

I. *Errata Recepta* in letters and numerical symbols :

1. Letters.

To begin at the very beginning—with the elements themselves of words—the alphabet itself: what is this, in modern languages at least, but a series of *errata*—departures from original forms and intentions? *Errata Recepta* now, which there is neither need nor desire to correct. The mind fond of analysis, is, nevertheless not disinclined to recover the original forms, where it is possible to do so; and dwells with some interest on the idea that A, for example, is the head of an ox, only inverted; that Alpha, *i.e.* *Aleph*, is *ox*, and survives in that sense in *Eleph-as*, *i.e.* *Aleph-as*, elephant, that animal being designated in early unscientific days as a *bos*, somewhat in the same way as we call the great amphibious creature of the Nile a horse. That B, *beta*, is *beth*—a house—a hut—two wigwams, in fact, now, when you lay the letter on its face. And let it be at once well understood, that the attitudes and postures of letters have been almost infinitely varied. The Easterns generally (the users of Sanskrit excepted) write from right to left; the Westerns (the Etruscans excepted) from left to right: each turning the character accordingly. Hence we must often reverse letters before we can trace their identity. The scribes of intermediate races or tastes, wrote sometimes one line one way, and the next line the other way,—reversing perhaps the letters, as they reversed the direction of the reed. Others, again, arranged their words vertically—column-wise—like the modern Chinese.

From these and other like causes, it is not sufficient even to reverse the letters: we must, in certain instances, lay them on their face—lay them on their back—sustain them at uncomfortable angles—and humour them in other ways, discreetly and patiently, if we would trace the connection between them and their reputed congeners or originals. It is thus that we may, perhaps, at length detect that not only does *aleph* betoken an ox, and *beth* a booth; but that G (*i.e.* hard c), is a camel's head and neck; D, a triangular tent door-way; E, a hand in a certain dactylogical posture; F (*bau*), a hook or tent-pin; H, a garth, perhaps a temenos, or sacred enclosure; I (J and Y), again, a hand in proper position; as is also K (C); L, an ox-driver's goad or whip; M, rippling water, the element of its neighbour, N, which is a fish; O (connected with *ayin*), the human eye; P, the mouth seen in profile; Q, the ear; R, the head (also seen in