

destitute, taken from their forlorn condition of helpless misery, and sheltered and nurtured by private benevolence, till they can be placed in a situation of independent self-subsistence, to be the authors of happiness to themselves, and of comfort and assistance to others. Prosperity to all such praiseworthy institutions! and honour and joy to those pure and generous ornaments of their race and times, who not only open their purses, but give their time, their labour, and the influence of their bright example, to sustain them!

Among other visits we made to-day, was one to a most interesting Florentine lady, Mademoiselle America Vespucci, a lineal descendant of the great navigator whose name was given to the continent of America. She had just arrived here from Washington, and, besides the natural impulse of feeling, which alone would prompt an early expression of respect, and proffer of hospitality, to one of such truly illustrious descent—the convictions of duty and the calls of sympathy joined with those of more generous impulse, to induce us to pay this lady an early visit. I went, therefore, accompanied by my family, and Mrs. Luzenberg, to the Hotel St. Louis, where we enjoyed a long and agreeable interview with this accomplished and most interesting stranger. To convey to others the interest which we felt ourselves, and to state the circumstances which gave so great an additional charm to her powerful personal attractions, it may be proper to present the following particulars, from the journals of the day of the accuracy of which there is no doubt.

AMERICA VESPUCCI.—As this fair stranger is now in our city, perhaps some, if not all of our readers will read with interest some points in her history. The article which follows, is taken from the 'Washington Democratic Review' for February, 1839:

"After spending, like most of the young Italian ladies of rank, fourteen years of her youth in a convent for her education (the convent of *La Signora della Quietè*, in the environs of Florence) she was introduced into the midst of the brilliant society of the capital and court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, at the age of seventeen. She was placed by her parents in the service of the Grand Duchess, as a 'demoiselle de compagne,' or maid of honour. There she was of course surrounded with all the seductive influences of European aristocratic life, in the midst of the splendours and luxuries of the Pitti Palace. Her mind had, however, already—by its own self-derived impulses, as it would seem, for it was certainly entirely at variance with all the natural bias of such an education and such a position—taken a decided stand in the movement of liberal ideas which is the leading characteristic of the age, and which in no country has exercised a stronger influence upon the imagination of ardent youth than in Italy. Possessed of rare natural talents, highly accomplished by reading and cultivation, with remarkable force of character, vivacity of imagination, and energy of will, it will not be a subject of surprise, that, during the agitations that were fermenting in the north of Italy immediately after the French revolution, she was one of the few females whose social position and personal qualities gained them admission to the secret societies which were conspiring to rid Italy of the dominion of a foreign despotism, and to unite the whole of that beautiful and unhappy land under a single sovereign, who might again restore it to a rank amidst the family of nations. But we are not aware of any others whose ardour carried them beyond the private machinations of conspiracy, to the actual field of battle and blood.

"In the attempted rising of August, 1832, and in the engagement with the Austrians on the banks of the Rimini, in which, it will be remembered by our readers that young Louis Bonaparte took part, she conducted herself with great gallantry, and received a severe sabre stroke on the back of her head, from an Austrian

dragoon (to whom, however, though nameless, the justice ought to be done, to state that he did not know her to be a woman,) and in her fall to the ground, her right arm was broken by the weight of her horse falling upon it. Though suspected, her disguised participation in this affair could not be proved, and after her recovery from her wounds, she spent two years at her father's house in Florence, though under a vigilant surveillance. This resulted in the interception of a letter to her, as secretary of one of the sections of the Society of 'La Jeune Italie,' which made it apparent that she could disclose its entire organization in Tuscany. She was accordingly required either to betray her associates, or to quit Florence within twenty-four hours. Her choice between these two alternatives does not need to be stated. She found a present asylum under the protection of the Queen of the French; and it is under the auspices of the French flag, and the highest guarantees of the genuineness of her title to American sympathy and friendship in all points of view—of character, conduct, family, and position—that she is now here, in the country to which she has always looked as her natural home of refuge and protection."

The object for which she had specially come to America, was to obtain, if possible, a grant of land from the Congress of the United States, as a means of honourable and independent support; and the failure of her application, as well as the grounds on which it was deemed necessary to decline compliance with the request, are fully and fairly stated in the following Report made to the Senate of the United States, by Mr. Walker, of Mississippi—

"Conceiving it to be their duty to verify the facts upon which the application was founded, they have examined a voluminous mass of documentary evidence, and find the statements of the memorial to be fully sustained. They have seen the authentic certificates of baptism, through many generations of the Vespucci family in Florence, which attest the lineage and descent of the memorialist. They have read the highly favourable and com-

plimentary letter of the Queen of the French, through her secretary, to the petitioner. They have read the letter to her of the King of the French, through the minister of the interior, subscribing for a work for the king, of which she was the author, and have also read the permission of the French minister of the marine, for her to sail in a French national vessel. The committee have also had before them her credentials from the minister of Tuscany, in France, and many other papers of high character and authenticity in her favour. They have also witnessed her own personal deportment here, and the manner in which she has been received by the French legation, which, added to other testimonials, leave not a doubt of the identity of the memorialist, and the truth of her representations.

“After the lapse, then, of more than three centuries, a descendant of the celebrated Americus Vespuccius is amongst us. This heroic navigator, before, and also after the close of the fifteenth century, landed upon the shores of the New World, among the most early and scientific of those who succeeded the great and pre-eminent Columbus in the discovery of this continent. A descriptive narrative of his several voyages was written and published by Americus, and Europe baptized with his name this mighty continent. This name can never now be abandoned. It is the name of our beloved country. It is associated with all the glories of the past, and the still brighter hopes of the future. It is written upon our national constitution, and engraven upon the heart of every true American. Under this name we have succeeded in two struggles with the most formidable power in Europe, and have so wonderfully augmented in population, that should the same ratio of increase continue for the future, the close of this century will find within our limits more than one hundred millions of people, and more than five millions within the single city of New York.

“In reflecting then with glory upon the name of American, can we forget the great navigator from whom we derived this proudest of earthly titles? A descendant of Americus is now here; a young, interesting, dignified, and accomplished lady, with a mind of the highest intellectual culture, and a heart beating with all our own enthusiasm in the cause of America, and of human liberty. She

feels that the name she bears is a prouder title than any that earthly monarchs can bestow ; and she comes here, asking us for a small corner of American soil, where she may pass the remainder of her days in this land of her adoption. She comes here as an exile, separated for ever from her family and friends ; a stranger, without a country and without a home ; expelled from her native Italy, for the avowal and maintenance of opinions favourable to free institutions, and an ardent desire for the establishment of her country's freedom. That she indeed is worthy of the name of America—that her heart is indeed imbued with American principles, and a fervent love for human liberty, is proved in her case, by toils, and perils, and sacrifices, worthy of the proudest days of antiquity, when the Roman and the Spartan matrons were ever ready to surrender life itself in their country's service."

Such was the history of this Italian lady ; and our personal interview with her, not only confirmed all our previous expectations, but went far beyond them. In person, she had the style of beauty which one sees in the finest statues of the antique—a noble head, regular and expressive features, a fair and stately neck, dark eyes, dark hair, beautiful lips and teeth, a fine expanded chest, well-rounded arms, white and delicate hands, small feet, and an exquisitely graceful figure of the middle size. She appeared in a simple yet elegant and well-made dress of black silk, trimmed with deep lace. Her head was marked by a classic grandeur, though without any kind of ornament but her rich and exuberant hair ; her voice was full of music ; and in her look and expression, dignity and sweetness were happily blended. Her age appeared to be about twenty-five or twenty-six, and her whole deportment presented the most agreeable combination of dignified self-respect with refinement, polish, and ease, that I ever remember to have

witnessed. Though opposed to royalty, and coming to seek an asylum in a republic, she looked, and spoke, and moved, as if she were "every inch a queen." She seemed to realize the idea I had often formed of the Egyptian Cleopatra; and it would not be hazarding much to say, that she was altogether, the most accomplished, elegant, and interesting woman that had ever landed on this continent since the days of her great ancestor whose name it bears.

Our conversation was at first in Italian; but when a French lady arrived to join our party, it changed to French, both of which languages she spoke with an eloquence rarely equalled; and her whole discourse seemed to be composed of "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." She spoke with great feeling, of the degraded and oppressed condition of her beloved country, Italy; and suppressed with some difficulty the emotion under which she was evidently struggling, when she said she had bidden it an eternal adieu! She expressed herself surprised and delighted at the grandeur and extent of the territory occupied by the several States of this great Republican Union; and charmed with all she had yet seen of the workings of its political system, in which freedom of sentiment and freedom of expression was enjoyed by all on topics of religion and government, and the freest exercise allowed to enterprize and industry in every branch of human undertaking. This was a state of things so new to her sight and experience, though often read of in books, dreamt of in theory, and hoped for in her aspirations after Italian liberty, but never before realized within her actual vision, that she sometimes

doubted whether all she saw around her was real, or merely an allusion. Sometimes she dreaded, too, lest so fair a fabric should be prematurely undermined by some destroying principle, or some corrupting power, and thus the great example of self-government which it was exhibiting to the world, be frustrated or destroyed, before the enemies of human liberty would allow its grand experiment to be completed. Her grief, at seeing the continued existence, and hearing the continued defence of negro slavery, was the only drawback to her satisfaction ; but this she condemned in terms of just indignation, and admitted, that with all their many claims to admiration, the Americans could never be recognized as a great or truly free people, until they should put away this reproach from them, by emancipating their slaves.

Since my favoured and happy residence with Lady Hester Stanhope, in the mountains of Palestine, I had never witnessed so noble a union of high birth, mental power, lofty aspirations, and generous impulses, blended with so much refinement of manners, and the whole crowned by the utmost affability and kindness, as in the person of America Vespucci. It is not too much to say of her, that there is no throne in Europe, which she would not elevate by her wisdom ; no court which she would not adorn by her manners ; no family, that she would not delight by her conversation ; and no man, however noble in birth, profound in erudition, high in station, or opulent in fortune, to whom she would not be a source of intellectual and social enjoyment, if he could but win her respect and confidence, and become the object of her esteem as well as of her affections.