

## THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

This admirable eulogium on our native tongue formed part of a speech of the Marquis of Hastings, at the College of Fort William, in the East Indies:—

“Regard the English language not, I beseech you, as the mere medium of ordinary intercourse; it is a mine whence you may extract the means of enchanting, instructing, and improving communities yet nameless, and generations yet unborn. Our English language has never yet had an adequate tribute paid to it. Among the languages of modern Europe, specious but subordinate pretensions have been advanced to cadence, terseness, or dexterous ambiguity of insinuation, while the sober majesty of the English tongue stood aloof, and disdained a competition on the ground of such inferior particularities. I even think that we have erred with respect to the Latin and Greek. Our sense of the inestimable benefits we have reaped from those treasures of taste and science which have been handed down to us, have led us into an extravagance of reverence for them. They have high intrinsic merit, without doubt; but it is a bigoted gratitude, and an unweighed admiration, which induces us to prostrate the character of the English tongue before their altars. Every language can furnish to genius, casually, a forcible expression, and a thousand turns of neatness and delicacy may be found in most of them; but I will confidently assert, that in that which should be the first object in all languages—precision, the English tongue surpasses them all; while in richness of colouring and extent of power, it is not exceeded, if equalled, by any. What subject is there within the boundless range of imagination which some British author has not clothed, in British phrase, with a nicety of definition and accuracy of portraiture, a brilliancy of tint, a delicacy of discrimination, and a force of expression which must be sterling, because every nation of Europe, as well as our own, admits their perfection with enthusiasm? Are the fibres of the heart to be made to tremble with anxiety, to glow with admiration, to thrill with horror, to startle with amaze, to shrink with awe, to throb with pity, or to vibrate in sympathy with the tone of pictured love? Know ye not the mighty magicians of our country, whose potent spell has commanded, and continues irresistibly to command, those varied impulses? Was it a puny engine, a feeble art that achieved such wondrous workings? What was the sorcery? A justly conceived collocation of words is the whole secret of this witchery. And remember, there was a period, not remote, when all these recorded beauties were a blank, were “without form and void.” The elements of those compositions which now so uncontrollably delight and elevate our souls, existed; but they existed as dormant powers, mere capacities; they were the unconnected notes of the gamut, the untouched strings of the harp. The music was in the instrument, but the master’s hand had not thrown itself across the chords, to rouse them from their slumber, and bid them scatter ecstasies. Then do you make trial of their forces; fear not that the combinations are exhausted. Possess yourself of the necessary energies, and you will find the language exuberant beyond the demand of your intensest thought. It has no assignable compass. One of its most admirable qualities is, that if a term sanctioned by usage or precedent does not present itself to express a conception adequately, a word may be moulded for the purpose, which, if it be legitimately framed, it will be as universally understood as if it had been constantly employed in colloquial discourse. The appropriation of words to defined and specific senses, (either direct or through that allusion to similitudes which we call metaphor,) has arisen from the high will of those powerful minds who have exercised a splendid despotism over opinions. The right of domination which they asserted over the multitude, insured a willing adoption of their application of words, and a ratified sanction of their extension of simple meaning to all the subdivisions of shade and affinity; not that they coined arbitrarily, for you are not to suppose that the language has not its law and limits. The boundaries of the privilege are strictly laid down, for they exist in nature. Hence has flowed, and hence will endlessly flow, “the power of giving to airy nothings a local habitation and a name.” Astonishing faculty! never regarded, as I think, with sufficient admiration. Enjoying the treasures thus heaped up, we do not deign attention to the efforts by which they have been collected. How many positions are there that form the basis of our every day’s reflection, the matter for the ordinary operation of our minds, which were toiled after perhaps for ages, before they were seized and rendered comprehensible! How many subjects are there which we must be severally conscious we have strived at, as if we saw them floating in an atmosphere just above us, and found the arm of our intellect but just too short to reach them; and then comes a happier genius, who in a fortunate moment, and from some vantage ground, arrests the meteor in its flight, grasps the fleeting phantom, drags it from the skies to earth, condenses that which was but the impalpable corruscation of spirit, fetters that which was but the lightning glance of thought, and having so mastered it, bestows it a perpetual possession and heritage to mankind.

It was a quaint but expressive and pregnant saying of the Emperor Charles, V., that whenever he had conquered a new language, he found he had acquired an additional soul. He felt within him-

self a marked expansion of the powers of conception, comparison, and combination. Words, the types of ideas and things, cannot be treasured up without some consideration of the things to which they refer; and the variety of shades which must present themselves in translation will infallibly lead the student into a research respecting the causes and qualities of those discriminations, calculated to open his mind to an infinity of relations in his native tongue, never before imagined by him. This is what the emperor meant to imply he felt within him.

A conscious elevation in the class of being is the most delightful sensation which can swell the breast. It may suit the poet to describe man as indiscriminately borne

“High to bear his brow,  
To drink the spirit of the golden day,  
And triumph in existence;”

but the observation must be dull indeed which has not satisfied you that, to uncultivated man, there is no such glowing sentiment. The propensities of his mind are selfish and violent. His qualifications make him the most mischievous and dangerous of animals. Hatredful to others, and knowing that he is so, he never can raise his thoughts above petty plots for the molestation of his fellows, or miserable precautions for his own security. It is only through culture that he can arrive at any sense of his duties; and, through that sense of his duties, at any estimation of himself. And that first important step gained, what an infinity of gradations remain! Is it nothing to remove yourselves from the lowest line of such a scale? Is it not excellent to reach the top of such a progression, and to enjoy, over so large a portion of your kind, a pure, a noble, and undisputed exaltation? Superiority of mental powers is the warrant of the Almighty for command; and man will eagerly bow to it wheresoever his judgment acknowledges the stamp and signature. Ought I to stop here? Not so. Having attained that summit, think what an expanse must be spread before your eye! Think how your eagle ken will range around! how distinct will be your view of the universe! that view which necessarily leads the mind from Nature up to Nature’s God. Upon that pinnacle man breathes a purer air; he becomes, in some degree, a denizen of ethereal regions before he has shaken off his mortal veil. Not by a selfish divorce from society, or by a chilling abstraction from earthly concerns. Oh no! the capacity to which he has raised himself, of gazing more steadfastly and more fervently on the ineffable glories of the Creator, will only teach him to read more distinctly that part which Almighty wisdom has ordained. He will feel that a fulfilment of earthly relations is the great obligation imposed on our existence in this world; he will confess that no period of life can be exempt from it; the energy of youth, the steadiness of maturer years, and the experience of age, are alike bound to obey the claim. Even in the stage of decadence, when the failure of the frame no longer allows bodily activity, he will be sensible that he may still inculcate, and watch, and warn, and prompt, and encourage, and lead, younger intellects to a conception of its high destinies. Thus he will earn the last and best of mortal consolations. Looking forward in calm and humble confidence to the hour in which the Great Giver of good shall require from him the intrusted talent, he will hope that he may surrender it not ungratefully misprized, nor idly overlooked, nor sordidly unemployed. Dare you, when the meed is thus displayed to you, dare you refrain from contending for it?”

## THE JEWISH MAIDEN.

“The house of David is no more; no more our sacred seed shall lurk and linger, like a blighted thing in this degenerate earth. If we cannot flourish, why then we’ll die!”

“Oh! say not so, my brother!”

A voice broke on the air, so soft, so sweet, so wildly musical—it sounded like a holy bell upon a summer day, a holy bell that calls to prayer, and stills each fierce emotion.

And softly kneeling at his side behold a female form! Her face is hid, her lips are pressed against the hand she gently steals. And now she raises up her head, and waits with tender patience for a glance from one who seldom smiles.

“Oh! say not so, my brother!”

He turns, he gazes on a face beautiful as a starry night—a starry night in those far climes where not a cloud is marked in heaven, when all below on earth’s so sweet, and all above in air so still, that every passion melts away, and life seems but a fragrant dream.

I too have wandered in those lands, and roamed amid Jordan’s vocal bowers. Ah! could the nightingale that sang to Syria’s rose now sing to me, I’d give the fame of coming years to listen to that lay!

He turns, he gazes, and he bends; his heart is full, his voice is low.

“Ah, Miriam! thou queller of dark spirits! is it thou? Why art thou here?”

“Why am I here? Are you not here? and need I urge a stronger plea? Oh! brother dear, I pray you come, and mingle in our festival! Our walls are hung with flowers you love; I culled them by the fountain’s side; the holy lamps are trimmed and set, and you must raise their earliest flame. Without the gate my maidens wait to offer you a robe of state. Then, brother dear, I pray you come and mingle in our festival.”

“Why should we feast?”

“Ah! is it not in thy dear name these lamps are lit, these garlands hung? To-day to us a prince is given to day——”

“A prince without a kingdom.”

“But not without *that* which makes kingdoms precious, and which fill many a royal heart has sighed for—willing subjects, David.”

“Slaves, Miriam, fellow-slaves.”

“What we are, my brother, our God has willed; and let us bow and tremble.”

“I will not, I cannot tremble!”

“Hush, David, hush! It was this haughty spirit that called the vengeance of the Lord upon us.”

“It was this haughty spirit that conquered Canaan.”

“Oh! my brother, my dear, dear brother! they told me the dark spirit had fallen on thee, and I came, and hoped thy Miriam might have charmed it. What we have been, Alroy, is a bright dream; and what we may be at least as bright a hope; and for what we are, thou art my brother. In thy love I find present felicity, and value more thy chance embraces and thy scanty smiles than all the vanished splendour of our race, our gorgeous gardens and our glittering halls.”

“Who waits without there?”

“Caleb.”

“Caleb?”

“My lord.”

“Go tell my uncle I presently will join the banquet. Leave me a moment, dearest. I’ll soon be with thee. Nay, dry these tears, my life, or let me stop them with a soft kiss.”

“Oh, Alroy, they are not tears of sorrow.”

“God be with thee, angel; fire-thee-well, though but for a moment. Thou art the charm and consolation of my life. Farewell, farewell. I do observe the influence of women very potent over me. ’Tis not of such stuff that they make heroes. I know not love, save that pure affection that does subsist between me and this girl; an orphan and my sister. We are so alike, that when, last Passover, in mimicry, she twined my turban round her graceful head, our uncle called her David.

“The daughters of my tribe, they please me not, though they are passing fair. Were our sons as brave as they are beautiful, we still might dance on Sion. Yet have I often thought that could I pillow this moody brow upon some snowy bosom that were my own, and dwell in the wilderness, far from the sight and ken of man, and all the care and toil and wretchedness, that groan and sigh about me, I might haply lose this deep sensation of overwhelming wo, that broods upon my being. No matter; life is but a dream, and mine must be a dull one.”—*Tale of Alroy.*

From the Wild Garland.

## CYPERUS PAPYRUS.

The Cyperus Papyrus, the celebrated papyrus of Egypt, was called by the Greeks *biblos*, whence is derived our Greek word *bible*, as being *the book*. In Syria it is called *babeer*, and hence the words papyrus, paper, papier. The papyrus is the most ancient material employed as paper. Pliny and others have fixed on the time of Alexander (about 324 B. C.) as the period when it first began to be used for this purpose; but there is good reason to believe that it was in use at least three hundred years before that time. It was also employed for constructing boats; sails, mats, ropes, coverlets, and garments, were manufactured from the light coat under the bark; and the root was used for food. Vessels of bulrushes, or papyrus, are mentioned in the sacred Scriptures. We read in Isaiah, “Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters (Isaiah, xviii. 2;)” and the floating cradle of the infant Moses was of this material (Exod. ii. 2.) Pliny, Herodotus, and Diodorus, speak of the Egyptian ships and vessels of the Nile as made of papyrus. But its chief claim to notice arises from its valuable properties as a material for writing upon, being employed for this purpose for a series of ages, during which little comparative use seems to have been made of any other mode of recording the history of man, the discovery of science, or the truths of religion. The frail leaf preserved and transmitted to posterity the treasure committed to its keeping, while the gigantic pyramids and the sculptured hieroglyphic proved less true to the trust reposed in them.

The papyrus does not appear to have grown in the Nile, but in the stagnant waters and marshes formed by the overflowing of the river. It is found also growing in the river Jordan, where a singular provision for the security of the plants in the midst of the flowing waters has been observed. The firm and towering stalk is of a triangular form, and the point of the triangle stands opposed to the stream, and, in the same manner as the cutwater of a boat, or the buttress of a bridge, presents an acute angle to the opposing waters, thus gently diminishing their force. The general form of the plant has been justly described as resembling a thyrus. The head is composed of a number of small grassy filaments, each about a foot long. The stalk is a vivid green, thickest at the bottom, and tapering to the top, and clothed at the