

been suffered to become obsolete, that M. de Guignes was able, in his day, to collect and put into his dictionary eight thousand characters: the six national dictionaries that were chiefly in use about a century since, give from fifteen to about thirty thousand; and, lastly, the Imperial Chinese Dictionary, composed by order of the emperor Kang-khee, in 1710 of our own era, comprises not less than forty-three thousand four hundred and ninety-six characters!

Dr. Marshman, in his valuable "Elements of Chinese Grammar," observes, that in the Imperial Dictionary these stand arranged as follows:—

Characters in the body of the work	- - - -	31,214
Added, principally obsolete and incorrect forms of others	- - - -	6,423
Characters not before classed in any dictionary	- - - -	1,659
Characters without name or meaning	- - - -	4,200
		43,496

We have here, therefore, a confession by the Chinese lexicographers themselves, that upwards of ten thousand of the characters admitted into the Imperial Dictionary, being nearly a fourth of the whole, are useless, and for the most part unintelligible, in the present day; independently of which, "a considerable number," observes Dr. Marshman, "of the 31,214 characters adopted from the former dictionaries have no meaning affixed to them; but are merely given as obsolete, or current but incorrect forms of other characters, to which the compilers of the dictionary have referred the reader for their meaning."* Whence we may fairly conclude, that of the characters which are still allowed to figure away in the written language of China, nearly half of the whole convey no ideas whatever, and are altogether representatives without constituents.

Were we able to follow even the latest of these up to their origin, and to prove that they have not issued, in the remotest manner, from the two hundred and fourteen elementary marks, which Dr. Marshman has endeavoured to do,

III. INDICANTS, or POINTERS: from their indicating or pointing out the relative form or position of what is predicated: as,

Cháng	●	Above,	- - - -	now written	上
Híá	●	Below,	- - - -		下
Schoúng	⊕	the Middle,	- - - -		中
I	—	One,	- - - -		一
Eú	==	Two,	- - - -		二
Sán	===	Three,	- - - -		三

IV. ANTI-THETICS, or CONTRARIES: formed by inverting or reversing the character; and hence requiring an antithetic or correspondent signification: as,

			Modern Forms.
Tio	⤴	Left Hand, reversed is Géou	⤵ Right Hand, 左 and 右
Tchíng	正	{ Standing up, and, hence, "Correct," "Proper." }	{ Fa 正 } { Lying down, and, hence, "Defect." } 正 and 𠄎
Jin	人	a Living Man,	尸 Dead Body, 人 and 尸

Most of the Chinese characters may be classed under one of these four heads. The two remaining classes do not appear to be so intimately connected with a pictorial origin.

The two hundred and fourteen elementary keys, or radicals of the language, are divided into seventeen classes, according to the number of strokes of which each element or radical consists. It is probable, however, that all the more complicated, and, indeed, great numbers of all those that possess more than five or six strokes, are as strictly compounds as any in the language, though the lexicographers are incapable of reducing them to their constituent principles; and hence allow them to stand as primitives among such as are of simpler construction; and hence the total number of primitives are reckoned at about sixteen hundred, each of them producing from three to seventy-four derivatives; and hereby constituting the great mass of the Chinese written language.

* Elements of Chinese Grammar, with a preliminary Dissertation on the Characters and Colloquial Medium of the Chinese, &c. By J. Marshman, D.D., Serampore, 1814, 4to.

we should probably still find them derived in the same manner from forms or symbols of things, and that they were at first direct imitations or conventional representatives; still, as I have already shown, united and compounded, or in some other way modified to express abstract or complicated ideas. It must be obvious, however, that characters thus constituted must be very loose and perplexing; and such, in fact, they are often found to be, by the most expert and best instructed natives. It must be obvious, at the same time, that a system of picture-writing, thus constructed and perfected, may, in a considerable degree, answer the purpose of alphabetic marks;* and it is doubtless owing alone to the perfection which this system of writing had acquired in Mexico, and still exhibits in China, that the ingenious people of both countries stopped so long at the point of abbreviated emblems, significant of objects, and never fairly advanced from a legible language for things, to a legible language for words.

It should be observed, however, as a farther proof of the tendency of picture-characters to advance towards literal, that even in China itself the Mantcheu, or Tartars, have an alphabet, or system of verbal writing, and that the Mantcheu practice has long been acquiring a growing reputation. It should be observed, also, that the Chinese characters themselves have of late been resorted to at Canton, and by Chinese natives, as merely expressive of sounds, and been employed in the formation of an English vocabulary; in consequence, as Sir George Staunton remarks, of the great concourse of persons residing at this station who use the English language.† In like manner, the Japanese, fond as they are of copying from the Chinese, have long since departed from their system of marks for things, and addicted themselves to alphabetic characters; sometimes writing them horizontally, and sometimes perpendi-

* Among the numerous and important library establishments of the present day, one has lately been opened by the co-operation of a committee of enlightened and public-spirited individuals, for a regular course of instruction by lectures in many of the most extensively spoken languages of the East, and among the rest in Chinese. The President is Lord Bexley; among the Vice-Presidents are Sir George Staunton, Bart., and Sir T. S. Raffles; its situation is in Bartlett's Buildings, Holborn; and while instruction in these valuable branches of literature is hereby offered to every one, it is gratuitously bestowed on all Christian missionaries who are desirous of taking advantage of its benefits. It is, hence, emphatically denominated, a "LANGUAGE INSTITUTION IN AID OF THE PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY," and few establishments of the present day are more entitled to the support of the nation, or of the world.

† It should be farther stated, moreover, in order to excite the fullest confidence of the public, that the Professor in the Chinese department is the Rev. Dr. Morrison; while those in the Arabic, Persian, Bengalee, and Sanscrit are nearly of equal celebrity, and have the occasional assistance of Professor Lee, of Cambridge; and that all of them have entered into the undertaking with so much zeal and public spirit as to afford their valuable assistance gratuitously.

Nor has this instruction been offered in vain or unsuccessfully. Even in the Chinese department, where many might expect least to be accomplished, the very learned and excellent Professor, in his first Quarterly Report to the Committee, March 1, 1826, has stated, that he has been attended by thirteen students, seniors and juniors, besides several ladies; with the progress of most of whom he has had great reason to be satisfied: and two or three of whom, having attained some previous knowledge of the language, are preparing to carry on the design after his own return to China.

The Institution is also under a deep and inexpressible obligation to Dr. Morrison, for the gratuitous use of his most valuable Chinese library,—by far the first in Europe,—and, perhaps, any where out of Asia; which is now deposited and arranged at the establishment. As a matter of high literary curiosity, I have requested its distinguished owner to furnish me with a brief account of the library for insertion in the present place, and my reverend friend has been kind enough to comply by the following communication, which I give in his own words:—

"In the LANGUAGE INSTITUTION there is deposited an extensive library of Chinese printed books and MSS., together with a museum intended to illustrate subjects referred to in the books. This Library and Museum are the property of Dr. Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China.

"There are between nine hundred and a thousand works; making in all about 10,000 volumes, stitched and bound in the Chinese manner.

"These books contain specimens of the literature of more than three thousand years; from the compilations and original writings of Confucius, five hundred years before the Christian era down to the present time.

"The materials from which Confucius compiled the works he put forth are not extant in any other form than that which he gave them; and therefore, he may be regarded as the oldest Chinese writer whose works have come down to the present day.

"Dr. Morrison has not had time, during his sojourn in Europe, to make out a Catalogue Raisonné of his Chinese library, with a brief account of the chief works, their titles, subjects, authors, date, &c.

"They consist of the sacred books of Chinese antiquity, with copious commentaries, written at various periods, and by a great variety of persons; history, ancient and modern; geography, and topography; astronomy; biography; opinions on government; rites and usages of China; religious books of *Laokeu-nism*; *Budhism*; and the morals of *Confucianism*; poetry; historical and other novels; medicine; botany; and the materia medica; notices of foreign nations, and embassies to China; works composed by Jesuit missionaries concerning Europe and Christianity; the European geometry; and the astronomy of the fifteenth century, &c.; a few works on the religion of Mahomet, &c. &c."

† Embassy, ii. 576; Hager's Chinese Elements, p. lxi.

cularly; both which methods are found in Chinese records, though the perpendicular is by far the most common.

Attempts have been made to prove that the picture-writing of the Egyptians, the Chinese, and the Mexicans has proceeded from one common source; yet nothing can be more fanciful, and, apparently, nothing more unfounded; for each possesses a distinct style, derived from an attachment to distinct classes of images, for the most part of a local nature; as the sea-horse, the crocodile, the ibis, the ichneumon, the lotus, and papyrus, birds and other animals with human heads, and men with the heads of birds and dogs, in the Egyptian system; the rabbit, cane, reed, flint, house, flag, and circle, in the Mexican; and cross, parallel, crooked, and angular lines, as the abbreviated symbols of pictures, in the Chinese; derived, for the most part, as Dr. Morrison ingeniously conjectures, from the impressions of the feet of birds on the sand, and the lines on the bodies of shell-fishes.* Each has had a distinct origin, according as mankind in these different parts of the world, and under different circumstances, have found a necessity for recording facts and ideas in remote periods of antiquity; and each, as I have already observed, has an obvious tendency to run into arbitrary and, ultimately, into alphabetical characters, though of different forms and descriptions.

Of all these, the system whose origin we are, perhaps, best capable of tracing historically, is the Phœnician; and here the voice of history completely coincides with the theory now advanced. The oldest Phœnician historian, whose writings have reached us in a few fragments and quotations, is Sanchoniatho, who was contemporary with Solomon, and drew up a history of Phœnicia, from existing monuments, and archives preserved in the college of the Phœnician priests. This history was dedicated to Abibalus, the Phœnician monarch, father of Hiram, king Solomon's ally; and was allowed by the king and the official censors appointed to examine it to be a work of great truth and accuracy. In this history Sanchoniatho places mankind, on their first creation, in Phœnicia; and gives us a genealogy of the Patriarchs, from Adam, or Protogonus, as he calls him, to Taaut, Athoth, or Hermes, the successor of Menes, the first king of Egypt. In a passage of this very curious history, preserved by Eusebius, the author distinctly states, that picture-writing was invented by Ouranus, king of Phœnicia, who appears to have been contemporary with Misor or Misraim, the son of Ham; and that Taaut, the son of Misor, improved upon and abbreviated the picture-writing of Ouranus, either during the reign of Ouranus or of his son Cronus or Saturn; and that Cronus having given Taaut the throne of Egypt, upon the death of Menes, the Egyptian monarch, the latter carried with him this improved picture or symbolical writing into that country. And in another passage he asserts that Taaut afterward carried forward this improvement to the invention of alphabetic characters. "Misor," says he, "was the son of Hamyn; the son of Misor was Taaut, who invented the first letters for writing. The Egyptians call him Thoth; the Alexandrians, Thoyth; and the Greeks, Hermes, or Mercury." He tells us, in a third place, that having thus invented letters, Taaut ordered the Cabiri and Dioscuri, the priests and sages of the country, to employ them in drawing up a history of Phœnicia.

This is a very curious and important relic of profane history: and it is interesting to observe its coincidence with the Mosaic narrative. It makes no mention, indeed, of the deluge, and it introduces two more generations in the line of Cain, from Protogonus, or *first-formed*, as the term literally implies (the Adam of Moses), to Agroverus, or Noah. It places, however, the first race of mankind in Phœnicia, which, in the latitude in which this term was generally understood, included, as I shall have occasion to show presently, the banks of the Euphrates, on which Moses fixes the garden of Eden: it allows nearly the same period of time between the creation and the era of Misor, or Misraim; and nearly the same number of generations as Moses does; and gives, as closely as may be, the same names to the son and grandson of Noah,—Ham and Misraim being merely transmuted into Ham-yn

* Chinese Dictionary, p. 1.

and Misor. There is coincidence enough in the two accounts to reflect authenticity upon each other: and had there been more, an advantage would eagerly have been taken of the Phœnician narrative, by skeptical polemics, and Moses would have been boldly accused of having stolen his history from this quarter.

This account of Sanchoniatho, moreover, is not only supported generally by the sacred records, but is distinctly corroborated in regard to the point immediately before us, that of the invention of letters, by the suffrages of Porphyry, Eusebius, Pliny, Quintus Curtius, Lucan, and, indeed, all the Latin writers. And although the Greeks entertained a somewhat different opinion, and ascribed the invention of letters to a younger Taaut, or Hermes, than the son of Misraim, and who flourished about four centuries afterward, and was born in Egypt, as the first Taaut was born in Phœnicia, nothing is more evident than that the Greeks were less acquainted with the history of both Egypt and Phœnicia than the Romans, in consequence of the greater range of the Roman power; and that they confounded two personages of the same name, and who possessed the same crown, and attributed to the one what ought to have been attributed to the other. The oldest Egyptian historian is Manetho, who probably drew up his dynasties about two centuries and a half before the Christian era; these only touch upon the subject indirectly, but, so far as they go, they rather support than oppose the testimony of Sanchoniatho.

There is some degree of doubt whether Greece derived its letters from Egypt or from Phœnicia: the best authorities, however, incline to the last opinion; and suppose them to have been introduced by the Phœnician Pelasgi, upon their settlement in Peloponnesus. The oldest Greek letters are nearly Pelasgic in form; and, according to the usual fashion in the East, are written from right to left. This last, however, is by no means a decisive argument; for upon the earliest use of letters, in most countries, there seems to have been no settled rule: and hence, in, perhaps, all of them, we meet with letters running from right to left, and from left to right; in many very ancient specimens of Greek running alternately, the one line in one direction, and the ensuing in the other, like the course taken by a plough, whence it was denominated, from this machine, the ploughing style; and in both Persia and Egypt, running perpendicularly like the common style of the Chinese, instead of horizontally whether to the right or the left.

That the Romans derived their alphabet from the Greeks is unquestionable: and hence, admitting the authority of Sanchoniatho, confirmed as it is by a variety of collateral evidences, the first invention of writing seems to rest with the Phœnicians, and we are able to trace it to within one hundred and sixty years of the flood.*

I am purposely, however, using the term Phœnician in a very extensive sense; in that sense in which it appears to have been used by Herodotus, and the generality of ancient writers, in consequence of Phœnicia being the earliest and most extensive commercial nation; as embracing not merely the maritime coast of Palestine, of which Tyre and Sidon were the chief cities, but the whole country of the Canaanites and the Hebrews, under whatever name it may have passed at different periods, and from different circumstances; as Syria, Assyria, Syrophœnicia, Sidonia, Aram; and, of course, as touching upon, or rather crossing, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, and Chaldea. And I hence obtain an answer to those, on the one hand, who contend that alphabetic characters had their origin in Syria; and to those, on the other, who assert the same in respect to Chaldea, persuading themselves, upon a tradition current among the Jews and Arabians, that Abraham introduced them into Egypt on his migrating from Ur of the Chaldees, at the command of the Almighty, seven generations after the period we have just been contemplating. The fact is, that all these countries spoke the same language, or, at the utmost, dialects of the same language, that in no instance differed farther from each other than the Scottish differs from the English; and all used the same alphabet, or alphabets that possessed as little variation: and hence there

* See Astle, p. 45, 46, 64.

can be no doubt, that, in whatever part of this quarter of the globe the system of alphabetic characters originated, they were readily and rapidly introduced into every other part. Abraham might, hence, have learned them in Chaldea, or in Canaan, and communicated them wherever he sojourned; as Ishmael, probably, communicated them shortly afterward to Arabia, upon his exile from his father's house.

The proper Phœnician alphabet seems to have consisted of not more than thirteen letters at first; it afterward had three added to it, making sixteen in the whole, and in this number it seems to have been earliest employed by many of the adjoining countries, and is distinguished by the name of the Samaritan, or ancient Hebrew, the terms and characters being nearly the same as the Phœnician. The Chaldeans introduced some kind of change into the form of the letters, made them more elegant, and added six other letters, since the Samaritan alphabet did not seem sufficiently full to express all the articulations of their speech. And in this manner, with various changes and augmentations, the Phœnician alphabet can be traced throughout every part of ancient and modern Europe; every region of Africa, where writing of any kind is current, and the western countries of Asia.

Over a very extensive portion of this last continent, however, we meet with an alphabet that has no common origin or conformity of principle with any hitherto described. This is the Nagari, or Deva-nagari, as it is called by way of pre-eminence. It consists of not less than fifty letters, of which sixteen are vowels and thirty-four consonants, all arranged in the order of the alphabet, with a systematic precision that is to be found nowhere else. The vowels take the lead, beginning with those most easily uttered, and terminating with those which approach towards the consonant sound. The consonants then follow in five regular series of gutturals, compounds, palatines, dentals, and labials: the whole closing with letters expressive of sounds that do not exactly enter into any of the preceding series, and which may be regarded as forming a general appendix. This alphabet is asserted by many learned Bramins to be of a higher antiquity than any other; and there can be no doubt that it has a just claim to a very remote date. But its very perfection is a sufficient confutation of its having been invented first of all: something far more rude and incondite must have preceded and paved the way for it; and in the complex characters of which it consists, we seem to have the relics of that emblematic or picture-language, which I have thus endeavoured to prove has laid a foundation for alphabetic writing in every part of the world. With a few trifling variations, this correct and elegant alphabet extends from the Persian Gulf to China; but it has no pretensions to rival the antiquity of the Phœnician. It is unborrowed, but of later origin.

Such is a brief history of the noblest art that has ever been invented by the unassisted efforts of human understanding; an art that gives stability to thought, forms a cabinet for our ideas, and presents, in imperishable colours, a speaking portraiture of the soul. Without this, hard indeed would be the separation of friends; and the traveller would become an exile from his native home,—vainly languishing for the consolatory information that his wife, his children, his kinsmen, his country, were in a state of health and prosperity, and himself still embalmed in their affections. Without this, what to us would be the wisdom of past ages, or the history of former states? The chain of nature would be broken through all its links, and every generation become an isolated and individual world, equally cut off, as by an irretrievable abyss, from its ancestors and from posterity. While the language of the lips is fleeting as the breath itself, and confined to a single spot as well as to a single moment, the language of the pen enjoys, in many instances, an adamantine existence, and will only perish amid the ruins of the globe. Before its mighty touch time and space become annihilated; it joins epoch to epoch, and pole to pole; it gives unity to the works of creation and Providence, and enables us to trace from the beginning of things to the end. It is the great sun of the moral world, that warms, and stimulates, and vivifies, and irradiates, and develops, and matures the best virtues of the heart, and the best

faculties of the intellect. But for this, every thing would be doubt, and darkness, and death-shade; all knowledge would be traditionary, and all experience local; civilized life would relapse into barbarism, and man would have to run through his little, and comparatively insignificant round of existence, the perpetual sport of ignorance and error, uninstructed by science, unregulated by laws, and unconsolated by Revelation. Have I not, then, justly characterized it as the noblest art that has ever been invented by the unassisted efforts of human understanding?

LECTURE XI.

ON THE LITERARY EDUCATION OF FORMER TIMES; AND ESPECIALLY THAT OF GREECE AND ROME.

WE have taken a brief survey of the nature of oral language, and of the means devised in different ages and parts of the world to render the transitory ideas it communicates permanent, by means of picturesque or symbolical signs; so that what is once spoken may conveniently be copied or written down, and treasured up for future ages.

It yet remains for us to take some notice of the chief methods, that have been adopted in different eras, to turn this accumulating treasure or bank of intellectual knowledge to the best account; or, in other words, to develop the mode of education adopted among those nations that have been most celebrated for literary and scientific acquirements, especially in Greece and Rome; and to compare them with the means possessed in our own day, and the general and laudable desire of improvement manifested in every quarter, and prospective of no small addition to the best sort of wealth and prosperity with which a nation can ever be enriched.

We have already traced whatever degree of art or science may have descended from the antediluvian to the postdiluvian race, through the narrow link of human beings preserved in the ark, or whatever the earliest generations of the postdiluvians may have been able to strike out for themselves, to the plains of Babylon as their centre; and observed that, in their radiations from this central point, they have been peculiarly influenced by the political character of the people who cultivated them, and that of the country and the climate in which they took up their abode.

When, in the prosecution of the present subject, we shall come hereafter to examine more particularly into the furniture and faculties with which the mind is endowed, we shall have to show that its chief trains, as well of feelings as of ideas, of passions, and rational pursuits, have derived a strong tinge from these circumstances.

Of the birth or first growth of the Grecian states we know little or nothing, though we are made acquainted with the region from which they sprang. The exquisite beauty of the country in which they had the good fortune to fix themselves; its rich and picturesque variety of hill and dale, the spontaneous fertility of its soil, the sweetness of its temperature, the almost unbroken serenity of its skies, and the smooth and glassy sea that surrounded and deeply indented its coasts, harmonized all the ruder passions, and called forth the noblest and finest feelings of the soul. They soon became enamoured of the graceful and the beautiful; their language was melody, and they were led by nature to delight in music, poetry, and painting, from the first. Hence these are the eldest employments we find them cultivating; the earliest historians were their rhapsodists, Homer, Hesiod, and the writers whose works constituted the very valuable *EPIC CYCLE* of Greece; a work, unhappily, long lost to the world, and from which Statius is supposed to have drawn the materials of his *Thebaid*.* Their earliest artists were their musi-

* For the particulars of this celebrated work, see note in vol. ii. p. 262, 263, of the author's translation of Lucretius.