

June number of Blackwoods's Magazine.—S. in *Wisconsin Journal of Education*.

5. GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF CÆSAR.

"To these natural gifts, developed by a brilliant education, were joined physical advantages. His lofty stature, and his finely moulded and well proportioned limbs, imparted to his person a grace which distinguished him from all others. His eyes were dark, his glance penetrating, his complexion colorless, and his nose straight and somewhat thick. His mouth was small and regular, and his lips, rather full, gave to the lower part of his face an expression of kindness, while his breadth of forehead indicated the development of the intellectual faculties. His face was full at least, in his youth; but in the busts that were made towards the close of his life his features are thinner, and bare the traces of fatigue. His voice was sonorous and vibrating; his gesture noble, and an air of dignity pervaded his person. His constitution, which at first was delicate, grew robust by sober living, and by his habit of exposing himself to the inclemency of the seasons. Accustomed from his early youth to manly exercise he was a bold horseman; and he supported with ease privations and fatigues. Habitually abstemious, his health was not weakened by excess of labor, nor by excess of pleasure. Nevertheless, on two occasions, one at Cordova and then at Thapsus, he had a nervous attack, which was erroneously thought to be epilepsy. He paid particular attention to his person, shaved with care, or had the hairs plucked out; he brought forward artistically his hair to the front of his head, and this in his more advanced age served to conceal his baldness. He was reproached with the affectation of scratching his head with only one finger for fear of deranging his hair. His dress was arranged with exquisite taste. His gown was generally bordered with laticlam, ornamented with fringes to the hand, and was bound round the loins by a sash loosely knotted—a fashion which distinguished the elegant and effeminate youth of the period. But Sylla was not deceived by this show of frivolity, and he was wont to recommend that people should have an eye on that young man with the flowing sash. He had a taste for pictures, statues, and gems; and he always wore on his finger, in memory of his origin, a ring, on which was engraved the figure of an armed Venus. To sum up, there were found in Cesar, physically and morally, two natures which are rarely combined in the same person. He joined aristocratic fastidiousness of person to the vigorous temperament of the soldier; the graces of mind to the profundity of thought; the love of luxury and of the arts to a passion for military life in all its simplicity and rudeness. In a word, he joined the elegance of manner which seduces to the energy of character which commands. Such was Cesar at the age of 18, when Sylla possessed himself of the Dictatorship. He had already attracted the attention of the Romans by his name, his wit, his engaging manners, which were so pleasing to men, and, still more so, perhaps, to women."—*From Napoleon's Life of Julius Cesar.*

III. Correspondence of the Journal.

OUR LANGUAGE.

PART II.—ITS WRITTEN FORM, ORTHOGRAPHIC ANOMALIES, PHONOGRAPHY.

The object of the present paper is to give a brief history of the art of writing from the earliest ages of antiquity to the present time, to evolve a few of the glaring anomalies which exist in the construction of our written language, and to explain somewhat scantily, the use and advantages of Phonography. Histories of the Art of Writing are numerous; varied in theory and ability, and easily commatable, yet the following short and necessarily imperfect record of its most salient points may not prove void of interest:

As language commenced in ejaculatory and impassioned monosyllables, so writing first emerged from the realms of nothingness in a crude imperfect form. Its antiquity must be very great as has been often proved by the discoveries made by travellers in China and Asia Minor, but especially in Egypt, for Mr. Humphreys, who adopts Hale's computation of the age of the world, informs us that inscriptions are yet visible on the pyramids of Memphis, bearing convincing proof of their having been written 5000 B.C. Dwelling on such an hypothesis it is not probable that calligraphy was much practised prior to that time. Some writers maintain that, like language, it was divinely imparted; for when the Almighty condescended to write the decologue on two tablets of stone, it is not a little significant that all the letters in the Hebrew alphabet, one excepted, were therein contained. The Penteteuch admits of no proof of the existence of writing. When Abraham despatched a messenger to adjust the marriage articles between Isaac and Rebekah there is no mention of any written documents, nor yet

when Joseph sent down to Egypt for his beloved brother Benjamin. Leaving the origin of writing, like that of language, for controversialists, we proceed to the next stage in its history, and one which we may term its beginning proper. The most natural representation of objects was sure to be the method first employed—that of picture writing. This, we are informed, was used by the three once great nations: Egypt, China, and Mexico; yet it must have been but a very imperfect and circuitous representation, and it is not surprising that it should soon develope itself into hieroglyphic writing. Hieroglyphe served a double purpose—object expression and idea expression, the latter qualification being an important step in the advancement of the art. This is simply allegorical writing, comprehending in an adopted figure the symbol of some virtue, vice, or passion. The next stage in the development of writing was the invention, (by whom, it is not known) of words based on the phonetic principle. The honour of the origin of words is divided between the Egyptians and the Chinese, both apparently having equal rights to the discovery, indeed the latter people still continue their use of words or syllables arbitrarily, and, in consequence of the multiplicity of these fixed signs for the expression of ideas, objects and feelings, a proficiency in the language is the work of a life-time. From words these pioneers of civilization got to syllables, and from syllables to letters, and thus reached the climax of our composite literature. Letters, we are informed, were introduced into Greece by Cadmus, a Phœnician, at what time it is variously stated, though it must have been very early, as Herodotus, the first Grecian historian, mentions it. A poet couples it thus:

"'Twas Cadmus first found out the plan
Of wafting thought from man to man."

The Phœnicians were a merchant people; they bartered, bought and sold along the shores of Britain and Gaul, yet we have no account of them grafting the art on those distant lands. The Cadmean alphabet contained only sixteen letters and was of course inadequate to the expression of all the sounds in language, wherein our own alphabet which has twenty-six letters is so deficient. Yet, on the authority of Dr. Blair, we can trace our alphabet back through rolls of ages and revolutions of nations to that of Cadmus. People seldom interrogate themselves or others about the antiquity of letters, which is doubtless owing to our familiarity with them. In the same manner some of our most common utensils in daily use are overlooked; and, while acres of printed matter appear monthly, the segments of the circle, the fractions of the whole, escape our attention. Yet what power they wield, what influence they exert! They photograph our utterances and thoughts, and in the ratio of the increase or decrease of public demand are the negatives duplicated. All the tragic effects of Sophocles and Eschylus, communicated by withered generations, would not rouse us to an impassioned admiration of their immortal works, did we not possess them on our shelves. Language and volition were the medicines for the gratification of their auditory, and writing embalmed what they said to gratify the human race. But, returning to the thread of history, we find that different countries originated different methods of communication; as, for instance, the Peruvians who "wrote" to each other by cords, a variety of meanings being conveyed by an ingenious plan of tying knots, and the Arabians who employed the figures inherited by us for a similar purpose. Indeed, every nation appears to have been making out a literary course of its own until foiled in its purpose by the ravages of conquest or the milder influence of immigration. The Roman (English) alphabet, like Rome herself, overran civilization, but unlike Rome did not decline and fall. The mistress led the child afar off among the people, but failed to gather him again beneath her protecting folds. Even after writing to some extent became established the manner or order of it underwent many changes; the Arabians, Hebrews and Greeks, writing from left to right and subsequently alternately from right to left and from left to right, but eventually finding the motion from left to right the most natural it was generally adopted. According to Dr. Blair the alternate system terminated in the time of Solon the Athenian legislator. The Chinese, however, are an exception, having retained their peculiar perpendicular from right to left system of writing. What legendary lore and Confucian theory must be hidden in that great library of Emperor Kieulong, the printed catalogue of which fills 122 vols., and what a singular spectacle of hieroglyphic perpendicularity it must present.

The antiquity of letters has been somewhat explained and their history briefly followed down to the time when letters, the smallest part of distinct speech, were grouped so as to form syllables and words. We, with the experience of the ancients before us and an enlightened common sense, create words by a combination of the component parts of words. The Ancients—superstitious and benighted—commenced with words and dissected them to find their elements. We have seen that Cadmus, supposed to be contemporary with Moses, introduced an alphabet of sixteen letters into