

LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
OF THE
SLAVIC NATIONS.

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A

HISTORICAL VIEW

OF THE

LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

OF THE

SLAVIC NATIONS;

WITH A

SKETCH OF THEIR POPULAR POETRY.

BY TALVI.

WITH A PREFACE BY

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NEW-YORK:

GEORGE P. PUTNAM, 155 BROADWAY.

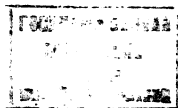
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of New-York.



2C 44857-11

JOHN F. TROW, Printer,
49, 51 & 53 Ann-street.

P R E F A C E.

THE present work is founded on an essay, which appeared in the Biblical Repository for April and July, 1834, then conducted by the undersigned. The essay was received with favour by the public; and awakened an interest in many minds, as laying open a new field of information, hitherto almost inaccessible to the English reader. A few copies were printed separately for private distribution. Some of these were sent to literary men in Europe; and several scholars of high name among those acquainted with Slavic literature, expressed their approval of the work. Since that time, and even of late, inquiries have repeatedly been made, by scholars and by public libraries in Europe, for copies of that little treatise; which, of course, it was impossible to satisfy.

These circumstances, together with the fact, that in these years public attention has been more prominently directed to the character and prospects of the Slavic nations, have induced the author to recast the work; and to lay it anew before the public, corrected, enlarged, and continued to the present time; as a brief contribution to our knowledge of the intellectual character and condition of those nations, in the middle of the nineteenth century.

In its present shape, the work may be said to supply, in a certain degree, a deficiency in English literature. It is true, that the literature of the Russians, Poles, Bohemians, and some others, is treated of under the appropriate heads in the *Encyclopædia Americana*, in articles translated from the German *Conversations-Lexicon*, though not in their latest form. The Foreign Quarterly Review also contains articles of value on the like topics, scattered throughout its volumes. Dr. Bowring, in the prefaces to some of his Specimens of Slavic Poetry, has given short notices of a similar kind. The Biblical literature of the Old Slavic and Russian has been well exhibited by Dr. Henderson;¹ while an outline of Russian literature in general is presented in the work of Otto.² Valuable information respecting the South-western Slavi is contained in the recent work of Sir J. G. Wilkinson.³ But beyond this meagre enumeration, the English reader will find few sources of information at his command upon these topics. All these, too, are only sketches of separate *parts* of one great whole; of which in its full extent, both as a whole and in the intimate relation of its parts, no general view is known to exist in the English language.

Yet the subject in itself is not without a high interest and importance; relating, as it does, to the languages and literature of a population amounting to nearly or quite seventy millions, or more than three times as great as that of the United States. These topics embrace, of course, the history of mental cultivation among the Slavic nations from its earliest dawn; their intellectual development; the progress of man among them as a thinking, sentient, social being, acting and acted upon in his various relations to

¹ See *infra*, p. 45.

² Page 100.

³ Page 121.