

## Literature and Science.

### THE ANCIENT SAGE.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON.

If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and wilt dive  
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,  
There, brooding by the central altar, thou  
May'st haply learn *the Nameless hath a voice,*  
*By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,*  
*As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know:*  
For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake  
That sees and stirs the surface-shallow there  
But never yet hath dipt into the abyss,  
The Abyss of all Abysses, beneath, within  
The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,  
And in the million-millionth of a grain  
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,  
And ever vanishing, never vanishes,  
To me, my son, more mystic than myself,  
Or even than the Nameless is to me.

And when thou sendest thy free soul thro'  
heaven,  
Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness,  
Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names.  
And if the Nameless should withdraw from all  
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world  
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,  
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,  
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one:  
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no  
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay, my son,  
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,  
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,  
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,  
Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,  
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,  
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!  
She reels not in the storm of warring words,  
She brightens at the clash of "Yes" and "No,"  
She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,  
She feels the sun is hid but for a night,  
She spies the summer through the winter bud,  
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,  
She hears the lark within the songless egg,  
She finds the fountain where they wait'd "Mirage"!

[Of this poem and the quotation we have made from it the *Athenæum* thus writes:—

"The Ancient Sage" is a ratiocinative dialogue based on one of the aphoristic sayings of Laoutze, the founder of Taouism, that most remarkable religious system, which in its relation to Buddhism we have more than once had occasion to glance at in these columns. This saying, "The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name," seems to cover the entire philosophy of the Unconditioned—seems to say all that can be said as to the nescience of the human mind confronted by the Absolute—all that can be said as to the futility of finite enquiries into the Infinite. Lord Tennyson's ancient sage (whom let us take to be Laoutze himself) had retired from the city to pursue his meditations, when a poet of the pessimistic species presented him with a scroll of verses:—

How far thro' all the bloom and break  
That nightingale is heard!  
What power but the bird's could make  
This music in the bird?  
How summer-bright are yonder skies,  
And earth as fair in hue!  
And yet what sign of aught that lies  
Behind the green and blue?

But man to-day is fancy's fool  
As man hath ever been.  
The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule  
Were never heard or seen.

The sage's reply is in Lord Tennyson's best and weightiest manner. If the reader doubts the concentrated strength of the foregoing passage, let him try to express in plain prose as briefly and succinctly as the poet has expressed in melodious verse the idea of the infinite divisibility of matter."

### THOUGHT AND ACT.

FROM THE GERMAN OF LERNAU.

THE forest gloom, the lake,  
The crags so stern and steep,  
A silent picture make  
Of earnest thought and deep.

Through yonder mountain rift  
The deep-voiced cataract  
That leaps so strong and swift,  
Pictures the daring act.

Thy purpose ponder long  
In earnest thought and deep;  
In act be swift and strong  
As yonder torrent's leap.

*Albert W. Gould, in the University.*

### THE DETECTION OF FIRE-DAMP.

[THE following paragraph taken from the *Current* contains many interesting facts not beyond the comprehension of many classes learning chemistry and physics in high schools and collegiate institutes. A great variety of topics, which he might discuss with his class, will be suggested by it to the teacher.]

THE *Scientific American* of last Saturday contains complete illustrations of the device invented by Henry Guy Carleton, of New York City, for indicating the presence of fire-damp in mines. This description has been freely copied, with accompanying diagrams, by several great daily papers, among them the *Chicago Tribune* of equal date, and there is little doubt that Mr. Carleton's invention will be at once brought to the attention of every mine-owner of America and the English-speaking nations, if not to the rest of the world. The inflow of fire-damp is not only signalled by the device of Mr. Carleton, but its percentage to the atmosphere, and its persistence, or its subsequent diffusion into a harmless element of the air are shown with precision to the electrician in the mine-office. By putting a certain ingenious balance in the mine, its action is at all times duplicated on a similar balance in the mine-office, through electric connections. Each balance has a sealed glass bulb holding 300 cubic inches of hydrogen gas. This bulb is balanced by the necessary weight. A change in the quality of the atmosphere will cause an oscillation. Right and left riders on the beam of the office-balance indicate the difference in the quality of the air above and below the ground, and the instruments are put in exact equilibrium through the manipulation of the riders of the office-balance. Now,

if the barometer rise with no fire-damp, the bulb-ends of the balance will rise, and a stronger current of electricity will restore the equilibrium of both; if the barometer fall, the bulbs will fall, and equilibrium of both may be restored from another current at hand; if the barometer rise, with fire-damp, the operator will find that in applying the restoring current the balance in the mine has come to an equilibrium (announced by the bell) sooner than his own balance, therefore he must move the rider on the beam of his balance to make it tally. The reading on this beam measures the percentage of fire-damp; if the barometer fall, with fire-damp, the same or a similar process, carried out on the other side of the beam, will restore the equilibrium and measure the amount of the poisonous gas. With an indifference to personal gain characteristic of the man, Mr. Carleton has waived his patent right in the premises, and all scientists and operators are free to apply the invention to the humane purpose for which it is intended. It is said that one of the latest testings for fire-damp with safety-lamps resulted in the death of thirteen miners. The *Scientific American*, beside giving this invention the place of honor in its journal, speaks of it editorially in terms of the warmest praise, and bespeaks for it a wide use and an unending opportunity for doing good. The cost is said to be trifling, yet it would be something, and the instrument would require the constant attention of an intelligent and skilful electrician. Mr. Carleton is the author of the tragedy of "Memnon," a literary work which will live far off beyond these times, of "Victor Durand," and of the "Thompson Street Poker Club." His attainments are remarkable, and he has had the advantage of comradeship with some of the most eminent scientists of the day, such, for example as Professor R. Ogden Doremus, and his son, Professor C. A. Doremus. Medicine and electricity have both been pet studies with the author and inventor.—*The Current.*

MANY Mound Builder weapons and ornaments composed of copper are beautifully fashioned. Some of their axes have the appearance of having been cast in a mould. Their stone weapons are admirably made. No ancient people excelled them in the art of working flint. The cabinet of almost any antiquarian will show exquisite specimens of their handiwork. The Mound Builders lived in a region where coal is now found abundantly; but it would seem that no traces have ever been discovered indicating that they made use of it, or knew of its inflammable nature. With dense forests to draw upon for fuel, what need had they of it? In a territory where now a great population draws wealth from the earth in the shape of coal, iron ore, copper, galena and limestone, they discovered and utilized copper only, with perhaps a very limited amount of galena from what is now Illinois.—*H. D. Mason, in the Current.*