

## Literature and Science.

### A LESSON FROM THE POTTER.

The potter stood at his daily work,  
 One patient foot on the ground ;  
 The other with never-slacking speed  
 Turning his swift wheel round.

Silent we stood beside him there,  
 Watching the restless knee,  
 Till my friend said low in pitying voice,  
 "How tired his foot must be!"

The potter never paused in his work,  
 Shaping the wondrous thing ;  
 'Twas only a common flower-pot,  
 But perfect in fashioning.

Slowly he raised his patient eyes,  
 With homely truth transfixed :  
 "No, ma'm ; it isn't the foot that works,  
 The one that stands gets tired !"

[We have not been able to discover the name of the author of this, and the exchange from which it was clipped has escaped our memory.]

### STUDIES IN AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY.

Few issues of the Government Printing Office have more general interest than those of the Bureau of Ethnology. The latest volume—which, though relating to the work of a time four years past, has but just appeared—does not yield in the value of its contents to those of any previous report. Its six hundred quarto pages of closely printed matter comprise several treatises, any one of which, if published separately, would have gained distinction for its author in the world of science. The chief contributors—Prof. Cyrus Thomas, Mr. W. H. Dall, the Rev. J. Owen Dorsey, Dr. Washington Matthews, and Mr. W. H. Holmes—will all be recognized as among our foremost scholars in various departments of archaeology and ethnology. Their papers in the present volume will add much to the reputation for good work and careful research which the Bureau has already acquired, both at home and abroad. After briefly sketching the duties undertaken by the different members of the Bureau during the year, Major Powell sets forth at some length his views on the origin of tribal society and the clan, which he explains as based entirely on kinship. His explanations, so far as they apply to the majority of the nomadic tribes of North America, must be deemed authoritative and valuable. In a paper on "activital similarities," he gives some excellent suggestions for observing and comparing the customs, arts, and institutions of different communities, and for deciding the often doubtful question whether their resemblances show a common origin or are due merely to similar causes. The "principles of interpretation" which he lays down with great clearness

form an admirable guide for the student of ethnology in determining such questions; and it may be added that these principles have been kept in view, with good effect throughout the present volume.

They appear to striking advantage in Prof. Thomas's "Notes on certain Maya and Mexican Manuscripts." Mr. Thomas points out some notable similarities between the Mexican and Maya calendars, which clearly show that the one must necessarily have been derived from the other. This had been already inferred; but what is less expected is the evidence which seems to prove that the Mexican was the original, and the Maya the copy. The author shows strong grounds for concluding that the Maya civilization, though seemingly more fully developed than the Mexican, was more recent, and was in great part derived from the latter. This, however, need not surprise us when we remember how quickly, in ancient times, the Greeks surpassed their teachers, the Egyptians and Phœnicians, and how, in later days, the Japanese, deriving all their culture from their Chinese neighbors, have in many respects passed beyond them. Mr. Thomas's paper explains the characters by which the Mayas denoted the four cardinal points, and clears up, with elaborate research, other doubtful points in the graphic system of that remarkable people. Mr. Dall's paper on "Marks and Labrets" is a monograph of great merit. It treats of certain peculiar customs which prevail more especially in two widely separated regions—viz., along the west coast of America, and among the Melanesians, or black tribes, of Papua and the adjacent islands. On first thought, the natural supposition would be that these customs had grown up independently in the two regions from similar causes; but Mr. Dall brings strong arguments in support of his suggestion that there may have been some early communication, either directly from Melanesia to the American coast, or mediately through the Polynesian islands. His study of this subject is highly interesting and suggestive, and is illustrated by many curious pictures.

The treatise on "Omaha Sociology," by Mr. Dorsey, is probably the most complete and exhaustive account of a North American tribe that has ever been published. Except the language, which is to be treated in another volume, and the mythology and religion, which are probably also reserved for separate discussion, no important element in the history and organization of the tribe has been omitted. We have its origin and migrations (illustrated by a map), its classes and clans, its kinship system and marriage laws, the condition and treatment of women and children, the domestic habits, food, amusements, industrial occupations, hunting and war customs, government and laws, set

forth with remarkable fulness, and with evidently the most scrupulous exactness. The work is a thesaurus, from which ethnologists will be able to draw materials of the highest value.

Dr. Matthews, in a well-written and interesting account of Navajo weaving, shows the singular mastery of this art attained by a native people whom many would style barbarians, though certainly with little justice. Their spinning apparatus, looms, and dyes, and the elegant and well-wrought blankets, shawls, sashes, and other products of their ingenuity, are minutely described, and are illustrated by some excellent engravings. This treatise forms an appropriate introduction to a valuable paper, by Mr. W. H. Holmes, on "Prehistoric Textile Fabrics of the United States." A knowledge of these fabrics, as made and used by the Mound-builders and other early inhabitants of our country, has been recovered by Mr. Holmes in a most ingenious manner, from the ornamentation of their pottery. The patterns impressed from these fabrics on their earthenware come out, when recast in clay from the surface of the pottery, with wonderful distinctness. This interesting paper affords decisive evidence of the progress which the former possessors of the Ohio Valley had made in the industrial arts. If the wandering Algonkins and Iroquois of later times were really, as some suppose, the descendants of the Moundbuilders, they had evidently sunk as far below their artistic and town-building ancestors as the Italians and Gauls of the dark ages were beneath the Romans of the First Century.

Fresh evidence on this point, if required, may be drawn from the useful illustrated catalogues, prepared by Messrs. Holmes and Stevenson, of the native implements and works of art collected for the Bureau. Many of these, derived from ancient mounds and burial-places, evince no small endowment of æsthetic taste and talent in their makers.—*The Critic.*

CAUTION the pupils against studying for recitation. Few class-room evils are more seductive than the habit of so conducting a recitation that the thought uppermost in the child's mind is that he learns to recite, or to get a good per cent. on an examination paper. All teaching fails, in large part, that does not secure an abiding conviction that study is for mental discipline—is for the exercise of the mind, that it may do better work for the next time; and that such discipline is best attainable by honest work with the mind, learning that which will benefit us most by retention, and then, having grasped its scope, retaining it as an individual and associated fact as long as possible.—*American Teacher.*