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SOME men are renowned in history on account of the extraordinary powers and capacities which they exhibited in the course of their career, or the intrinsic greatness of the deeds which they performed. Others, without having really achieved any thing in itself very great or wonderful, have become widely known to mankind by reason of the vast consequences which, in the subsequent course of events, resulted from their doings. Men of this latter class are conspicuous rather than great. From among thousands of other men equally exalted in character with themselves, they are brought out prominently to the notice of mankind only in consequence of the strong light reflected, by great events subsequently occurring, back upon the position where they happened to stand.

The celebrity of Romulus seems to be of this latter kind. He founded a city. A thousand other men have founded cities; and in doing their work have evinced perhaps as much courage, sagacity, and mental power as Romulus displayed. The city of Romulus, however, became in the end the queen and mistress of the world. It rose to so exalted a position of influence and power, and retained its ascendency so long, that now for twenty centuries every civilized nation in the western world have felt a strong interest in every thing pertaining to its history, and have been accustomed to look back with special curiosity to the circumstances of its origin. In consequence of this it has happened that though Romulus, in his actual day, performed no very great exploits, and enjoyed no pre-eminence above the thousand other half-savage chieftains of his class, whose names have been long forgotten, and very probably while he lived never dreamed of any extended fame, yet so brilliant is the illumination which the subsequent events of history have shed upon his position

and his doings, that his name and the incidents of his life have been brought out very conspicuously to view, and attract very strongly the attention of mankind.

The history of Rome is usually made to begin with the story of Æneas. In order that the reader may understand in what light that romantic tale is to be regarded, it is necessary to premise some statements in respect to the general condition of society in ancient days, and to the nature of the strange narrations, circulated in those early periods among mankind, out of which in later ages, when the art of writing came to be introduced, learned men compiled and recorded what they termed history.

The countries which formed the shores of the Mediterranean sea were as verdant and beautiful, in those ancient days, and perhaps as fruitful and as densely populated as in modern times. The same Italy and Greece were there then as now. There were the same blue and beautiful seas, the same mountains, the same picturesque and enchanting shores, the same smiling valleys, and the same serene and genial sky. The level lands were tilled industriously by a rural population corresponding in all essential points of character with the peasantry of modern times; and shepherds and herdsmen, then as now, hunted the wild beasts, and watched their flocks and herds, on the declivities of the mountains. In a word, the appearance of the face of nature, and the performance of the great function of the social state, namely, the procuring of food and clothing for man by the artificial cultivation of animal and vegetable life, were substantially the same on the shores of the Mediterranean two thousand years ago as now. Even the plants and the animals themselves which the ancient inhabitants reared, have undergone no essential change. Their sheep and oxen and horses were the same as ours. So were their grapes, their apples, and their corn.

If, however, we leave the humbler classes and occupations of society, and turn our attention to those

which represent the refinement, the cultivation, and the power, of the two respective periods, we shall find that almost all analogy fails. There was an aristocracy then as now, ruling over the widely- extended communities of peaceful agriculturalists and herdsmen, but the members of it were entirely different in their character, their tastes, their ideas, and their occupations from the classes which exercise the prerogatives of government in Europe in modern times. The nobles then were military chieftains, living in camps or in walled cities, which they built for the accommodation of themselves and their followers. These chieftains were not barbarians. They were in a certain sense cultivated and refined. They gathered around them in their camps and in their courts orators, poets, statesmen, and officers of every grade, who seem to have possessed the same energy, genius, taste, and in some respects the same scientific skill, which have in all ages and in every clime characterized the upper classes of the Caucasian race. They carried all the arts which were necessary for their purposes and plans to high perfection, and in the invention of tales, ballads and poems, to be recited at their entertainments and feasts, they evinced the most admirable taste and skill;—a taste and skill which, as they resulted not from the operation and influence of artificial rules, but from the unerring instinct of genius, have never been surpassed. In fact, the poetical inventions of those early days, far from having been produced in conformity with rules, were entirely precedent to rules, in the order of time. Rules were formed from them; for they at length became established themselves in the estimation of mankind, as models, and on their authority as models, the whole theory of rhetorical and poetical beauty now mainly reposes.

The people of those days formed no idea of a spiritual world, or of a spiritual divinity. They however imagined, that heroes of former days still continued to live and to reign in certain semi-heavenly regions among the summits of their

blue and beautiful mountains, and that they were invested there with attributes in some respects divine. In addition to these divinities, the fertile fancy of those ancient times filled the earth, the air, the sea, and the sky with imaginary beings, all most graceful and beautiful in their forms, and poetical in their functions,—and made them the subjects, too, of innumerable legends and tales, as graceful, poetical, and beautiful as themselves. Every grove, and fountain, and river,—every lofty summit among the mountains, and every rock and promontory along the shores of the sea,—every cave, every valley, every water-fall, had its imaginary occupant,—the genius of the spot; so that every natural object which attracted public notice at all, was the subject of some picturesque and romantic story. In a word, nature was not explored then as now, for the purpose of ascertaining and recording cold and scientific realities,—but to be admired, and embellished, and animated;—and to be peopled, everywhere, with exquisitely beautiful, though imaginary and supernatural, life and action.

What the genius of imagination and romance did thus in ancient times with the scenery of nature, it did also on the field of history. Men explored that field not at all to learn sober and actual realities, but to find something that they might embellish and adorn, and animate with supernatural and marvelous life. What the sober realities might have actually been, was of no interest or moment to them whatever. There were no scholars then as now, living in the midst of libraries, and finding constant employment, and a never-ending pleasure, in researches for the simple investigation of the truth. There was in fact no retirement, no seclusion, no study. Every thing except what related to the mere daily toil of tilling the ground bore direct relation to military expeditions, spectacles and parades; and the only field for the exercise of that kind of intellectual ability which is employed in modern times in investigating and recording historic truth, was the invention and recitation of poems,

dramas and tales, to amuse great military audiences in camps or public gatherings, convened to witness shows or games, or to celebrate great religious festivals. Of course under such circumstances there would be no interest felt in truth as truth. Romance and fable would be far more serviceable for such ends than reality.

Still it is obvious that such tales as were invented to amuse for the purposes we have described, would have a deeper interest for those who listened to them, if founded in some measure upon fact, and connected in respect to the scene of their occurrence, with real localities. A prince and his court sitting at their tables in the palace or the tent, at the close of a feast, would listen with greater interest to a story that purported to be an account of the deeds and the marvelous adventures of their own ancestors, than to one that was wholly and avowedly imaginary. The inventors of these tales would of course generally choose such subjects, and their narrations would generally consist therefore rather of embellishments of actual transactions, than of inventions wholly original. Their heroes were consequently real men; the principal actions ascribed to them were real actions, and the places referred to were real localities. Thus there was a semblance of truth and reality in all these tales which added greatly to the interest of them; while there were no means of ascertaining the real truth, and thus spoiling the story by making the falsehood or improbability of it evident and glaring.

We cannot well have a better illustration of these principles than is afforded by the story of Cadmus, an adventurer who was said to have brought the knowledge of alphabetic writing into Greece from some countries farther eastward. In modern times there is a very strong interest felt in ascertaining the exact truth on this subject. The art of writing with alphabetic characters was so great an invention, and it has exerted so vast an influence on the condition and progress of mankind since it was introduced,

that a very strong interest is now felt in every thing that can be ascertained as actually fact, in respect to its origin. If it were possible now to determine under what circumstances the method of representing the elements of sound by written characters was first devised, to discover who it was, that first conceived the idea, and what led him to make the attempt, what difficulties he encountered, to what purposes he first applied his invention, and to what results it led, the whole world would take a very strong interest in the revelation. The essential point, however, to be observed, is that it is the real truth in respect to the subject that the world are now interested in knowing. Were a romance writer to invent a tale in respect to the origin of writing, however ingenious and entertaining it might be in its details, it would excite in the learned world at the present day no interest whatever.

There is in fact no account at present existing in respect to the actual origin of alphabetic characters, though there is an account of the circumstances under which the art was brought into Europe from Asia, where it seems to have been originally invented. We will give the facts, first in their simple form, and then the narrative in the form in which it was related in ancient times, as embellished by the ancient story-tellers.

The facts then, as now generally understood and believed, are, that there was a certain king in some country in Africa, named Agenor, who lived about 1500 years before Christ. He had a daughter named Europa, and several sons. Among his sons was one named Cadmus. Europa was a beautiful girl, and after a time a wandering adventurer from some part of the northern shores of the Mediterranean sea, came into Africa, and was so much pleased with her that he resolved if possible, to obtain her for his wife. He did not dare to make proposals openly, and he accordingly disguised himself and mingled with the servants upon Agenor's farm. In this disguise he succeeded in making

acquaintance with Europa, and finally persuaded her to elope with him. The pair accordingly fled, and crossing the Mediterranean they went to Crete, an island near the northern shores of the sea, and there they lived together.

The father, when he found that his daughter had deceived him and gone away, was very indignant, and sent Cadmus and his brothers in pursuit of her. The mother of Europa, whose name was Telephassa, though less indignant perhaps than the father, was overwhelmed with grief at the loss of her child, and determined to accompany her sons in the search. She accordingly took leave of her husband and of her native land, and set out with Cadmus and her other sons on the long journey in search of her lost child. Agenor charged his sons never to come home again unless they brought Europa with them.

Cadmus, with his mother and brothers, traveled slowly toward the northward, along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean sea, inquiring everywhere for the fugitive. They passed through Syria and Phenicia, into Asia Minor, and from Asia Minor into Greece. At length Telephassa, worn down, perhaps, by fatigue, disappointment, and grief, died. Cadmus and his brothers soon after became discouraged; and at last, weary with their wanderings, and prevented by their father's injunction from returning without Europa, they determined to settle in Greece. In attempting to establish themselves there, however, they became involved in various conflicts, first with wild beasts, and afterward with men, the natives of the land, who seemed to spring up, as it were, from the ground, to oppose them. They contrived, however, at length, by fomenting quarrels among their enemies, and taking sides with one party against the rest, to get a permanent footing in Greece, and Cadmus finally founded a city there, which he called Thebes.

In establishing the institutions and government of Thebes, and in arranging the organization of the people into a social state, Cadmus introduced among them several arts,

which, in that part of the country, had been before unknown. One of these arts was the use of copper, which metal he taught his new subjects to procure from the ore obtained in mines. There were several others; but the most important of all was that he taught them sixteen letters representing elementary vocal sounds, by means of which inscriptions of words could be carved upon monuments, or upon tablets of metal or of stone.

It is not supposed that the idea of representing the elements of vocal sounds by characters originated with Cadmus, or that he invented the characters himself. He brought them with him undoubtedly, but whether from Egypt or Phenicia, can not now be known.

Such are the facts of the case, as now generally understood and believed. Let us now compare this simple narration with the romantic tale which the early story-tellers made from it. The legend, as they relate it, is as follows.

Jupiter was a prince born and bred among the summits of Mount Ida, in Crete. His father's name was Saturn. Saturn had made an agreement that he would cause all his sons to be slain, as soon as they were born. This was to appease his brother, who was his rival, and who consented that Saturn should continue to reign only on that condition.

Jupiter's mother, however, was very unwilling that her boys should be thus cruelly put to death, and she contrived to conceal three of them, and save them. The three thus preserved were brought up among the solitudes of the mountains, watched and attended by nymphs, and nursed by a goat. After they grew up, they engaged from time to time in various wars, and met with various wonderful adventures, until at length Jupiter, the oldest of them, succeeded, by means of thunderbolts which he caused to be forged for his use, in vast subterranean caverns beneath Mount Etna and Mount Vesuvius, conquered all his enemies, and became universal king. He, however, divided his empire between himself and his brothers, giving to them

respectively the command of the sea and of the subterranean regions, while he reserved the earth and the heavenly regions for himself.

He established his usual abode among the mountains of Northern Greece, but he often made excursions to and fro upon the earth, appearing in various disguises, and meeting with a great number of strange and marvelous adventures. In the course of these wanderings he found his way at one time into Egypt, and to the dominions of Agenor,—and there he saw Agenor's beautiful daughter, Europa. He immediately determined to make her his bride; and to secure this object he assumed the form of a very finely shaped and beautiful bull, and in this guise joined himself to Agenor's herds of cattle. Europa soon saw him there. She was much pleased with the beauty of his form, and finding him gentle and kind in disposition, she approached him, patted his glossy neck and sides, and in other similar ways gratified the prince by marks of her admiration and pleasure. She was at length induced by some secret and magical influence which the prince exerted over her, to mount upon his back, and allow herself to be borne away. The bull ran with his burden to the shore, and plunged into the waves. He swam across the sea to Crete, and there, resuming his proper form, he made the princess his bride.

Agenor and Telephassa, when they found that their daughter was gone, were in great distress, and Agenor immediately determined to send his sons on an expedition in pursuit of her. The names of his sons were Cadmus, Phœnix, Cylix, Thasus, and Phineus. Cadmus, as the oldest son, was to be the director of the expedition. Telephassa, the mother, resolved to accompany them, so overwhelmed was she with affliction at the loss of her daughter. Agenor himself was almost equally oppressed with the calamity which had overwhelmed them, and he charged his sons never to come home again until they could bring Europa with them.

Telephassa and her sons wandered for a time in the countries east of the Mediterranean sea, without being able to obtain any tidings of the fugitive. At length they passed into Asia Minor, and from Asia Minor into Thrace, a country lying north of the Ægean Sea. Finding no traces of their sister in any of these countries, the sons of Agenor became discouraged, and resolved to make no farther search; and Telephassa, exhausted with anxiety and fatigue, and now overwhelmed with the thought that all hope must be finally abandoned, sank down and died.

Cadmus and his brothers were much affected at their mother's death. They made arrangements for her burial, in a manner befitting her high rank and station, and when the funeral solemnities had been performed, Cadmus repaired to the oracle at Delphi, which was situated in the northern part of Greece, not very far from Thrace, in order that he might inquire there whether there was any thing more that he could do to recover his lost sister, and if so to learn what course he was to pursue. The oracle replied to him that he must search for his sister no more, but instead of it turn his attention wholly to the work of establishing a home and a kingdom for himself, in Greece. To this end he was to travel on in a direction indicated until he met with a cow of a certain kind, described by the oracle, and then to follow the cow wherever she might lead the way, until at length, becoming fatigued, she should stop and lie down. Upon the spot where the cow should lie down he was to build a city and make it his capital.

Cadmus obeyed these directions of the oracle. He left Delphi and went on, attended, as he had been in all his wanderings, by a troop of companions and followers, until at length in the herds of one of the people of the country, named Pelagon, he found a cow answering to the description of the oracle. Taking this cow for his guide, he followed wherever she led the way. She conducted him toward the southward and eastward for thirty or forty miles,

and at length wearied apparently, by her long journey, she lay down. Cadmus knew immediately that this was the spot where his city was to stand.

He began immediately to make arrangements for the building of the city, but he determined first to offer the cow that had been his divinely appointed guide to the spot, as a sacrifice to Minerva, whom he always considered as his guardian goddess.

Near the spot where the cow lay down there was a small stream which issued from a fountain not far distant, called the fountain of Dirce. Cadmus sent some of his men to the place to obtain some water which it was necessary to use in the ceremonies of the sacrifice. It happened, however, that this fountain was a sacred one, having been consecrated to Mars,—and there was a great dragon, a son of Mars, stationed there to guard it. The men whom Cadmus sent did not return, and accordingly Cadmus himself, after waiting a suitable time, proceeded to the spot to ascertain the cause of the delay. He found that the dragon had killed his men, and at the time when he arrived at the spot, the monster was greedily devouring the bodies. Cadmus immediately attacked the dragon and slew him, and then tore his teeth out of his head, as trophies of his victory. Minerva had assisted Cadmus in this combat, and when it was ended she directed him to plant the teeth of the dragon in the ground. Cadmus did so, and immediately a host of armed men sprung up from the place where he had planted them. Cadmus threw a stone among these armed men, when they immediately began to contend together in a desperate conflict, until at length all but five of them were slain. These five then joined themselves to Cadmus, and helped him to build his city.

He went on very successfully after this. The city which he built was Thebes, which afterward became greatly celebrated. The citadel which he erected within, he called, from his own name, Cadmia.

Such were the legends which were related in ancient poems and tales; and it is obvious that such narratives must have been composed to entertain groups of listeners whose main desire was to be excited and amused, and not to be instructed. The stories were believed, no doubt, and the faith which the hearer felt in their truth added of course very greatly to the interest which they awakened in his mind. The stories are amusing to us; but it is impossible for us to share in the deep and solemn emotion with which the ancient audiences listened to them, for we have not the power, as they had, of believing them. Such tales related in respect to the great actors on the stage in modern times, would awaken no interest, for there is too general a diffusion both of historical and philosophical knowledge to render it possible for any one to suppose them to be true. But those for whom the story of Europa was invented, had no means of knowing how wide the Mediterranean sea might be, and whether a bull might not swim across it. They did not know but that Mars might have a dragon for a son, and that the teeth of such a dragon might not, when sown in the ground, spring up in the form of a troop of armed men. They listened therefore to the tale with an interest all the more earnest and solemn on account of the marvelousness of the recital. They repeated it word for word to one another, around their camp-fires, at their feasts, in their journeyings,—and when watching their flocks at midnight, among the solitudes of the mountains. Thus the tales were handed down from generation to generation, until at length the use of the letters of Cadmus became so far facilitated, that continuous narrations could be expressed by means of them; and then they were put permanently upon record in many forms; and were thus transmitted without any farther change to the present age.

CADMUS'S LETTERS

THERE are two modes essentially distinct from each other, by which ideas may be communicated through the medium of inscriptions addressed to the eye. These two modes are, first, by symbolical, and secondly, by phonetic characters. Each of these two systems assumes, in fact, within itself, quite a variety of distinct forms, though it is only the general characteristics which distinguish the two great classes from each other, that we shall have occasion particularly to notice here.

Symbolical writing consists of characters intended severally to denote ideas or things, and not words. A good example of true symbolical writing is to be found in a certain figure often employed among the architectural decorations of churches, as an emblem of the Deity. It consists of a triangle representing the Trinity with the figure of an eye in the middle of it. The eye is intended to denote the divine omniscience. Such a character as this, is obviously the symbol of an idea, not the representative of a word. It may be read Jehovah, or God, or the Deity, or by any other word or phrase by which men are accustomed to denote the Supreme Being. It represents, in fine, the idea, and not any particular word by which the idea is expressed.

The first attempts of men to preserve records of facts by means of inscriptions, have, in all ages, and among all nations, been of this character. At first, the inscriptions so made were strictly pictures, in which the whole scene intended to be commemorated was represented, in rude carvings. In process of time substitutions and abridgments were adopted in lieu of full representations, and these grew at length into a system of hieroglyphical characters, some natural, and others more or less arbitrary, but all denoting ideas or things, and not the sounds of words. These characters are of the kind usually understood by the word