

as have been projected, is to reduce the primary signs to as few as possible; it is said about two hundred; to make these signs the representatives of general ideas; and to form all such particular objects as birds, serpents, &c. out of the combination of them. It is obvious that it is only by such a plan that a language of symbols can attain to convenient expression; otherwise the recollection is perplexed and lost in the multitude of particulars. Resting then on the probability of the picture language of Egypt, and of the countries to which it gave civilization and art, being in a great degree defective, as one of the main supports of my hypothesis, I proceed to consider some causes that might probably lead to the first attempts in forming a pictorial language representing sounds, and to others that might probably lead to the extension and general adoption of this phonetic language.

The Phœnicians are generally said to have been the first inventors of phonetic writing. It will suit my desire of condensing my ideas on the subject, to assume that they were so. Let us then see what in Phœnicia might have induced men to adopt the expedient, strange in these days, of making pictures meeting the eye suggest sounds to the ear.

The Phœnicians were a trading nation. They visited the whole coasts of the great Mediterranean, and trafficked with all the fresh and numerous tribes that gave life and energy to its then fertile shores. They launched beyond it. Portugal, France, and Britain bought from them and sold to them. This is certain. How much farther they may have ventured is not known. Now a merchant is a great recorder; he wishes, indeed it is necessary for him, to keep a note of all his transactions. To keep such a record by means of the im-

perfect picture language of the Egyptians, would be very difficult, in some cases impossible. Take, for example, a proper name—the name of some individual. Among people of a primitive race indeed names are generally significant words, referring, like those of the Indians, to some occurrence in the life of the individual, or like many of our own, to some habit or accident belonging to some of our ancestors. Such names can be marked by pictures as well as other things. The son of the Farrier, the son of the man with the black locks, his grandson, or so on, might easily be represented by pictured signs. But when we take words of a foreign language, as they communicate to us nothing but sound, we have no other idea of them but of the sounds they give. Thus, to a Phœnician, such names as these, Cataline, Cæsar, Berenice, and Penelope, would be incapable of being directly represented by any signs.

To represent such names as these, in some manner or other, might nevertheless be a matter of great importance to him. Would it be impossible to do so? I believe not. Let us suppose, for example, that one of us knew nothing of even the elements of our literature, the alphabet, and that he yet had to keep in memory such a name as Cataline:—Might he not adopt the expedient which children use in play, and by drawing a representation of a cat, *r* eye and a line, make out Cataline. In the same way he might keep a note of such a man as Cæsar, by two characters representing to his conception the sea and the air. Berenice might be, bee-wren-ice-eye; Penelope, pen-el-hop-pea; and by similar expedients, a little strained, he might represent in sounds, probably as near as his language would permit, all, or almost all, proper names that he might be desirous of recording.