

profile), the occiput, as distinguished from the face ; S, the teeth seen in front ; T, a kind of dancing cobra ; U (V), a hook or tent-pole, as said for F ; X, a combination of K and S ; Y (as J), a hand in right position ; Z, a barbed hook, for catching fish.

We cannot, of course, be sure that we thus track our letters to their prototypes ; but human instincts everywhere developing themselves in an analogous way, we can easily conceive that all alphabets are pictorial in their origin ; that they represented objects to convey an idea either of the objects absolutely, or of the sounds which the objects represented were supposed to symbolize. What is, in fact, the meaning of *litera* ? It is something delineated or drawn (*lino*) ; the idea conveyed also by *γράφω*, which is to *pencil* or *draw*—though allied to *γλάφω* and *γλίφω*, to hew or carve, as *scribo*, to write, is to *scalpo* and *sculpo* ; and the English *write* is to *writan*, properly to cut or engrave, and *wrotan* to plough or root up.

Symbols inscribed by sharp instruments, are strictly not letters (*literæ*) but characters, *χαρακτήρες*—from *χαράσσω*—which expresses “scratching,” by its very sound. So that in the rude symbols of our Indians, in the canoes, wigwams, and school-boy-fashion figures of men and animals, charcoaled with a burnt stick, or indented with a flint-arrow point on a sheet of birch-bark, we have the veritable *literæ* and *characteres*—the *elementa elementorum*—the simplest forms and originals into which all letters and characters are to be resolved. Examples of the same also, were those sketches on cotton cloth, of the ships, horses, and artillery of Cortez, made by the Mexican Chiefs (1519), for the purpose of giving to Montezuma an idea of the power of the fatal invader.

Interesting specimens of picture-records *in transitu* to letters, may be seen in the beautiful inscription-tablets of Copan and Palenque, represented by Stephens, in his work on Central America. The Chinese and Japanese characters still bear on the face of them the appearance of being sketches of objects, although now conventionally rendered. And the Egyptian phonetic symbols and hieroglyphics, with which we are all more or less familiar, are very slightly disguised. Of these, the enchorial or demotic characters are declared to be modifications.

We can have little doubt, then, that the Chaldaic and Phœnician characters, and with them, for the most part, the Greek and the Latin,—and, through these, the European letters generally have their origin in pictures and sculptures.