## THE DAILY EVENING TELEGRAPH-PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1869.

Greek Art Before Pericles. The London Saturday Review has the following notice of a new work by M. Banté, Secretary of the Academy des Beaux Arts, entitled Histoire de l'Art Gree Avant Pericles :--

"M. Beulé combines the learning of the antiquary with the eloquence of the rhetorician. The materials at his command are full. His treatment has the recommendation of being strictly logical, yet highly imaginative. His literary style is marked by the rapid dash and the proverbial brilliance of the French; and thus, as in Madame de Staël's rhapsodies upon Rome, history reads in the pages of this volume like a romance, and antiquarian dissertations glow with the color of a picture. M. Beulé has worked hard under rare advantages; he has been a sojourner under the shadow of the Acropolis in Athens; the Greek temples which he describes he has seen. L'Acropole d'Athènes, "published under the auspices of the Minister of Public Instrution," is among the fruits of those original researches in Greece which, conducted under the auspices of the French Government, helped the writer to celebrity. M. Beulé 'Secrétaire Perpétuel de l'Académie des Beaux Arts, Président de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres," and one of the writers in Le Journal des Savans, may be traced through some half-dozen volumes which treat of divers themes in the classic, middle age, and modern arts, till lastly we come upon the volume before us, which certainly is calculated to sustain if not to augment the writer's well-earned reputation.

M. Benlé naturally commences by an in quiry into the origin of Greek art. He believes, in common with the best authorities, that it took its historic rise in the East, and yet, though thus in its first rudiments borrowed, he holds that it was essentially selforiginated. European art, at any rate, commences with the Greeks. The monuments of India and China are fantastic, the palaces of Assyria vast and astounding, the temples and tombs of Egypt grandly immobile in its theocracy. These national arts, as the civilizations whence they sprang, became dead letters and desolate tracks of grand sterility. The Greeks seized upon what they found among other nations to be most artistic and enduring. And thus, in creating or perfecting the Doric and Ionic orders, they set their seal of beauty upon the common patrimony of antiquity. Yet perhaps it will never be possible to solve completely the phenomenon of perfection which Greek art presents:--"Ni la question · de race, ni la question de climat, ni la raison politique, ne penvent expliquer par quel divin privilége les Grecs ont eu cet esprit de etc. "Les grands peuples," adds M clarté. "ne s'expliquent pas plus que les Beulé, grands hommes."

Architecture is the mother and instructress of the arts, she comes first in order of time, she inspires and she directs. This is the uni versal law which presides over all great epochs. Hence in Greece, where all the pro-ducts of the human mind have observed a natural and local sequence in development, architecture as the parent art gives birth, and affords shelter and sustenance, to her younger scions, sculpture and painting. Thus each art came upon the scene in its appointed century. By the age of Pisistratus architecture had well-nigh attained perfection; in the age of Perioles soulpture advanced to take a station by her side; but not till the reign of Alexander did painting, the latest born and long under tutelage to the Doric and Ionic orders, assert an independent life. Yet construction was nothing higher than a mechanical process while it provided merely for the necessities of the body; it became an art only when it ministered to the desires of the mind. And just in proportion as the arts are removed from service to bodily necessities, into the region of ideas and of the imagination, do they cease to be purely naturalistic or imitative. Sculpture and painting are usually accounted imitative arts; but architecture, like music, is less imitative than creative; and each seem essentially to rest in numeric ratios and geometric proportions. Such ratios and proportions at all events lie apparently at the basis of Greek architecture, and of its associated arts of sculpture, bas relief, and mural painting. It is this subjection to law which makes Greek art unchangeably true and beautiful: it is growth permitted only within the limits of law, which secures to Greek art a progression naw, which sectres to treex at a progression nnbroken by lawless overthrow. Absolute truth led to perfect beanly—a truth so ab-stract as to be without accident, a beauty so ideal as to be without blemish, Truth abso-lute implies breadth, simplicity, repose; accordingly, in Greek art resides such repose; that each the sector of the sec that even in motion there is rest, such sethat even in motion there is rest, such se-renity that not even passion is permitted to mar supreme beauty. Yet we must not for-get that the sculpture galleries of Europe, in-cluding the British Museum, the Vatican, the Museums of Naples, Munich, etc., prove that Greek art was many-sided, and that the architects and sculptors of Athens, Ægina, Asis Minor, etc., could do any-thing and everything, and actually did what pleased them best. Thus of painting it was said there existed three styles--that Diowas said there existed three styles-that Diowas said there existed three styles-that Dio-nysins painted men as they were, that Pauson painted them worse than they were, and that Polygnotus painted them better than they were. The first would correspond to a natur-alistic, the second to a comic or satirical, the third to an ideal manner, and it is certain that all three are to be found in Greek plastic and fictile art. In the Museo Gregoriano of the Vatican we recall vases with comic incidents painted thereon. In the British Museum we have within more immediate reach the marbles of the Parthenon, as the most perfect examples of the union of a naturalism which was noble with an idealism which was vigorous. Within the limits of our observation, Greek art tends to infinite variety, yet preserves abaolute unity. Greek art maintained a happy mean and enjoyed a wholesome moderation; tradition preserved it in an obedience without servility, and made liberty safe in protection against license. M. Ben!é seeks to consolidate tradition into a law-the law of a sure and steadfast progression, The Greeks "took posses sion of all the patrimony of the past, and profited by the experience of the generations by which they were preceded." Tradition was for them accumulated wisdom and aggregated beauty; it was as an ample river which augments in volume as it flows, and which traverses lands the most diverse without break in its course or change in its identity. It is the want of this wise tradition which leaves modern art in anarchy; modern artists rest lessly seek for something new-the last and hopeless state of a mind frivolous and unstable in all its ways. The aim of the Greek artist, on the contrary, was to make his work perfect; he did not strive even at originality, he isbored according to the know-ledge gained and the ability given, and if par-chance he did better than his predecessors, those who came after profited by his example. Thus art, while always following in the same track, made a step forward, and tradition be-came, not a law of finality, but a condition of progress. Neither in nature nor in art are there abrupt transitions. The Dorio order was not at a single stroke fixed in its symmetry and unity by the effort of any one man; under the law of tradition it had a gradual growth. m. Bou.e a wachings mercon, is not aiways size , though a tair record of antiquarian labors in .

toric foundation.

Cencerning polychrome M. Beulé truly states that there have been three distinct theories. The first denies to Greek architecture and sculpture color altogether; the second accords color without stint; while the third, as a happy mean between the two extremes, suggests that color may have been modified and mitigated according to the exigencies of material cli-mate and use. We think it can be affirmed that the first and the second of these propositions must be surrendered as untenable. Thus the much debated practice of polychrome is reduced to a question of degree, relation, and circumstance. M. Beulé believes that Greek systems passed through successive stages, and were under continuous transformation. Thus he refers the historic origin of polychrome back to primal wood structures. Marble temples took their first types from prior wooden fabrics, and the copying of the form natur-ally involved the adoption of the color. Thus the earliest practice of polychrome arose in the obvious utility of preserving a perishable material, and disguising a surface not in itself necessarily ornamental. From this probable conjecture we gladly draw the broad conclusion that this earliest polychrome, transcribed servilely from rude wooden structures, was somewhat ornde and barbarons; while in more advanced epochs the tones became refined, delicate, and transparent. One reason, at all events, held equally good for the painting of wood and stone: when the stone was poor and perishable, it needed, no less than wood, protection or decoration. Greek architects, indeed, seem to have done pretty much as the middle-age builders; when the masonry was rotten, they disgnised blemishes by a coating of stucce or plaster. The reasoning, of course, tells entirely the other way when the material is in itself lovely, and the lines of construction and masonry good in art; then the more seen the better. It certainly would strike us as barbarons in taste, and altogether snicidal in art, to hide or disfigure with plaster or opaque paint the clear crystal and the translucent texture of Pentelious marble. As soon could we believe that a lady of a complexion bright in the bloom of youth would betake herself to Rachel enamel. M Beulé, however, is evidently of opinion that a suspi-cion of rouge may heighten the charm of nature. It appears clear that color was applied in various ways; sometimes on a coat of plaster, and sometimes directly on the surface of the marble. And a distinction must be drawn between a coat of stucco and a thin wash of transparent paint. Thus does M. Beulé with reason conjecture that marble prized for its own sake might be preserved in its beauty by the use of "an encaustic preparation, pale and transparent, which sheuld soften crudity without destroying the loveliness and lustre of the material." Indeed, there would seem to be ground for believing that Greek polychromy conformed to the fundamental law of all true decorationthat of ornament of construction, not of construction of ornament; that of adorning material, not destroying it. The system evidently was vital; it had power of adaptation. Thus when, as in the Doric order, the forms were massive, the color preserved consonant gravity; but when the proportions became, as in the lonic, elegant, the tones assumed more lightness and cheerfulness. The color of sculpture we have always deemed to follow as a logical and inevitable necessity on the color of its surrounding architectural structure.

John Gibson was accustomed to talk much on this the favorite topic of his closing years; but though an uncompromising polychromist, we have heard him prononnce as a mistake the color applied by Mr. Owen Jones to the Elgin Friezes. In the notorious painted Venus, as seen in the International Exhibition of 1862, Gibson gave what he believed to be an accurate reproduction of Greek polychromy. On this not wholly unsuccessful experiment it may be observed in elucidation of preceding principles-lst. That a semitransparent pigment was so applied as to precerve in some degree the quality of the un-derlying marble; 2d. That the color was intentionally non-naturalistic, the tone being that of ivory, not of flesh; 3d. That the figure held harmonious relation with the colored architectural background. Mr. Gibson, when he came to London, expressed his complete satisfaction with the result. Doubtless it was the misfortune of his art to start with the assumption that the Greeks could do no wrong; such assumption not only involves servility, but stands in opposition to the universal experi ence that error is inseparable from all human work. M. Beulé, like Mr. Gibson, believes in the infallibility of the Greeks. The argument, stripped of circumlocution, reads thus:-Al that the Greeks did was right; they colored architecture and sculpture; therefore to color architecture and sculpture is right. We confess that we have become converts to "Greek polychrome" almost against our will. We cannot but feel how unapproachable for beauty is marble fresh from the chisel and we know in what loveliness the elements have clothed temples in Athens, on the head-land of Sunium, and on the plain of Poestum. We cannot but say that on the spot any pro-position for polychrome would have sounded as profanation. Still the historic [evidence seems conclusive, and abstract reasoning is certainly not entirely on the side of colorless light and shade. Doubtless it is possible to conceive that a bran-wew, brightly painted temple might assume an aspect poetic and imposing when backed by the brilliant sky of Atica, or the deep blue of the Ægean Sea. M. Semper, an enthusiast and partisan, pre-sents the imagination with the following ploture:--

from contradiction, have sufficiently sure his- | France takes little or no account of important researches in England. Thus no mention is made of the seated statues from the Sacred Way of Branchidze, now in the British Maseum. These archaic works, which probably belong to the sixth century B. C., "are exe-cuted," says Mr. C. Newton, "in a style pre-senting so strong a resemblance to the Egyptian as to suggest the idea that they were the work of Greek artists who had been educated in Egypt." We need not point out how important is the bearing of works which stand on boundary lines in the schools of Egypt and Asia Minor upon the long-mooted question of the historic origin of Greek art. It may further be objected that no critical account is given of the famous Harpy's Tomb (B. C. 500), acquired, with other Lycian remains, for our country, by Sir Charles Fellows. Again, any history of "L'Art gree avant Perioles" must be bat fragmentary if it exclude all fictile art that has of late years seen the light. The vases found at Camirus, Rhodes, Athens, Corinth, Sicily, and the islands of the Archipelago, now in process of strict chronologic arrangement in the British Museum, offer to the stu dent a rare opportunity of acquiring a mas tery over historic developments in the ceramic and plastic arts. Neither should coins or gems be forgotten in any treatise professing to produce a vivid picture of arts which adorned the early eras of Grecian civilization. We thank M. Beulé for his valuable contribution to a subject which extends far beyond the limits of a single volume. Fortunately the laborers in the field are no longer few, and we gladly remember that each year adds to the store and to the critical accuracy of our knowledge.

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"The prevailing color of the temple burned with all the glowing beauty of the setting sun. The color may be defined of a yellow red, very vapory, resem-bling that of the finest terra cottas. In fact, the general appearance of the temple would precisely resemble the appearance of a fine day in an Eastern limate.

This relation between sky and color, climate and material, involves the true principle for the application of polychrome. And yet the reasoning sometimes cuts both ways. Thus it may be urged that our northern atmosphere, dark, dull, and dense, needs lighting up. On the whole, however, the weight of argument lies on the other side. In our cold and rainy clime the eye, shadowed in grey, is startled and pained by bright positive color; nature herself puts on sombre drapery, the rain cloud shadows the mountain. A Greek temple, radiant as a rainbow, would in the hills of Cumberland need, like the cactus or the lotus, acelimatization. But on the shores of the blue Mediterranean, or baneath the clear cloudless skies of Ionia, the Greek pediment, glittering in gold, and glowing with red fire, reflects with ardor the rising and the setting sun Nature in these climes exults in exuberant if'e, and the peoples themselves are fisry in impulse and florid in costume. Behold, then, crowking the height of the Acropolis, and locking down upon the gay life of the city beneath, "ces temples brillants de couleurs, tonjours 'jennes, parce qu'ils sont tonjours rajennis." "Les Grecs vonlaient que toutes les branches de l'art, peinture, sculpture, architecture, contribuassent à former les temples des dieux. Dédaigner la payohrome, 'est paraitre ne l'avoir ni étudiés ni comprise.

M. Benic's treatise is far from exhantive

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