or refusing the guidance of accredited historians, just as they suit his peculiar views. Thus he reverses the account of Herodotus that the Tyrrhenians were a colony from Lydia, into an emigration from Tyrrhenia into Greece upon the authority of Myrsilus,¶ a writer unknown in classic history. But his capricious treatment of some of the most able and candid historians of antiquity is deserving of especial animadversion: for instance, in one place he says, “Polybius is not to be relied upon in historical matters of remote antiquity;”** in another, that “he writes with so much caution and accuracy that every word he uses must be taken as significant.”†† Dionysius is, in general, his favourite authority, who, he tells us, “was renowned as a critic among his cotemporaries;”‡‡ yet, elsewhere, he classes him with Plutarch “as a man of weak discernment,”§§ and “whose judgment was warped by prejudice.”|| || He appeals to Varro as a standard authority on many occasions, yet he also writes that “his authority, as to the situations and names of places destroyed in very remote ages, is, in fact, of little value. But whatever weight may reasonably be assigned to him where ancient documents could be brought to light, yet his confused knowledge and

* Vol. i., p. 23. † P.p. 67-77. ‡ Page 175. § Page 142-178. || Page 193.
¶ P.p. 169-170. ** Page 51. †† Page 249. ‡‡ Page —. §§ Page 169. ||| Page 142.

wavering judgment, tend much and justly to diminish his credit, on occasions where critical penetration alone can justify the boldness of venturing on an untrodden path without a guide.”* Livy, whose elegant and valuable history he has taken as his text book, he declares, “is not to be depended upon when the chronology of foreign nations is concerned;”† that, “from a poetical spirit he relates things rather in the style of history, than as real history;”‡ that “he did not seek truth with simplicity of spirit, and is an affectedly ingenious investigator who deserts the natural and obvious meaning.”§ These, and they are but a few of those to be found in this volume, are manifest inconsistencies, and surprise us as dropping from the pen of a professor of ancient history. He is the most recent, the most confident, and, perhaps, the most popular advocate for the existence of a high degree of civilization and skill in the arts and sciences among the ancient Etruscans, before the æra of authentic history: but opinions founded on books of augury, the Sybilline oracles, annals written by savages, monuments whose existence is not authenticated, and whose inscriptions were, at all events, never intelligible, and other similar data, which were despised by the classic historians of Rome, are not likely to command respect in the present day, nor would they have been noticed here, did not their hostility to the view of the subject maintained in this paper render it necessary to expose their fallacy by an analytical examination. It now remains to make only one or two observations on the temples at Pæstum.

In the dark and turbulent ages which succeeded the Trojan war, intestine sedition, foreign invasion, or the restless spirit of adventure occasioned extensive migrations from Greece in various directions. Some of the most important settled in the south of Italy and in Sicily, which settlements were afterwards included in the generic term *Magna Græcia*. With the exception of Eubæan Cumæ whose foundation ascends to the heroic ages, the greater number of Greek colonies in those parts were planted during the 8th century B. C., chiefly by the Eubæans of Chalcis, the Achæans of Peloponnesus, and the Dorian states,

* Page 125.

† Page 55.

‡ Page 169.

§ Page 315.

particularly Corinth, by whom Syracuse was founded. Crotona, the most considerable city of the Achæans and of all Italy in ancient times, was built 710 years B. C. Sybaris, its rival, was built about the same time, and by the same nation. The former sent colonies to Tirina, Caulonia, and Pandosia; the latter built Laus, Metapontum, and Poseidonia or Pæstum. Many other cities sprung up at the same time both in Sicily and Italy, over the whole southern coast of which the Syracusans had extended their settlements in the 6th century B. C., and in the following the colonies of Magna Græcia had risen superior to the mother country in wealth, power, and refinement. During all this time Proper Greece was in a state of semi-barbarism, and had made but little progress either in literature or the arts. The refinement of Magna Græcia clearly emanated from the Asiatic Greek cities, which had been planted about the same time with the western colonies, and with which they maintained an intimate intercourse. From Miletus, the capital of Ionia, the arts and manners of the polished Lydians might easily pass, without communication with Proper Greece, to the wealthy towns of Italy and Sicily. But history is deficient in materials for tracing the causes of the wonderful prosperity of some of these cities. Many, as formerly in Holland, seem to have contained an excess of private wealth, beyond reasonable objects of expenditure. Agrigentum, for example, was a vast city commanding a territory scarcely equal to one of our smallest counties, in which 20,000 wealthy citizens were sovereigns over 180,000 free subjects, sovereigns and subjects both having under them slaves unnumbered. Their extraordinary wealth was displayed in the magnificence of public edifices, and in the splendid enjoyment of private fortunes. They had begun and almost completed the celebrated temple of Jupiter, on whose pediment were the celebrated sculptures of the defeat of the Giants and the taking of Troy. Nothing could rival the beauty and elegance of their tombs to perpetuate the fame of their coursers which had obtained the prize at Olympia; and to commemorate the quails and other delicate birds which were cherished by the effeminate youth of both sexes.

This prosperity and refinement, had, in a certain degree, spread

through the principal Greek cities of Italy, antecedently to the appearance of even brick buildings, either in Etruria or Rome; for in the 5th century B. C. such was the weakness and barbarism of the Italian tribes that, according to the testimony of Greek and Roman writers, wherever almost a Grecian pirate chose to settle on the coast he found no force among the natives capable of resistance; and it is allowed that Rome was but a collection of thatched cottages, until it was destroyed by the Gauls. Here, then, we find all that is necessary, in regard to wealth, science, taste, and peculiarity of religious worship, for the construction of the Pæstan temples, among the Greek inhabitants of that city or district; while throughout the whole of this paper we have not discovered a single similar circumstance in favour of their Etruscan origin.

The same arguments might be effectually urged against a supposed Etruscan style of architecture, still visible in many parts of Tuscany and Magna Græcia, as Fondi, Crotona, and Cora; and which consists in having the sides and angles of large polygonal blocks accurately adapted to each other without cement; did we not know that similar specimens are to be found at Mycenæ, the Pynx at Athens, the walls of Mantinea and Chæronea, and in almost all the fortified cities in Proper Greece and Epirus; which shows, beyond doubt, that it was derived from Greece.

But many, and Paoli in particular,* consider the three temples at Pæstum, from their style and proportions, to have been built by Etruscans, and before the arrival of the Greeks in Calabria. Here, however, we have on the other side, the opinion of Mr. Wilkins, a competent judge of the national characteristics of architecture, who informs us that the largest of the three is decidedly Greek, and the two smaller Roman, built in subsequent ages when the arts had been long on the decline. "There can exist little doubt," he observes, "in the minds of those who are accustomed to contemplate the features of ancient architecture, that the largest was coeval with the very earliest period of the Grecian migration to the south of Italy. The Grecian character is too strongly marked to admit of any argument whether its origin was

* Apud WILKIN'S *Magna Græcia*, p. 59, note.

prior or subsequent to the possession of Poseidonia by that people. Low columns with a great diminution of the shaft, bold projecting capitals, a massive entablature, and triglyphs placed at the angles of Zophorus, are strong presumptive proofs of its great antiquity. The shafts of the columns diminish in a straight line from the base to the top, although at first sight they have the appearance of swelling in the middle.”*

But, as the style of the great temple at Pæstum, predominates also in most of the temples remaining in Sicily, and in one, of which small relics only are left, at Pompeii, and differs from what is found common in Greece, and among the Grecian settlements in Lesser Asia, does not this discrepancy show—say the advocates for the Etruscan origin of the Sicilian and Pæstan buildings—that these are Italian and not Grecian architecture? I answer, no, for the reasons assigned for this discrepancy by Mr. Mitford.† “But not,” says this excellent historian, “to say any more of the total want of testimony to the existence of an Italian people capable of teaching architecture to the Greeks, the following considerations may, I think, sufficiently account for the difference between the style of the Attic, and that of the Sicilian and Pæstan buildings. Sybaris was destroyed about eighteen years before the invasion of Xerxes, and the buildings of Agrigentum, where the noblest ruins of Sicily remain, were raised, according to Diodorus, immediately after the event, when Athens was also to be restored, after its complete destruction by the Persians. It is likely that the Agrigentines and Sybarites would build in the style of their forefathers; but we are well informed that the Athenians did otherwise. Themistocles, who superintended the rebuilding of Athens, splendid in his disposition, rather to excess, acquainted with the elegancies of Asia Minor, and possessing power to command the science, art, and taste of the country, would not restore when he could improve. Cimon, who succeeded him in the administration, was also remarkable for his magnificence; and he too had seen whatever the Asiatic coast possessed of great and beautiful. But the ornamental buildings of both those great men were comparatively little

* *Magna Græcia*, p. 59.

† *Hist. of Greece*, vol. ii., p. 299, note.

to what were afterwards raised by Pericles under the direction of Phidias. The fame of the buildings of Athens then spreading over Greece, a new style of architecture was introduced gradually everywhere. The Ionic order had been imported into Attica from Asia; the Corinthian was soon after invented by an Athenian architect; and the Doric itself began to change its ancient, simple, and massive grandeur, for more embellishment, lightness, and grace."

These quotations remove all doubt respecting the architects of the Pæstan temples, and the latter shows that the Tuscan order is no other than the old Doric, as it existed before the age of Pericles. It is, therefore, needless to seek for other proof that the Etruscans were not the founders of those buildings which have survived near nine centuries the total destruction of the city. That they were constructed previous to the arrival of the Greeks in Italy, is an assertion founded on ignorance of ancient history; for it is well known that both Italy and Sicily, in Homer's time, were known only by name. They were regions of imaginary monsters and real savages, who, according to this great poet, neither ploughed nor sowed. "They feed," he says, "on the spontaneous productions of the soil; they have no assemblies for public debate; no magistrates to enforce laws; no federal union nor common concern of any kind; but they dwell in caverns, or on the tops of mountains, and every one is magistrate or lawgiver to his own family."* The situation of Pæstum, in the midst of a wide plain, was most happily adapted to the purposes of commerce and agriculture. Its port was highly advantageous to the interests of the city, and was frequented by the merchants of distant nations. During a period of more than 200 years from their first establishment, the Posidonians enjoyed a state of tranquillity in their possessions. An equal degree of prosperity was enjoyed by nearly all the Grecian settlements in Italy and Sicily. It is, therefore, natural to suppose that, from the gulfs of Salerno and Naples, in particular, a gleam of civilization would, in time, reach the coast of Tuscany, either through the medium of trade or piratical excursions, and in this manner we may account for those rude institutions and arts

* *Odyss.* lib. ix.

which appear to have been known there during the first æra of Roman history ; but in all that I have read respecting the ancient Etruscans, I have met with nothing in any author of repute which countenances the opinion that they were ever an enlightened and scientific people ; on the contrary, they appear to have been subdued and incorporated with the Roman Commonwealth before they had emerged from a state of barbarism.