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FOR THE PHILADELPHIA MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

FASHIONABLE HIEROGLYPHICS.

When the history of this age shall be written, it will be set down as one of the marks of its refinement, that much of domestic intercourse was carried on through a figurative medium, superior for simplicity and brevity to the Egyptian Hieroglyphics, Peruvian cords, or Arabian cyphers. 'The material employed,' the future Champollion will say, 'was a preparation of paper, which when put into the circulating shape, was called *a card:* the symbols used were merely the name of the individual, and sometimes certain cabalistic *emblems* were added from the alphabet. This we have reason to believe was the ordinary mode of communication, and there is no invention of antiquity the loss of which is more to be deplored, than this art of steganography.'

The discovery of a card-case in those days, will terminate the fame of the pyramids of Africa; and all the reliques of Herculaneum would be given for a single specimen of the mystical inscriptions of us ancients. All the other literary importations of Cadmus would be surrendered for an insight of the occult meaning of the portentous consonants T. T. L. and P. P. C.: and the Sphynx and the Sybil will be neglected, as mysteries inferior to the broken and bent corners of the incomprehensible pasteboard. Such a prospect of puzzling the Old Mortalities, and Archæological societies of futurity, should excite the good humoured people of our day, to multiply the uses of this invaluable agent, which is calculated to shed lustre on our age, when the ruins of our Parthenon shall stand in Chesnut street, in the present condition of its prototype of Greece, and the Scotch Novels be to posterity, what the Ionian and Milesian tales are to us.

There is this decided superiority which the card has above all other species of emblematic writing, that it is not merely expressive of language, but is often the actual representative, the εἴδωλον, of the person, and attracts to it all the deference and courtesy, which its principal, in proper person, could command. It satisfies the despotic etiquette of visiting, and makes its recipient the debtor in kind of the represented visitor. The valuable time that is thus saved—the waste of words that is prevented—the quantity of reputation spared a little longer from being gossipped away, throw an inestimable value on this branch of its employment. It reduces friendship to that harmless character, which the poet has been abused for calling 'a name,' and saves the trouble of harbouring certain affections which so often come in the way of some people. The card is a palpable, substantial metonymy: it bids the ten-

The moon, methought, grew less and less,
And the stars blazed large and full,
Like suns they seem'd, as I past them by,
All bright and beautiful.
Swift as an arrow from the bow
I pierc'd the dark thin air,
And a blessed gale of heaven came,
And fann'd my cheek and hair—

O let me see thy face, my God!
Thus pray'd I fervently—
And a living blaze of light burst forth,
And a stream of harmony;
And a thousand harps of gold were strung,
And a thousand lustres shone,
And I saw and heard the seraphim
That harp'd before the throne.

And God himself, my fathers' God,
Sat in the midst—and all
Veil'd their bright faces with their wings,
And bow'd, both great and small:
And I saw my own dear babes, whom God
On earth to me had given;
And I fain had press'd them to my heart,
But I woke—for I felt 'twas heaven.

S.

Line 24.—"It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek." *Coleridge.*

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ORIENTAL LITERATURE.

There seems to be a strong analogy in almost every case between the literature of a country, and its physical peculiarities. Beneath skies that are never clouded, and amidst the softness of perpetual spring, we naturally look for romantic sensibility, and poetical enthusiasm: among the frozen hills and endless snows of an arctic region, what more can we expect than unpolished vigour, and ungoverned feeling? While in that chosen land where neither heat nor cold preside in uninterrupted power, but follow each other in endless succession; the genius of the people is marked by the coolness of conception, and a temperance of emotion, at equal distance from rugged violence, and the warmth of effeminate refinement. It may be a fanciful conceit; but it seems to us, that nature has assigned to every zone, its portion of intellectual exercise. There is a sternness, both exterior and mental, in the inhabitants of frozen countries, which forms a visible distinction between them and the rest

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of men. When their rudeness shall be cultivated, and their ferocity subdued, it is difficult to tell how this peculiarity will display itself. But during the ages which have witnessed their ignorance and debasement, it has been exhibited in those wild and fearful fictions of giants and spectres, and mysterious agencies, for which we are indebted to the Scandinavian fancy. In warm and fertile regions, the gentle Muses seem to have reared their throne. The genius of amatory song loves best to sport among the spicy groves, and ride on the odoriferous breezes of the south. To the calm and calculating intellect of the mid-way nations, who, though they have the pleasures both of summer and winter, are chained in perpetual servitude to neither, is left the less romantic, but sublime task of opening the mines of knowledge, revealing the secrets of the earth, and subjecting to human scrutiny the operations of nature. Of this analogy, the influence of climate on the fancy and the moral sensibilities affords an adequate solution. Having alluded to the general fact, let us now examine a particular example.

We are all familiar with the contrast which has frequently been drawn between the poetry of Europe and of Asia. Of the former, classical antiquity presents at once the highest model and most favourable specimen. The Muses of Greece were fabled to reside on the summits of her cold but fertile mountains; and there is something in the local habitation thus assigned them, exceedingly appropriate to those beautiful creations which their aspiring genius enabled them to produce. The literature of Athens in its uncorrupted purity, is, as far as possible, removed from rich and exuberant redundance. Its faults are faults of the opposite extreme, rigidity of thought and stiffness of expression. Its excellencies lean with a visible propensity in the same direction. They are precision, clearness, strength, vivacity, and point. The genius of the Greek, when presented in its most imposing aspect, is marked by the freshness of a healthy hardihood, at equal distance from the dreary dimness of northern fiction, and the gorgeous extravagance of oriental romance. Even Homer, whose fervour of conception often rises to the height of ebullition, exhibits nothing in the workings of his creative fancy, analogous to the gilded bombast or laboured fustian of the modern muse. The latter is the fruitless toiling of a barren intellect, to pile with words its hopeless vacuity of thought. The former is the boiling over of an exhaustless reservoir, in which every bubble that escapes serves to indicate the strength and richness of that which is left behind. In a word, the character of Attic literature, is chastened elegance, neither encumbered with the weight of superfluous ornament, nor marred by the deformities of barbarous conceit.

We descend from "the cold mountain tops of Hellas," and as we journey towards the east, new prospects, physical and intellectual, present themselves to view. We have exchanged the land of sparse, but healthy vegetation, for that of teeming and spontaneous fertility—the grassy walk for the bed of roses—and a cool, but salubrious and bracing air, for the voluptuous fannings of aromatic gales. In the garden of Asiatic genius, all is richness and profusion—but a richness which cloys from its unmingled sweetness, and a profusion which palls from the absence of variety. There is in the effusions of oriental genius, more of that mere exterior embellishment, which, without some substantial subject around which to throw its charms, is stale and unprofitable trash—and less of that *vis vivida animi* which needs no aid from decoration to give or to increase its potency.

The advantage, then, so far as relates

to the solidity of the groundwork, is on the side of the Greek; with respect to beauty of embellishment, it is doubtful and divided. There is a correctness of judgment, as to propriety of conception and expression, unknown to the Eastern writer, which contributes more than any other cause to the chastened elegance of Attic composition. With the standard of correctness drawn from classical authority, the cultivated minds of the West are all familiar. Whatever, therefore, violates or varies from this standard appears to us a defect almost unpardonable; and as we have been taught in the same high school, that richness and elegance of ornament can never atone for the slightest transgression of propriety, we open the poems of the East predisposed to censure their most boasted excellencies, and turn with disgust from their brightest charms. Now the justice of such a condemnation may be questioned. It has by some been disputed, and with at least a show of plausibility, whether the rigid rules of propriety, now fully admitted among western critics and writers, are not rather deduced by an arbitrary process from unquestioned authority, than founded in natural and immutable principles. But laying aside the consideration of this point, it should be recollected, that these canons of criticism, whatever be their intrinsic value, are not recognised in all their extent among the literati of the East; and the inference seems to be, that the merit of their writings would more justly be determined by an appeal to simpler principles, and a disregard of systematic niceties. If we pursue this method, and commence the perusal of their works, distinctly recollecting that they feel no such prejudice against extravagance of thought and redundancy of diction, as we have derived from habit and instruction, we cannot fail to find much that deserves our admiration.

In fertility of fancy the Asiatics stand unrivalled. Sir William Jones, an acknowledged master of the language and letters of the ancient world, and noted from his childhood as an enthusiastic lover of the classic authors, deliberately gives the palm of richness and brilliancy of invention to Ferdúsi the Persian Bard, over Homer and all other poets with whom he was acquainted. It is indeed the excess of this single quality, which, by its disproportion with the rest, produces what to us appears extravagance. The imagination of the oriental teems with strange and beautiful creations, which his taste induces him to look upon with pleasure; and as he acknowledges no rule which would condemn the improbability or wildness of these favourite conceptions, he embodies them in words, and throws around them that luscious garb of rich and flowing language, which in western tongues is unknown and unintelligible. If we examine some of the productions of Arab and Persian fancy, without respect to congruity of metaphor or propriety of phrases, but merely following the author's mind in its wanderings through regions unknown and unimagined, we shall readily subscribe to the praise which orientalists have lavished on Eastern fertility of thought, and *copia verborum*. When the poet of the West undertakes the task of composition, he feels himself surrounded by tangible restraints. If, in the ardour of an excited fancy, some novel idea is suddenly suggested, he looks back to the practice of antiquity, around him to the taste and spirit of the age, and forward to the judgment of posterity. He vacillates between the pride of originality and the dread of critical severity, till his inspiration, so to speak, subsides. Then he sees or fancies that he sees extravagance, in all that charmed him as original; and he gradually brings it nearer to the ordinary track, till what before was striking novelty, is transformed into hackneyed common-place.

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From these inconveniences the oriental bard is free. He bows to no critical authority, and knows the minds for which he writes too well, to fear that they can be startled by the vagaries of his fancy. We generally see the images as they first rose upon his mind, in all their native grossness or delicacy, deformity or grace, unchanged by subsequent reflection, and untouched by the *limæ labor*. There is a freshness in their aspect wholly unlike the withered formality of *his* conceptions, who hesitates for hours over every sentiment, and pauses in doubt over almost every word. As no attempts are made to reduce them to conformity with any existing model, they remain as they were at first, not altogether new perhaps, but in the most pleasing sense original, by bearing the incommunicable impress of their author's intellect and fancy.

From these general considerations, it would appear that there is much in the mines of oriental learning that is of sterling value, and worthy of being extricated from the worthless substances by which it is surrounded. This extrication would have long since been accomplished, but for a prejudice among the learned of the West, which, by yielding the palm of every excellency to the classic authors, excludes the literature of every other people, from all participation in the praise. The day is perhaps approaching, when the ancient languages, while the respect for the matchless works which they contain remains unaltered, will be less exclusively the objects of attention. To that period the orientalist looks forward, in the confidence, that the productions of Eastern genius will then be candidly and impartially appreciated.

ALI.

Princeton, N. J.

HALLORAN THE PEDLAR.

A TALE.

By the writer of the "Diary of an Ennuyée."

SELECTED FROM THE BIJOU.

"IT grieves me," said an eminent poet once to me, "it grieves and humbles me to reflect how much our moral nature is in the power of circumstances. Our best faculties would remain unknown even to ourselves, did not the influences of external excitement call them forth like animalculæ, which lie torpid till wakened into life by the transient sunbeam."

This is generally true. How many walk through the beaten paths of every day life, who but for the novelist's page would never weep or wonder; and who would know nothing of the passions but as they are represented in some tragedy or stage piece? not that they are incapable of high resolve and energy; but because the finer qualities have never been called forth by imperious circumstances; for while the wheels of existence roll smoothly along, the soul will continue to slumber in her vehicle like a lazy traveller. But for the French revolution, how many hundreds—*thousands*—whose courage, fortitude and devotedness have sanctified their names, would have frittered away a frivolous, useless, or vicious life in the saloons of Paris! We have heard of death in its most revolting forms braved by delicate females, who would have scream-

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