

record, which professed to contain a plain and simple statement of such supernatural communication, and such subsequent confusion of tongues, it would be a book that, independently of any other information, would be amply entitled to our attention, for it would bear an index of commanding authority on its own forehead.

To pursue this argument would be to weaken it. Such a book is in our hands—let us prize it. It must be the word of God, for it has the direct stamp and testimony of his works.

## LECTURE X.

## ON LEGIBLE LANGUAGE, IMITATIVE AND SYMBOLICAL.

THE subject of the vocal organs, and the scale of tones and terms to which they give rise, which have just passed under review, led us progressively into an inquiry concerning the nature of the voice itself; and the origin of systematic or articulate language.

Systematic or articulate language, however, as we have already observed, is of two kinds, *oral* and *legible*; the one spoken and addressed to the ear, the other penned or printed, and addressed to the eye. It is this last which constitutes the wonderful and important art of writing, and distinguishes civilized man from savage man, as the first distinguishes man in general from the brute creation. The connexion between the two is so close, that although both subjects might, with the most perfect order, find a place in some subsequent part of that comprehensive course of study upon which we have even now but barely entered, I shall immediately follow up the latter for the very reason that I have already touched upon the former. It will, moreover, if I mistake not, afford an agreeable variety to our philosophical pursuits; a point which ought no more to be lost sight of in the midst of instruction than in the midst of amusement; and will form an extensive subject for useful reflection when the present series of our labours shall have reached its close.

Written language is of so high an antiquity, that, like the language of the voice, it has been supposed, by a multitude of wise and good men in all ages, to have been a supernatural gift, communicated either at the creation, or upon some special occasion not long afterward. Yet there seems no satisfactory ground for either of these opinions. That it was not communicated like oral language at the creation of mankind, appears highly probable, because, first, it by no means possesses the universality which, under such circumstances, we should have reason to expect, and which oral language displays. No tribe or people have ever been found without a tongue; but multitudes without legible characters. Secondly, among the different tribes and nations that do possess it, it is far from evincing that unity or similarity in the structure of its elements which, I have already observed, is to be traced in the elements of speech, and which must be the natural result of an origin from one common source. The system of writing among some nations consists in pictures, or marks representative of things; among others in letters or marks symbolical of sounds; while, not unfrequently, the two systems are found in a state of combination, and the characters are partly imitative and partly arbitrary. And, thirdly, there does not seem to be the same necessity for a divine interposition in the formation of written characters as in that of oral language. The latter existing, the former might be expected to follow naturally in some shape or other, from that imitative and inventive genius which belongs to the nature of man, and especially in a civilized state. And, as we endeavour to penetrate the obscurity of past ages, we meet with a few occasional beacons which point out to us something of the means by which this wonderful art appears to have been first devised, and something of the countries where it appears to have been first practised.

But an exception is made by many learned and excellent men in favour of one species of writing; namely, that of alphabetic characters, which is conceived to be so far superior to every other method, as to have demanded and justified a special interposition of the Deity at some period of the creation; and, by turning to the Pentateuch, a few texts, we are told, are to be met with, which seem to intimate that the knowledge of letters was first communicated to Moses by God himself, and that the Decalogue was the earliest specimen of alphabetic writing.

Such was the opinion of many of the fathers of the Christian church, and such continues to be the opinion of many able scholars of modern times: as, among the former, St. Cyril, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Isidore; and among the latter, Mr. Bryant, Mr. Costard, Mr. Windar.\* And it is hence necessary to remark, in addition to what has already been observed, that, so far from arrogating any such invention or communication to himself, Moses uniformly refers to writing, and even to alphabetic writing, as an art as common and as well known in his own day as at present. He expressly appeals to the existence of written records, such as tablets or volumes, and to the more durable art of engraving, as applied to alphabetic characters. Thus, in the passage in which writing is first mentioned in the Scriptures, "And the Lord said unto Moses, *Write* this for a memorial in a *book* or *table*."† And shortly afterward, "And thou shalt make a *plate* of pure gold, and *grave* upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD."‡ The public seals or signets of oriental princes are well known to be of the same description even in the present day, and to be ornamented with sentences instead of with figures or mere ciphers. In the State-Paper Office, at Whitehall, there are still to be seen a number of letters from Eastern monarchs to the kings of England, with seals of this very kind, the inscriptions of several of which are copied by Mr. Astle into his valuable work upon the present subject.§

In that sublime and unrivalled poem, the book of Job, which carries intrinsic and, in the present individual's judgment, incontrovertible evidence of its being the work of Moses, we meet with a similar proof of the existence and general cultivation of both these arts, at the period before us; for it is thus the afflicted patriarch exclaims, under a dignified consciousness of his innocence:

O! that my words were even now written down:  
O! that they were engraven on a table:  
With a pen of iron upon lead:—  
That they were sculptured in a rock for ever!!

Nor do the Hebrews alone appear to have been possessed of written characters at this era. Admitting Moses to be the author of this very ancient poem, we find him ascribing a familiar knowledge of writing, and not only of writing but of engraving and sculpture, to the Arabians; for of this country were Job and his companions. And if, as appears from the preceding passages, the Hebrews were generally acquainted with at least two of these arts at the time of their quitting Egypt, it would be reasonable to suppose, even though we had no other ground for such a supposition, that the Egyptians themselves were equally acquainted with them.

We have also some reason for believing that alphabetic writing was at this very period common to India; and either picture-writing or emblematic writing to China. The Hindoo Scriptures, if the term may be allowed, consist of four distinct books, called Baidis or Beids, Bedas or Vedas, which are conceived to have issued successively from each of the four mouths of Brahma; and of these, Sir William Jones calculates that the second, or Yajur Beda, may have been in existence fifteen hundred and eighty years before the birth of our Saviour, and, consequently, in the century before the birth of Moses: whence, if there be any approach towards correctness in the calculation, the

\* Compare Astle's Origin of Writing, &c. p. 11, 4to.  
§ Origin and Progress of Writing, p. 14, 4to. 1803.

† Exod. xvii. 14.  
‡ Job, xix. 23, 24.

‡ Ib. xxviii. 36.

first, or Rik Beda, must, at the same epoch, have been of very considerable standing. He dates the Institutes of Menu, the son or grandson of Brahma, which he has so admirably translated, at not more than two centuries after the time of Moses; though he admits that these are the highest periods that can fairly be ascribed to both publications:\* and is ready to allow that they did not at first exist in their present form, and were, perhaps, for a long time only traditional. It is impossible not to wish that the facts upon which this extraordinary scholar builds his premises were established with more certainty, and that the conclusions he deduces from them were supported by inferences and arguments less nicely spun. Admitting the existence of these compositions in any sort of regular shape on their first appearance, it seems more reasonable to suppose, considering their complicated nature and extent, that they were handed down from age to age in a written form, than that they maintained a precarious life by mere oral tradition; for, if the Egyptians, as appears almost unquestionable, were in possession of legible characters at or before the time of Moses, there seems no solid ground for believing that the Hindoos might not have been in possession of a similar art. The different ages of the *Kings*, or five sacred and most ancient books of the Chinese, have been still less satisfactorily settled than the Vedas of the Hindoos. A very high antiquity, however, is fully established for them by a distinct reference to their existence in the Institutes of Menu; nor perhaps less so in the very simple and antiquated style in which all of them are written, how much soever the characters of any one of these books may differ from any other: and, adopting the chronology of the Septuagint, Mr. Butler ingeniously conjectures that the era of the Chinese empire may be fixed, with some latitude of calculation, at two thousand five hundred years before Christ,† which would make it nearly a thousand years before the birth of Moses.

"The annals of China," says Dr. Marshman, "taken in their utmost extent, synchronize with the chronology of Josephus, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Septuagint, rather than with that contained in our present copies of the Hebrew text; and, according to the former, the highest pretensions of their own annals leave the Chinese *inhabiting the woods, and totally ignorant of agriculture*, nearly five hundred years after the deluge."‡ The Y-King, or oldest of their sacred books, consists of horizontal lines, entire or cut, which are multiplied and combined into sixty-four different forms or positions. They appear involved in almost impenetrable mystery, as well as antiquity; but, so far as they have been deciphered, they seem, in conjunction with the other sacred books, to contain a summary of patriarchal religion, or that which alone ought to be regarded as the established religion of China; under which the people are taught to know and reverence the Supreme Being, and to contemplate the emperor as both king and pontiff; to whom, exclusively, it belongs to prescribe ceremonies, to decide on doctrines, and, at certain times of the year, to offer sacrifices for the nation.§

It becomes me, however, to observe that, with all the researches of our most learned writers, we are still involved in a considerable degree of uncertainty concerning the chronology of several of the Oriental empires, and still more so concerning their most ancient publications. M. Freret and M. Bailly, generally speaking, concur in the periods assigned to the earliest Oriental writings by Sir William Jones; but the pretension of several of them, and especially of the Puranas, or series of mythological histories, to a very high antiquity, has lately been powerfully attacked by Mr. Bentley, in his dissertation on the *Suryá Siddhanta*;|| and still later by Captain Wilford, in his series of *Essays on the Sacred Isles of the West*;¶ and a fall in the preten-

\* He calculates the first three Vedas to have been composed about 300 years before the Institutes, and about 600 before the Puranas and Itahasas, which he felt convinced were not the production of Vyasa. Works, vol. ii. p. 305; and iii. p. 484, 4to. ed. † Horæ Biblicæ, vol. ii. p. 179, 2d ed. 8vo. 1807.  
‡ Elements of Chinese Grammar: with a Preliminary Dissertation on the Characters and Colloquial Medium of the Chinese. Serampore, 4to. 1814. § Lettres Edif. et Cur. tom. xxi. p. 218, 1781.  
|| Butler, p. ii. ut supr. p. 175. Asiatic Researches, vol. vi.  
¶ Asiatic Researches, vol. x. See also Edin. Rev. No. xxxii. p. 387—389. The difference is indeed wonderful; for while Sir William Jones reckons the Puranas at nearly 2500 or 2600 years old, "it is evi-

sions of these may probably be succeeded by a like fall in those of various others.\*

Even China, at the time of Moses, according to the statement of their own writers, had not long emerged from a state of the grossest barbarism. It is admitted in the Lee K'hee, that, during the reigns of Yaou and Shun, or about two thousand years before Christ, the people, as we have just observed, were living in a savage state, in woods and caves, and holes dug in the ground; covering themselves with the skins of beasts, and rude garments formed of the leaves of trees, grass, reeds, and feathers. Even one thousand years later, or during the dynasty Chow, their states or clans amounted to not less than eighteen hundred, each of which had its chieftain, who possessed absolute and hereditary power; though all united in acknowledging the supremacy of this family and conceding to it the imperial dignity. It was only about two hundred years before our own era that these clans were reduced to seven; and some time afterward that Che-hwang-he, the first emperor of the dynasty T'sin, succeeded in amalgamating the whole into one vast and massy despotism, the great outlines of which continue to the present day.† Yet, as far down as nine hundred and eighteen years before Christ, or about five hundred years before the era of Confucius, notwithstanding their symbolical characters and sacred books, in use among the learned, Dr. Milne affirms, from their own historians, that generally speaking they were barbarians in literature as well as in manners, and could "neither read, nor write, nor cipher."‡ And I may here add, that whatever were their writings, and by whomsoever written, in earlier ages, the Chinese have, at this day, none of a higher date than those composed by Confucius himself, five hundred years before our own era, or compiled by him from rude and imperfect copies of more ancient productions, for the most part indented on plates or pieces of wood rather than transcribed on paper.

Upon the whole, however, the conclusion I have ventured to advance seems to be strengthened by the general tenor of the inquiry into this subject, and affords us additional ground for believing that the art of writing, even by the use of alphabetic characters, instead of having been communicated to Moses by some special interposition of the Deity, was, in his day, as familiar to his countrymen as to himself; that it was generally known throughout Egypt, and, perhaps, cultivated over various parts of Asia.

Contemplating written language, therefore, as of human invention, let us next inquire into the most probable means by which it was invented and brought to perfection; and the countries in which it originated.

dent," says Mr. Bentley, "that none of the modern romances commonly called the Puranas, at least in the form in which they now stand, are older than 484; and that some of them are compilations of still later times."—Asiatic Researches, vol. viii. p. 240. And to nearly as late a date are they assigned by Mr. Wilford: "They are certainly," says he, "a modern compilation from valuable materials, that, I am afraid, no longer exist. An astronomical observation of the heliacal rising of Canopus mentioned in two of the Puranas puts this beyond doubt."—Ib. vol. p. 244. Mr. Coleman is of this same opinion; at least in respect to one of them, the Sri Bhagavata: which, he farther tells us, is considered even by many of the learned Hindoos as the work of a grammarian supposed to have lived about 600 years ago.—Ib. vol. viii. p. 487.

\* There is a doubt which has the best claim to the highest antiquity, the religion of Boodh or that of Brahma. One of the most authentic accounts we have of the former is that transmitted to the American Board of Missions by Mr. Judson, a man of great excellence and intelligence, who has resided in the Burman empire as a missionary, at Rangoon or at Ava, from 1814, to, I believe, the present time; to which I shall also have occasion to advert hereafter. Mr. Judson is intimately acquainted with the language, the customs, and established creed of the Burman empire; and, according to his account, the priests of Boodhism, though they claim for themselves a higher origin than those of Brahma, make no pretence to an extravagant antiquity. "Boodh," says Mr. Judson, "whose proper name is Gaudama, appeared in Hindostan about two thousand three hundred years ago, and gave a new form and dress to the old transmigration system, which, in some shape or other, has existed from time immemorial. The Brahmans, in the mean time, dressed up the system after their fashion; and both these modifications struggled for the ascendancy. At length the family of Gaudama, which had held the sovereignty of India, was dethroned, his religion was denounced, and his disciples took refuge in Ceylon, and the neighbouring countries. In that island, about 500 years after the decease and supposed annihilation of their teacher or deity, they composed their sacred writings in the Sanscrit, which had obtained in Ceylon; whence they were conveyed by sea to the Indo Chinese nations (those of the Burman empire). Boodhism, however, had gained a footing in Burmah before the arrival of the sacred books from Ceylon. It is commonly maintained that it was introduced by his emissaries before his death."—Correspondence, 1819.

† Part iv. sec. 9. See Milne's Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China. Malacca Press, 8vo. 1820, p. 18.

‡ Kwoh-tsch. Pref. p. 1. Milne, ut supr. p. 20.

Supposing,\* by a miracle, the world were now to be reduced to the state in which we may conceive it to have existed in its infancy; and every trace and idea of written language were to be swept away, and the only means of communication to be that of the voice, what would be the mode most likely to be resorted to of imparting to a deaf person, or a foreigner ignorant of our dialect, a knowledge of any particular fact or thing with which we might wish him to be acquainted? The reply is obvious: we should point at it if in sight; and if not, endeavour to sketch a rude drawing of it; and thus make one sense answer the purpose of another. This is not mere fancy, but manifest and experimental fact; it is the plan actually pursued in most institutions for instructing the deafly-dumb, and the elementary system by which they acquire knowledge. In such establishments, however, it is the elementary system alone; for the use of letters significative of words or sounds is, in every respect, so far superior to that of pictures significative of things, that the latter is uniformly dropped as soon as ever it has answered its purpose and served as a key to the former.

But we are at present adverting to a state of things in which letters are supposed not to exist; and the only established mode of communicating between man and man is that of vocal language. Under such circumstances, the most natural method of conveying ideas to a person unacquainted with our tongue must be, as I have already observed, to point at the things to which they relate if at hand, as all savage nations are well known to do; and if not at hand, to trace out a rude sketch of them on the sand, the bark of a plant, or some other substance. In this manner the idea of a horse, a house, a dog, or a tree, may, as single objects, be as distinctly communicated as by alphabetic characters; while two or more houses may be made significative of a town, and two or more trees of a wood; and, by thus continuing to copy in successive series such things or objects of common notoriety as the train of our ideas might call for, a kind of connected narrative of passing events might be drawn up, which, though not calculated for minute accuracy, might be generally understood and interpreted.

This kind of language would be fairly entitled to the appellation of *picture-writing*; it would give the images of things instead of the symbols of sounds or words. In its scope, however, it must be extremely limited, for though conveniently adapted to express imbodied forms, it must completely fail in delineating pure mental conceptions, abstract ideas, and such properties of body as are not submitted to the eye; as wisdom, power, benevolence, genius, length, breadth, hardness, softness, sound, taste, and smell.

Our next attempt, therefore, would be to remedy this deficiency; and the common consent of mankind in ascribing peculiar internal qualities and virtues to peculiar external forms, would enable us to lay hold of such forms to express the qualities and virtues themselves. Thus the figure of a circle might be made to signify a year; that of a hatchet, separation or division; that of an eye, watchfulness or providential care, if open; and sleep or forgetfulness, if closed; the figure of a harrow might represent a ploughed field; and of a flag a fortress; a rosebud, odour; and a bale of goods, commerce.

Upon the same principle compound ideas might be expressed by a combination of characters; the character expressive of a man in the midst of that expressive of an enclosure, as a square, for example, might denote a prisoner; and a union of those significative of mouth and gold might import eloquence. And we hence advance to another kind of imitative characters, those of a mixed kind, and which are called ALLEGORICAL, OR EMBLEMATIC WRITING.

It is obvious that legible language must be very considerably improved by such an accession of power; that it must become both more manageable and more comprehensive. It is obvious, also, that in a variety of abstract subjects, as those of philosophy or religion, the allegorical characters alone might be employed as a medium of communication; and that, by attaching an esoteric

\* A few pages of this lecture, particularly adapted to the occasion, were introduced into an article in the British Review for 1811, at the request of the writer's friend, who was at that time its editor; and may be found in the analysis there given of Dr. Marshman's Elements of Chinese Grammar.

or concealed, instead of an exoteric or general, meaning to each, it would form a language of impenetrable privacy—a language from which every one would be shut out excepting those who might be in possession of its key.

The persons to whom we should chiefly look for learning and science in the state of the world to which I am at present adverting would be the priesthood; or that elevated order which, among all uncultivated nations, concentrates in itself the three professions of law, medicine, and theology. It is among this order, therefore, that we should chiefly expect to meet with proofs of both these kinds of visible language; and hence, both kinds might also be fairly denominated *HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING*, OR THAT OF *SACRED IMPRESSIONS*. Thus, indeed, they have been denominated generally; the pure picture-writing being distinguished by the term *curiologic hieroglyphs*; and the allegorical, typical or symbolic hieroglyphs.

Such kinds of picture-language, however, even with this improvement, must be attended with very considerable labour; and hence, from a desire to abbreviate that labour, we may readily conceive that the pictures or imitative characters would soon become simplified and contracted.

The idea of a MAN, formerly represented by his whole figure, might now be signified by his legs alone, as a simple acute angle, like a Greek  $\Delta$ , which is the written character for a MAN in the Chinese tongue, the whole figure being supposed to have been employed at first; that of HAND, formerly represented by a perfect drawing of this organ, might be contracted into a Greek  $\psi$ , or rather the figure of  $\Psi$ , which is the old Chinese expression for this purpose, being a rude or rapid outline of the wrist, palm, and fingers; while the idea of UNION OR FRIENDSHIP, at first denoted by two such figures conjoined, as  $\Psi\Psi$ , might subsequently be abbreviated into  $\Psi\Psi$ , which, in like manner, is the old Chinese written sign for both these ideas. Ingenuity, thus set to work, would soon be able to form a like device for the auxiliary parts of speech; concerning which it may be sufficient to observe, that most of the prepositions might be expressed by some simple mark, whose precise meaning should be determined by its relative situation. Thus a plain horizontal stroke, as —, placed at the foot of a noun, might import UNDER it, and at its head ABOVE it; which is, in fact, the very device had recourse to in the old written language of China; so that the sign for MEASURE, with a horizontal line over it, imports ABOVE MEASURE, and below it, UNDER MEASURE; while, in the ordinary mark for HAND, as noticed above, the cross line is turned to the left to express LEFT-HAND, as  $\text{E}$ , and to the right to express RIGHT-HAND, as  $\text{Y}$ ; for both which, however, a somewhat different form is used in the present day.

In this manner picture-characters or images would insensibly become converted into arbitrary characters; which, to those acquainted with the meaning of the different marks, would answer the purpose as well, and would have an incalculable advantage in the facility of writing them.

We have now reached the utmost pitch of perfection which the legible language of *things* is, perhaps, capable of attaining. It has one superiority over that of *words*, or marks characteristic of *sounds*; namely, that when the pictures are drawn at full length, or, if abbreviated, where the key of the abbreviation is known, it is a species of writing addressed to all nations, and may be interpreted without a knowledge of their oral tongues. It speaks by painting and appeals to what all are acquainted with. And hence M. Leibnitz, and many other philosophers, have conceived an idea that a system of pasigraphy or universal writing, a language of human thoughts, might be founded\* upon some such invention.

It is easy to perceive, however, without any detail of facts, that such a system could never be carried into full effect among different nations: and that, plausible as it may appear at first sight, it must be loaded with inconveniences, and be equally defective and burdensome, even among people of

\* See here also Northman's Panography, Repertory of Arts, li. 307, iii. 91. Langlois's Pantograph, Mach. A. vii. 207. Lodwick's Universal Alphabet.

the same empire. It is easy to conceive, to adopt the language of Sir George Staunton, as applied to the most perfect system of the kind that has ever been actually carried into execution, that it would consist of "a plan of which it may justly be said, that the practice is no less inconvenient and perplexing than the theory is beautiful and ingenious."\* If a distinct character were to be employed to represent every distinct idea, the number of distinct characters would be almost incalculable: if a few distinct or simple characters only were to be made use of to represent such ideas as are most common, and the rest were to be expressed by combinations of these, though the number of distinct characters would be in some degree diminished, the memory would still have a difficult task to retain them: and the combinations would, in a thousand instances, be embarrassing and intricate.

Under this pressure of evils there can be no doubt that a contemplative mind, in whatever part of the world placed, would soon begin to reflect on the possibility of avoiding them, by making the contracted characters now in use, or any other set in their stead, significative of sounds or words rather than of things or images. By minute attention it would soon be discovered, that such an art, which would require, indeed, a general convention or agreement in order to its being generally embraced or understood, might be effected with less difficulty than would at first be imagined. It would be perceived that the distinct articulate sounds in any or in every language, as I had occasion to observe in our last lecture, are not many, and in every language are the same or nearly so: that in few languages they exceed twenty, and in none, perhaps thirty;† and that consequently from twenty to thirty arbitrary marks or alphabetical characters might be ample to express every simple sound, and, by their combinations, to denote every separate word or intermixture of sounds:‡ whence a written language might be formed, addressed to the ear instead of to the eye, symbolical of oral language, and, of course, possessing the whole of its accuracy and precision; and as much more easy of attainment as it would be more definite and comprehensive.§

I have thus drawn a sketch of what there can be but little doubt would be the case provided mankind were at this moment to be deprived by a miracle of all legible language, and reduced to the state in which we may conceive the world to have existed in its earliest ages. The art of writing would commence with imitative, and terminate in symbolical characters; it would first describe by pictures or marks of things addressed to the eye, and after having passed through various stages of improvement would finish in letters, or marks of words addressed to the ear.

This is not a speculative representation; for I shall now proceed to show, as far as the period of time to which we are limited will allow me, that what we have thus supposed would take place has actually taken place: that wherever alphabetic characters exist, or have existed, we have direct proofs, or strong reasons for believing, that they have been preceded by picture or imitative characters; and that wherever picture or imitative characters, the language of things, still continue to exist, instead of having been preceded by alphabetic characters, they have a strong tendency to run into them, and probably will run into them in the upshot. And in this view of the subject I am supported by many of the most celebrated philologists of the age, as Bishop Warburton, the President de Brosses, Mr. Astle, M. Fourmont, M. Gibelin.

The remains of Egyptian sculpture are but few; but they are sufficient to afford us specimens of each of the kinds of writing I have adverted to;

\* Ta Tsing Leu Lee. Pref. p. xiv.

† "Mr. Sheridan says the number of simple sounds in our tongue are twenty-eight. Dr. Kenrick says, we have only eleven distinct species of articulate sounds; which, even by contraction, prolongation, and composition, are increased only to the number of sixteen; every syllable or articulate sound in our language being one of this number. Bishop Wilkins and Dr. William Holden speak of about thirty-two or thirty-three distinct sounds."—Astle, p. 18.

‡ Taquet asserts, that the various combinations of the twenty-four letters (without any repetition) will amount to 620,448,401,733,239,439,360,000.—Arithm. Theor. p. 517, ed. Amst. 1704. Clavius makes them only 5,852,616,738,497,664,000. In either case, however, it is evident, "that twenty-four letters will admit of an infinity of combinations and arrangements sufficient to represent not only all the conceptions of the mind, but all words in all languages whatever."—Astle, p. 20. In like manner, ten simple marks are found sufficient for all the purposes of universal calculations which extend to infinity; and seven notes, differently arranged, fill up the whole scale of music.

§ De Brosses, sur l'Origine de l'Alphabet.

the pure hieroglyph, or simple picture-style; the mixed, allegorical, or emblematic; the abbreviated or contracted; and the alphabetic; and the valuable relics which are to be seen in the British Museum, more especially the sarcophagi and the famous Rosetta stone (as it is called), erected in honour of Ptolemy V., contain examples of most of them. They prove to us, also, the order of succession in which the changes were effected, and clearly indicate the pure picture-style to be the most ancient.

The magnificent ruins of Persepolis, the capital of ancient Persia, offer monuments to the same effect. The windows, the pillars, the pilasters, and the tombs are loaded with characters of some kind or other, imitative, emblematic, or alphabetical. In many instances, the pure picture-style is as correctly adhered to as in any Egyptian specimen; in others we meet with tablets filled with what may indeed be abbreviated emblems, but which appear to be letters; and which, at any rate, afford proof that the ancient Persians had, at this period, made some advance from characters for things towards characters for words.

The prophecy of the utter destruction of Babylon has been so completely fulfilled, that, although the banks of the Euphrates, on which this city stood, give evident proofs of magnificent ruins along their track, we cannot exactly ascertain its situation. On many of the bricks, however, which have been dug up from the midst of the general wreck, we find a peculiar sort of character, evincing an approach towards letters, and which are supposed to be abbreviated emblems, as emblems are often abbreviated pictures, employed by the Chaldean sages of Babylonia; who, according to Pliny, always engraved their astronomical observations on bricks.\* And even in Southern Siberia, as high as the river Irbit, or Pishma, Strahlenberg asserts, that he found a variety of rude figures or emblems engraven on the rocks,† which seem to have preceded the use of the Tartar or Mantcheu alphabet.

In America we meet with traces of picture-writing amid the most savage tribes; every leader on returning from the field endeavouring to give some account of the order of his march, the number of his adherents, the enemy whom he attacked, and the scalps and captives he brought home, by scratching with coarse red paint a certain display of uncouth figures upon the bark of a tree, stripped off for this purpose. "To these simple annals, he trusts for renown, and soothes himself with a hope, that by their means he shall receive praise from the warriors of future times."‡ The Mexicans are well known to have acquired such a degree of perfection in this style of writing, that on the first arrival of the Spaniards on their coasts expresses were sent off to Montezuma, the reigning monarch, containing an exact statement of the fact, together with the number and size of the different ships, by a series of pictures alone, painted on the cloth of the country. It was thus this people kept their public records, histories, and calendars. We are still in possession of several very curious specimens of Mexican picture-writing, some of which exhibit several of the very emblems I have just adverted to, as those which would probably be had recourse to in our own day, were we miraculously to be deprived of all knowledge of alphabetic writing; as, a bale of goods to represent the idea of commerce, and a rose-tree that of odour. The most valuable specimens, however, of Mexican picture-writing are those obtained by Mr. Purchas, and published in sixty-six plates, divided into three parts; the first containing a history of the Mexican empire under its ten monarchs: the second, a tribute roll, representing what each conquered town paid into the royal treasury; and the third, a code of Mexican institutions, domestic, political, and military. Various other specimens are to be met with in different parts of Spain, and especially in the Royal Library at the Escorial; and a folio volume in the Imperial Library at Vienna. Along with the full pictures, we occasionally meet, in some of these national archives, with emblems, or a prominent feature put for the whole figure; and in others with various symbols or arbitrary characters, making an approach towards

\* Plin. vii. 56.

† De Vet. Lit. Hun. p. 15. Astle, p. 6.

‡ Robertson's America, vol. iii. b. vii. p. 303. Astle, p. 6.

letters; and thus confirming the progress from pictures to arbitrary signs which I have endeavoured to establish.

The written language of the Chinese, however, is carried to a still higher pitch of perfection; and is, perhaps, rendered as perfect as the system upon which it is founded will allow. It is still altogether a language of things, and was formerly very largely, if not altogether, a language of pictures. The pure picture-style is admitted by themselves to have been the oldest, or that first invented, and they expressly denominate this order of characters *siang* or *hing*, "form or image." "The picture," however, observes Dr. Morrison, "does not appear to have ever been intended as an exact representation, such as the picture-writing of Mexico, or the hieroglyphics of Egypt, but only a slight outline."\* This kind of style is now become obsolete, and is rarely to be met with; but of the next series, or that into which the original or *siang* style was first transformed, which they call Yu-tsu, probably from the name of the great emperor Yu, or Chow, in whose era the transformation is said to have occurred, it is no uncommon thing to meet with specimens on rings, seals, and other public instruments. These are strictly abbreviated pictures, such as symbols or emblems of some kind or other. But the characters now in use are abbreviations of these abbreviations; and hence have, for the most part, the appearance of being arbitrary marks, though we can still so frequently trace the parent image, as to decipher their origin and reference.

The Chinese is an extraordinary language in every respect. Its radical words do not exceed four hundred and eleven; every one of which is a monosyllable. But as it must be obvious that these can by no means answer the purpose of distinguishing every external object and mental idea, unless varied in some way or other, every one of these four hundred and eleven words is possessed of a number of different tones and combinations with other words; and every tone or combination signifies a different thing; so that the whole vocabulary, limited as it is, may be readily made to express several thousands of ideas. Thus the word *fu*, which enters into the well-known compound Kong-fu-tsee, or Confucius, pronounced in different manners, imports a *husband* or *father*, a *town*, and various other ideas. So *khoû* imports a month; but pronounced nasally, as *khoong*, it denotes *empty*; and thus the word *shu*, differently uttered, means both a *lord* and *swine*.

The whole of the elementary marks, or keys, as they are called, by which the ideas of this language, for it is not the language itself, are written down and communicated, are still fewer than the elementary words; for they are only two hundred and fourteen, and express such ideas alone as are most common and familiar; as those of *plant*, *hand*, *mouth*, *word*, *sun*, *nothing*, *water*; every other idea being denoted by compounds, or supposed compounds, of these elementary marks. Thus, the mark for a thicket, if doubled, implies a wood; a union of the two characters of a man and a field signifies a farmer; the characters of a hand and staff united, import parental authority, or a father; and it is from like characters I have selected the specimen of symbols which I have mostly submitted to you as some of those which would probably be invented in the present day, if, by a miracle, we were suddenly to be deprived of all knowledge of alphabetic writing.†

By combinations of this kind, the two hundred and fourteen elementary characters, like the four hundred elementary words, are wonderfully increased, and are daily increasing; while the greater mass have so little resemblance to any one of the genuine elements, that the philologists of the present day regard many of them as primitive or independent signs, formed long subsequently to the invention of the proper elements, and combined, like themselves, in various ways.

I have said that the sum total of Chinese characters derived from these





\* Chinese Miscellany.

† The following table, compared with the remarks offered in page 281, will more clearly illustrate the pictorial origin of the Chinese characters.

The whole are usually divided by the native philologists into six classes, the first four of which will best serve as exemplifications.






sources is perpetually increasing; and have also hinted, that from this natural tendency, the language must at length become an intolerable burden even to the most assiduous Chinese scholar. Thus, while all the characters that occur in Confucius, in Mung, and the five Kings, or sacred books, forming together more than twenty volumes, fall considerably short of six thousand, including the numerous unusual words, found in the four volumes of the Shu (and I may add, that the scope is much the same in the celebrated ethical comment of Tung-tsee, the favourite disciple of Confucius, denominated Ta-hyoh, "The Great Sublime or Momentous Doctrine," as also in the Choong-yoong, Zun-zu, and Mun, constituting, conjointly, the four books most revered next to the Kings);—such has been the accession of new terms invented by subsequent writers, and often with a forgetfulness of the old, which have hereby,

I. IMAGES: a name given to characters which, in their antiquated form, show very clearly a rough representation of the material objects they denote: as,



	Ancient Form.		Modern Form
Jo		the Sun, - - - - -	now written 日
Youë		the Moon, - - - - -	月
Chán		a Hill, - - - - -	山
Moü		a Tree, - - - - -	木
Khiouan		a Dog, - - - - -	犬
Jú		a Fish, - - - - -	魚
Ma		a Horse, - - - - -	馬
Moü		the Eye, - - - - -	目
Tcheou		a Boat, - - - - -	舟
Kiú		a Cart, - - - - -	車
Chouï		Water, - - - - -	水
Eü		the Ear, - - - - -	耳
Jin		a Man, - - - - -	人
Kheou		Mouth, - - - - -	口
Chouï		Water, - - - - -	水

Of this sort there are about 200 characters.

II. ASSOCIATES: meaning words formed by a combination of two or more Images: as,

Ming		Brightness, now written 明	Sun and Moon united.
Sian		a Hermit, - - - - -	仙 Man and Hill.
Ming		Note of a Bird, - - - - -	鳴 Mouth and Bird.
Wén		to Hear, - - - - -	聞 Door and Ear.
Loü		Tears, - - - - -	淚 Water and Eye.

Their number is very great.

Koo-kin  "Eloquence," "Fluency of Speech," literally "Golden-mouth;" the mark for mouth, which  (two lips), being united with the mark for gold, which is the remainder of the character. In Greek *χρυσος οπυς, aurea verba ore fundens.*