

Thomson have overturned all these speculations. The fibres of linen thread are said by these more recent inquiries to present a cylindrical form, transparent and articulated, or jointed like a cane; while cotton offers the appearance of a flat ribbon, with a hem or border at each edge. It has indeed been suggested that the ripeness of the cotton might affect the condition of the fibre, or that the ancient mode of treating the plant might give to Egyptian flax an appearance not presented by European specimens. Yet, although Philostratus expressly affirms that calico was exported from India to Egypt for sacred purposes, the balance of opinion has inclined to the belief that all the cerecloths at least were of flax.

As our inquiry leads us from the shores of Greece to the banks of the Nile, the language in which the subject of discussion is expressed is radically changed. In Egypt we are in contact with a Shemitic dialect. The Teutonic word "linen" disappears. The Greek, in purchasing a foreign commodity, had learnt the Greek word, and he had given it to the Romans as "byssus." But in the Shemitic dialects we meet with half-a-dozen words which may all mean linen or cotton, and whose signification has been abundantly disputed. No doubt these words had originally different significations; but eventually they were confounded together. The account of the corslet presented by Amasis, if there were no other evidence, would prove that the Egyptians had cotton under the Pharaohs. The very phrase for cotton, which we find in the mouths of the Greeks and Romans, viz, "linen of the tree" or "woollen of the trees," we find in the book of Joshua, ii, 6. But "byssus" seems to have been selected as the name of the material specially destined for sacred rites. It certainly is the term which Herodotus employs in speaking of the mummy wrappers. But had the father of history another word to use, intelligible at least to Greek ears? On the other hand, if the Greek word meant "byssus" why did he choose the foreign word? Byssus evidently had a special adaptation to his subject. That the Jewish byssus had a more yellow tint than the plant cultivated in Elis may be inferred from a passage in Pausanias; but the etymology of the word leads us to surmise that the name implied peculiar brilliancy and whiteness. Theocritus, who enjoyed the favors of Ptolemy Philadelphus, and may be supposed to know the appropriate name for the material used in Egyptian rites, represents one of his female characters as attending a procession to the grove of Artemis in a byssus tunic.

But if we are in doubt as to the native names for the various sorts of Egyptian linens, the mummy wrappers leave no uncertainty as to the excellence of the workmanship. The interior swaths are indeed coarse; but some of the exterior bands vie with the most artistic productions of the modern loom.

The peculiarity of the Egyptian structure is a great disparity between the warp and the woof; the warp generally containing three or even four times as many threads as the woof. The disparity probably originated in the difficulty of inserting the woof when the shuttle was thrown by hand. To give an idea of the fineness of the Egyptian muslins, we may remark that the yarns average nearly 100 hanks to the pound, 140 threads in the inch to the warp, and about 64 to the woof. Some of the cloths are fringed at the end, and remind us of the garments prescribed to the Jews in the Mosaic law. (Numbers xv. 38.) Several specimens are bordered with blue stripes of various patterns. Had the patterns, instead of being confined to the edge, been extended across the structure, they would have formed a modern gingham. The Nubians at the present day rejoice in similar shawls. The dresses in the Egyptian paintings, descriptive of women of rank or of deities, resemble our chintzes.

Such was the ancient linen, the staple commodity of Egypt. She exported it in Phœnician bottoms to the Mediterranean ports. It was not all made of flax. Both Pliny and the Rosetta stone testify that the calico was in especial favor with the priesthood; that their partiality for the more modern material was not strong enough to break through ancient custom. The experiments on the mummy cloths corroborate all which we know of Egyptian conservatism. For religious purposes the flaxen texture was rigidly demanded.

3. ADVERTISEMENTS OF THE ANCIENT ROMANS.

OPENING LECTURE OF THE WINTER COURSE AT THE TORONTO MECHANICS' INSTITUTE. BY THE REV. DR M'CAUL, PRES. UNIV. COLL.

The Rev. Doctor commenced his lecture by stating that the subject which he had selected for consideration was recommended to him principally on account of its novelty. So far as he was aware it had never formed the subject of a lecture before, either a public or an academic audience. Another recommendation of it was its obscurity—but when he said its obscurity, he hoped it would not be so obscure that it would be uninteresting to the audience. Its obscurity, indeed, had been greatly removed by the discoveries made at Pompeii—that great repository of knowledge for scholars regarding the private and domestic life of the ancient Romans. In the extant

writings of the ancients it was impossible to find reference to minute particulars of daily life. But in Pompeii are found things as they were in the houses, in the baths, in the saloons, and in the kitchens, when they were overwhelmed by the fearful eruption which buried it for so many hundred years. The consequence was, that we derived from it information which we could not have learned in any other way. The Doctor then gave a graphic and impressive description of the destruction of Pompeii: On the 24th August, 79, when Titus, the delight of all the earth, was emperor, the morning sun rose with its usual splendor, and looked down from a cloudless sky on Pompeii. All was life and animation. The people came forth, some for occupation,—for their daily business,—but the majority for pleasure. They repaired, as usual, to the theatres, but they were not long there before they heard strange rumbling sounds as of distant thunder, and soon after perceived sulphurous vapours rising from Vesuvius. These vapours must have been more alarming than usual, and it is quite plain the people must have rushed from the theatres, for no skeletons were found in them when the city was exhumed, if he might use that expression. When they rushed away from the theatre they must have witnessed the awful spectacle of an immense column of dark pitchy smoke, ascending from the crater, mingled with coruscations of flame, and steam-like vapor. When it reached an enormous height—the younger Pliny described it as a colossal pine tree, with the branches hanging from the top—unluckily the wind brought this mass towards Pompeii, and down descended red hot rocks, pumice stones and ashes. The description, said he, of the ancient historians of this event is couched in forcible brevity and expressive simplicity. Some rushed from the town to the fields; some from the fields to the town; some from the sea to the land; some from the land to the sea; some from their houses to the streets; some from the streets to the houses, in the wildest confusion. But all the efforts to escape the fiery deluge were unavailing, and before the close of that day there can be little doubt that nothing more than a rude mishapen mound covered the spot where Pompeii had stood.

"Where gleamed afar Pompeii's graceful towers,
And hill and vale were clothed with vintage bowers;
O'er the dark waste the smouldering ashes spread,
A pall above the dying and the dead."

The morning's sun arose with the same unclouded splendor, but its light fell not on Pompeii. Its light could not penetrate the dark, murky cloud that curtained from view the spot where Pompeii once had stood. Its rays, however penetrating, could not pierce the sable drapery, wherewith the heavens were hung, as if in mourning for the recent disaster. For 1600 years Pompeii remained in the tomb. At length, by accident, its position which was so completely lost as to be a matter of curious investigation, was discovered. And what is very remarkable, the ashes over some parts of it were not more than three feet deep. It was from this city that most of the advertisements to which he was now about to call their attention, were taken. These were not advertisements such as we now have. All their advertisements were on walls, and were sketched with chalk, red, white, or black, in anything but what could be called a symmetrical form. The difficulties with regard to discovering the true meaning of Latin inscriptions he would briefly allude to. First of all they were often contracted. One single letter frequently stood for a word, and of course, however easy they were to the Romans, they were difficult to us. For instance, if any such thing were to happen to Toronto as happened to Pompeii, and that in long ages after this some one was to fish up a Railroad car with the words, "O. S. H. R. R." on it, what would he make of it? So it was with these inscriptions, in many cases. Then they had contractions such as our abbreviations for esquire, honorable, and so forth: and, as a matter of course it was difficult to know what they meant. They also used tied letters, i. e.: two or three grouped together, as our Æ for A E. And besides these difficulties in understanding the meaning of those inscriptions there was another very material one—that there were seldom breaks or stops in them. Their advertisements were in the most public places, on walls, at the gates of the city, at the theatres, at the markets, on monuments, &c. There seem to have been *alba*, or white panels for the notices of the magistrates or municipal officers. One of their business signs was as follows:

D. M.

TITVLOS S'CRI
BENDOSVEL
SI QVID OPE
RIS MARMOR
ARI OPVS FV
ERIT HIC HA
BES

"If you want inscriptions to be written on monuments, or any work done in marble, here you have me," for "Here's your man."—So that that expression was after all somewhat classical. [Laughter.]