

generic and specific characters, their modes of life and the uses to which they can be applied. This essay to be open to general competition.

2. *A Silver Medal* for the best Essay descriptive of the PLANTS indigenous to the CANADAS their generic and specific characters, their habits, and their uses, medical and economic. This essay to be open to the competition of the Honorary, Corresponding and Ordinary Members of the Society, resident in the BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN PROVINCES, only.

3. *A Silver Medal* for the best Essay on any branch of general literature, the particular subject thereof to be chosen by the respective authors. This essay to be open to general competition.

4. *A Silver Medal* for the best Essay on any branch of philosophy or science, other than Natural History, the particular subject thereof to be chosen by the respective authors. This essay to be open to general competition.

The Society being anxious to encourage general talent imposes no restriction as to the qualification of competitors for the Medals, further than that they shall be resident or usually so, of some one of the BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN PROVINCES, nor to the language in which the Essays are to be written.

The Essays intended for the competition are to be transmitted to, and to be received by A. F. HOLMES, Esq. M. D. Corresponding Secretary of the Society, or before the 20th day of February 1830, accompanied by a sealed note containing the name of the author, and a motto similar to one to be inscribed at the commencement of the essay. The Essays which do not obtain the prize will, if required, be returned with their accompanying notes unopened to any designated address. The Society also reserves to itself the right of retaining the successful Essays, as well as the power of refusing any of the Medals, should none of the essays be deemed, in the opinion of the Judges to be appointed, worthy of it.

The Committee of Judges to whom the Essays will be referred will be appointed at the Monthly Meeting of the Society in February 1830, and will be composed of Members of the Society and of other individuals residents of MONTREAL, distinguished for their literary and scientific acquirements, and the Society would recommend competitors resident in MONTREAL, and whose hand-writing might possibly be familiar to the Judges to be appointed to procure the assistance of some friend to copy the Essay intended for competition in order that not even the slightest grounds for supposed partiality may exist.

The Medals will be presented to the successful candidates or to their authorized representatives at the Annual Meeting of the Society on the 18th May, 1830.

HON. JOHN RICHARDSON, *President.*

A. F. HOLMES, *Corresponding Secretary.*

ROBERT ARMOUR, Jr. *Recording Secretary.*

Society's Room, June 8, 1829

MISCELLANY.

From the Asiatic Journal, for March.

AN ADVENTURE AT SHIRAUZ.

Nine or ten years ago, I happened to spend a few weeks in Shirauz. I will not say they were the most agreeable of my life; but assuredly I have passed many less pleasant. Being in some degree clothed with an official character, I enjoyed more freedom than is usually allowed to ordinary travellers; not that Persia is an intolerant or bigoted country,—far from it; boys and raggamuffins will occasionally insult a Peringhee, and even pelt him with stones: but there is not much risk in taking summary vengeance upon the offender's carcass, provided the outrage be real and unprovoked.

Shirauz is, or rather was, (for recent visitors tell us that the earthquakes have changed its climate as well as its aspect) a delicious place. At about seven miles from the city, you enter a beautiful valley, emerging from hilly defiles. Fertility smiles around, and perfumes impregnate the air. Within the walls of Shirauz are gardens and fountains and in the suburbs groves of citron and orange, with vineyards and rivulets, where the indolent voluptuaries of the city repose upon couches of rose-blossoms, as they listen to the enchanting notes of the Persian nightingales, whilst inhaling from the caloon the fragrant and exhilarating smoke. Such is the influence of the climate, in the more temperate season of the year and of the day, that existence, mere existence, is felt to be a luxury. Shall we then account the Persians a brutified, unintellectual race, because we hear of their resigning themselves sometimes to the gratification which results from the indulgence of bodily languor, as if they were more sensualists, and incapable of mental effort? Henry Martyn, the celebrated missionary (of whom I shall have more to speak anon), who had many advantages to assist him in forming a right estimate of the Persian character, says, "the people are clever and intelligent, and more calculated to become great and powerful than any of the

nations of the East, had they a good government and the Christian religion."

In truth, Persian society, good Persian society, introduces an observant European, qualified by a familiarity with the language and manners, to the knowledge of many characters, which would be admired in the circles of our own country; I mean men of excellent parts, cultivated understandings, and fine taste. I could appeal to the testimony of one individual on this point, who has had abundant opportunities to study the Persians,—I mean Sir John Malcolm: I have heard him speak in the most favourable terms of the better classes in Persia.

Having received an invitation to dine (or rather sup) with a Persian party in the city, I accordingly went, and found a number of guests assembled. The banquet was served in a court, decorated with flowers, *sub dio*. The conversation was varied, grave and gay, chiefly of the latter complexion. Poetry was often the subject; sometimes philosophy, sometimes politics prevailed. Amongst the topics discussed, religion was one. There are so many sects in Persia; especially if we include the free thinking classes, who dabble in religious subjects by way of amusement more, than the questions which frequently grow out of such a discussion constitute no trifling resource for conversation. I was called upon, though with perfect good breeding and politeness, to give an account of the tenets of our faith, and I confess I felt myself sometimes embarrassed by the pointed queries of my companions. I soon found that I could best parry their attacks by opposing one of my antagonists against the other. One of the guests whom I had never before seen, appeared to be a sceptic; he doubted every thing; he declared he was not convinced that the scene before him was real; he even maintained the probability of the whole of what we suppose is actually cognizable by our senses, being an illusion. Another sportively remarked that there was nothing real but enjoyment: he argued (evidently in jest) that pleasure was the greatest good which human beings could desire; that, therefore, pleasure was the only subject worthy of a man, and his pursuit of it was justifiable, to whatever length it carried him, provided he did not interfere with the pleasure of another, which was the only rule of human conduct. A graver reasoner endeavoured to rebuke both speakers. He dwelt upon the necessity of our being accountable to the Being who made and preserved the world; observed that a sense of religion alone could effectually restrain mankind from the commission of acts inimical to the general good; and quoted many maxims from Saadi and the poets, ending with a passage from the *Pand-naneh*: "if you would escape the flames of hell, purify yourself with the water of piety; if you would walk in the paths of happiness, let the lamp of devotion guide your footsteps!"

Amongst the guests was a person who took little part in these wick encounters, which seemed to me to be chiefly expedients for the display of wit and repartee. He was a man below the middle age, of a serious countenance and mild deportment. He did not appear to be on terms of intimacy with any but the entertainer. They called him Mahomed Rahem. I thought he frequently observed me with great attention, and watched every word that I uttered, especially when the subject just referred to was discussing. Once I expressed myself with some levity; I fear I was a little corrupted by the example of those around me, many of whom made no scruple of jesting upon points, which ought, in their estimation at least, to have been exempt from ridicule. This individual fixed his eyes upon me with so peculiar an expression of surprise, regret, and reproof, that I was struck to the very soul, and felt a strange mysterious wonder who this person could be. He perceived that he had unintentionally excited my suspicion and consequently avoided my looks; but whenever our glances did meet, each of us was evidently disordered by the collision. I asked privately of one of the party if he knew the person who had so strangely interested me. He told me that he had been educated for a moollah, but had never officiated; that he was a man of considerable learning, and much respected, but was particularly reserved and somewhat eccentric in his habits. He lived retired, and seldom visited even his most intimate friends. My informant added that his only inducement to join the party had

been the expectation of meeting an Englishman, as he was extremely attached to the English Nation, and had studied our Language and Learning.

This information mightily increased my curiosity, which I determined to seek an opportunity of gratifying, by conversing with the object of it. But he was by no means so forward as I expected. He acknowledged that he knew a little of the English language, but he preferred expressing himself in Persian. He spoke but little, and rather coldly.

The day after the entertainment, I paid a visit to the person at whose house it had been given, and spoke to him of Mahomed Rahem. He said he was a much esteemed friend of his, and offered, without waiting for my solicitation, to take me to visit him. I suppressed my joy at the offer, and the ensuing morning was fixed for the interview.

Mahomed Rahem resided in the suburbs of Shirauz. My introducer, whose name was Meerza Reeza, informed me that I should be disappointed if I expected to see a splendid mansion. Perhaps, he added, you will be better pleased, because you will see many objects which will remind you of your native land.

We reached the house of Mahomed Rahem, who received us with great cordiality, and spoke to me in a manner quite free from that reserve which appeared on the former occasion. I was soon charmed with his agreeable manners and even vivacity; for no appearance of frigidity remained. He was a remarkably cheerful and well-informed man.

Our interview was short; we seemed both to feel that the presence of Meerza Reeza was a restraint upon us. I therefore took my leave, after obtaining permission to repeat my visit. I remarked in the dwelling of Mahomed Rahem a neatness and comfort which are extremely rare in Persian houses generally; even when the proprietor is wealthy and the apartments spacious, there is almost always a grievous absence of what the French term *proprete* in that country. As Meerza Reeza had informed me, I perceived in the furniture of his friend's house several articles of European manufacture not often found in Persia.

A few days after this, I called alone upon Mahomed Rahem. I found him reading a volume of Cowper's Poems! The circumstance led to an immediate discussion of the merits of English poetry, and European literature in general. I was perfectly astonished at the clear and accurate conceptions he had formed upon these subjects, and at the precision with which he expressed himself in English. We discoursed upon these congenial topics for nearly two hours; and whether I was interested by the novelty of the occurrence, or by the mystery which still seemed to hang about the individual, I know not, but I never felt less fatigued, or, to speak more correctly, I never enjoyed a literary *tele-a-tele* with more *gout*. Surprised that a man with such refined taste and just reflection as he seemed to be, could still be enthralled in the bondage of Islamism, or could even relish the metaphysical mysticism of the Soofees, I ventured to sound his opinions upon the subject of religion.

"You are a Moollah, I am informed."

"No," said he. "I was educated at a Madrusia, but I have never felt an inclination to be one of the priesthood."

"The exposition of your religious volume," I rejoined, "demands a pretty close application to study; before a person can be qualified to teach the doctrines of the *Koran*, I understand he must thoroughly examine and digest volumes of comments, ascertain the sense of the text and the application of its injunctions. This is a laborious preparation, if a man be disposed conscientiously to fulfill his important functions." As he made no remark, I continued: "our Scriptures are their own expositors; we are solicitous only that they should be read: and although some particular passages are not without some difficulties, arising from the inherent obscurity of language, the faults of translation, or the errors of copyists; yet it is our boast that the authority of our Holy Scripture is confirmed by the perspicuity and simplicity of their style as well as precepts."

I was surprized that he made no reply to those observations. At the hazard of being deemed impertinent, I proceeded to panegyricize the leading