

THE

214

# PRINCETON MAGAZINE.

EDITED BY

WILLIAM C. ALEXANDER.

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VOL. I.

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PRINTED BY JOHN T. ROBINSON.

1850.

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THE MINOR WORKS OF DOCTOR JOHNSON.

Johnson, as is familiarly known, was a copious writer for the old fashioned English magazines, from a very early date. Many of his contributions, including some of his characteristic and perhaps invented reports of parliamentary debates, are now undistinguishable in the mass; but a number of his hackney pieces have been collected and made public. His fondness for biography, of which he was to become the most noted subject in modern times, was early remarkable. Not to speak of his 'Lives of the Poets,' which we exclude, as belonging to his greater productions, there are a number of truly valuable sketches, which retain all the importance they ever possessed. Such are his memoirs of Father Paul, of the prodigy Barretier, of the great navigators Blake and Drake, of the great physician Boerhaave and Sydenham, of Ascham, Sir Thomas Browne and Frederick the Great. These may now be read with much instruction. Their moral tone is high from the very first, and they abound in those sagacious observations on life and manners, which afterwards won for Johnson the name of the British Moralist. At the same time they are singularly free from that affected balance in the periods, which reached its maximum in the Rambler.

your matches, your gun, your thermometer; and, on occasions, your steam-chariot, and your telegraph. None of these things could be produced but by manifold labour-saving inventions. Surely you would not go back to the condition of the Camanche Indian and the New Zealander. In every civilized country, the whole labouring population is daily rising to a level of greater comfort, by this very cause. The evidence of it is in every bed-room, cellar, and kitchen, in the land. A little enlarged thought, reaching beyond one's little self to the great brotherhood, will cure a man of these narrow and paltry prejudices. The resources of a country, especially of small states, cannot be brought out without machinery. Where the great staples of commerce cannot be raised, they can yet be handled over and turned to use. There is more in a land than its soil and crops. To agriculture there is a limit; but to manufactures, that is to the use of machinery, there is none.

The upshot of all is, that he who quarrels with machines, runs a tilt against a windmill. Every new contrivance, which really saves labour, may be so managed by you, as to give you a lift in the world. You will have more money, more time, and abundantly more comfort.

C. Q.

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## THE PERSIAN LANGUAGE.

Persian and Arabic are almost always named together, as if they were dialects of one great language. Their connection is historical, though not in general correctly understood. It rests upon two facts, both relating to the Arabian conquest of Persia in the seventh century of our era. The first is, that since that time Persian has always been written in the Arabic character, with a few modifications and additions.

The other is, that the Persian vocabulary has been overflowed with Arabic words. This has made some knowledge of Arabic absolutely necessary to the comprehension of most Persian books. But in structure and internal character, the two tongues are among the most dissimilar and uncongenial in existence. They belong indeed to different genera or classes in the grand division of human language. Comparative philology reduces all cultivated dialects to two great families, distinguished, not merely by local or historical associations, but by intrinsic and characteristic features. The Semitic, Hebraic, or Syro-Arabian languages are written (with a single exception), from the right hand to the left. Their alphabets consist of consonants only. Their vowels are either not expressed in writing or denoted by points and strokes entirely distinct from the letters. An analogous distinction between consonants and vowels may be traced in the etymology and grammatical changes of these languages. Essential differences of meaning are expressed by consonants; nicer shades by diversities of vowels. The radical forms of words are definite and restricted, consisting almost always of three letters. The verb in all these languages has only two distinct and independent tenses; but as if to compensate for this defect, it has numerous affiliated forms, corresponding partly to the Greek and Latin voices, partly to the classes of inceptive, frequentative, and other derived forms of occidental grammar. These modifications are so numerous and regular in their formation, that they constitute whole systems of kindred verbal forms deducible from one root. Another striking feature in this family of languages is the absence of compound words, properly so called, and the presence of a species of composition quite unknown to us, except in certain combinations of Spanish and Italian grammar. This is the practice of attaching possessive and objective pronouns to the governing part of speech so as to form a single word. As a last peculiarity of these tongues may be mentioned the extension of the difference of genders to the verb

as well as the noun. In every one of these particulars, the Japhetic, Indo-Germanic, or Indo-European family of languages is wholly different. They are all written from the left hand to the right. Their alphabets consist of vowels and consonants promiscuously mingled and indiscriminately used for the expression of grammatical distinctions. The roots or primary forms of all these languages are wholly unrestricted as to shape or size, the nature or the number of the letters which compose them. The temporal modifications of the verb are very numerous; but it knows no difference of gender in the proper verbal forms. Lastly, the languages derive a large part of their richness from an indefinite susceptibility of composition.

The heads of those two great dialectic families are the Hebrew and the Sanscrit, which may be considered as presenting the most perfect contrast of internal structure and external form that can be found in the whole circle of cultivated languages. As daughters or younger sisters of the first may be reckoned the two great Aramean dialects, the Chaldee and the Syriac, together with the Arabic, and the derivatives of each. To the other, besides Greek and Latin, and all the modern languages of Europe, belongs Persian, although written for the last twelve centuries in the Arabic modification of the old Semitic alphabet. The old Persian character has been brought to light in our own day, together with the ancient Persian dialect or language called the Zend. The modern Persian, from the singular connection into which it has been brought with a language so unlike itself in structure and in genius, has a peculiar motley or mosaic character, especially as used by the inferior class of writers, whose defective taste has led them to overlay the vernacular basis or substratum with a profusion of Arabic vocables, even in cases where the native treasures of the language furnished indigenous equivalents. There seems to be no defined limit to this mixture except that the Arabic words, however numerous, must be set, as it were, in a Persian frame, however

slight. With this restriction, even whole clauses, or complete though independent propositions, may be introduced without any change of form into a Persian sentence. The only approach to this kind of diction ever practised among us is the affected or pedantic use of French or Latin words and phrases by writers of corrupt taste or spurious erudition. The fashionable jargon of Lady Blessington's novels may be cited as a sample. Even in the worst Persian style, however, there is still discernible a fine substratum of the mother-tongue, and in some of the oldest books this is decidedly predominant. In the great epic poem or versified history of Persia, the Shahnameh of Ferdusi, this is especially the case. The separation of the two elements is the more acceptable to occidental taste, because the very excellencies of the two tongues are so very different. The Arabic is admirable for breviloquence and force; the Persian for perspicuous diffuseness. One of the most marked features of the latter is the constant disposition to resolve a simple verb into an abstract noun with an auxiliary verbal form. The difference is analogous to that between our English phrases, *speak* and *make a speech*, *please* and *give pleasure*, *favour* and *show favour*, *honour* and *do honour*. The almost constant preference of the longer form in Persian is the chief cause of its elegant diffuseness. We shall close this desultory statement, for the present, by observing that the Persian, while it strongly resembles Greek and German in the number and expressiveness of compound terms, is like the Latin in the absence of a definite article, and like our own mother English in its simple but truly philosophical distinction of the genders, not to mention the coincidence of form and sound in many of those elementary and household words, which are least subject to exchange or transfer. Some of these correspondences we may perhaps be tempted to state with more particularity hereafter.