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Poetry.

EARNEST LIFE.

BY HORATIO DONAH.

'Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief,
And sin is here.
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earnest in a world like ours.
Not many lives, but only one have we—
One, only one!
How sacred should that one life ever be—
That narrow span!
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

LANGUAGES OF THE EAST.

As our Missionaries have to learn languages very different from our own, it may be interesting to the readers of the *Messenger* to receive some information respecting the characteristics of those languages. The following passages are mostly taken from "The Bible of every land," an elegantly printed quarto volume, published by Messrs Bagster, London, in 1848.

BURMESE.

The tyrannical nature of the government, and the degraded, servile character of the people, are legible in the structure of the Burmese language. Although this language, like the Chinese, is totally destitute of inflection, yet, by means of suffixes and affixes, not only are the relations of case, mood, tense, &c., determined, but even the rank, both of the speaker and of the auditor, is indicated. A distinct set of words is used in reference to the common acts of life, when performed by the great or by priests. Thus the term expressive of eating, when the action is performed by ordinary individuals, is *tsah*; but if a priest is said to be eating, the term is *pong-bay*. Again, the word in common parlance for boiled rice is *ta-men*; but a priest's boiled rice must be distinguished as *soone*. These distinctions add precision to the language, but greatly augment the difficulties of the acquirement.

The Burmese language has been considerably moulded by the *Pali*, which was introduced into Burmah in connection with Buddhism. All pure Burmese words are monosyllabic, and even the polysyllabic terms engrafted on the language from the *Pali*, are, in general, subjected to certain orthographical changes, and pronounced as if each syllable were a distinct word; this circumstance, together with the frequent recurrence of guttural, sibilant, and nasal sounds, renders the language monotonous and unmusical to the ear of a stranger. Words closely allied in signification (as an adjective and the noun it qualifies) are, however, united in writing so as to form one word, and sometimes six or eight words are thus strung together, forming words of such formidable length as to remind us of the polysynthetic dialects of America. As many words have two, three or even ten significations with the same orthography, this manner of connecting words is of important service in removing ambiguity. Numerals are generally combined with a word descriptive of the form, or some other quality of the noun to which they belong, and in that state they are joined to the noun, and constitute one word. In this peculiarity the Burmese language resembles the Siamese. The Burmans like the Germans, delight in long and highly involved periods: in a simple phrase the agent is generally put first, then the object, and lastly the verb; and, as compared with the English idiom, the words of a Burmese composition may be said to stand in a directly inverted order. "The character of the language," says Dr. Leyden, "has a very considerable effect on the style of the compositions

which it contains. Repetitions of the same turn and expression are rather affected than shunned, and a kind of native strength and simplicity of phrase, with short sentences full of meaning, are the greatest beauties of which the language admits."

The Burmese alphabet is derived from the Sanscrit, through the *Pali*. It consists of ten vowels and thirty-two consonants. In point of form, it surpasses all the alphabets of Western Asia in simplicity, and most nearly resembles the alphabets of Canara, Telinga, and Ceylon.

About 1817 Messrs. Felix Carey (son of Dr. Carey) and Chater began to translate the Gospels, and an edition of Matthew was published. Their labours were afterwards transferred to Dr. Judson, who completed the New Testament in 1832, and the entire Bible in 1834. The following entry was made in his journal:—"Jan. 31, 1834.—Thanks be to God, I can now say, 'I have attained,' I have knelt down before Him, with the last leaf in my hand; and imploring His forgiveness for all my sins that have polluted my labours in this department, and His aid in future efforts to remove the errors and imperfections which necessarily cleave to the work, I have commended it to His mercy and grace; I have dedicated it to His glory. May He make His own inspired word, now complete in the Burman tongue, the grand instrument of filling all Burmah with songs of praise to our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ!"

KAREN.

The Karen language possesses several original elements, and in many respects varies in genius and structure from the Burmese, Siamese, and Pegu languages, though it borrows tones, some of which appear different from those of any other monosyllabic tongue. The Karen language is remarkably harmonious, and well adapted for poetry; a final consonant never occurs, but every word terminates with a vowel sound. Till a comparatively recent period, however, Karen was totally unknown to Europeans. About 1835, Messrs. Wade and Mason, of the American Missionary Union, acquired the language, and for the first time reduced it to writing. For this purpose they employed the Burmese alphabet, with a few additional characters to express the peculiar sounds of the language. The system of teaching reading, adopted by Mr. Wade, is so admirably conceived, that a person ignorant of a single letter can be taught to read a Karen book with ease in a few weeks. Dr. Mason thinks that the alphabetical powers of the Karen alphabet are of Arabic or Hebrew original.

Though the New Testament was translated into Karen at an early period of the mission, it was circulated for some time in manuscript; but after 1842 the press was brought into operation, and the Scriptures are now circulated in great numbers, in both dialects of the Karen, the *Pwo* and the *Sgau*.

"Give us books," said a native chief to Mr. Boardman, in 1828, "give us books in our own native language! then all the Karens will learn to read. We want to know the true God. We have been lying in total darkness—the Karen's mind is like his native jungle." They have books in abundance now; and flowers and fruits appear in the jungle.

SIAMESE.

The Siamese language possesses considerable affinity with some of the provincial dialects of China, more especially the Mandarin or Court dialect, from which many of the radical words and numerals are obviously borrowed. Several fundamental terms, appertaining to Malay, are also found in Siamese, which has hence been regarded as the connecting link between the Chinese and Malay languages. The delicate intonations of the Chinese exist in Siamese, and it is more strongly accented than any other lan-

guage of Indo-China. Political institutions of Siam, in part despotism and tyranny, are not to these of Burmah, and have had great effect in moulding the language and the literature. The rank of a speaker may in Siamese, as in French, be inferred from the pronoun he uses; and phrases expressive of adulation and flattery are very numerous and varied. The words which subserve the office of pronouns are particularly numerous, and attention to the rules regulating their distinctive use is so rigidly exact from all classes that the misapplication of a single pronominal is considered indecorous and disrespectful. The alphabet, though formed on the model of the *Pali* and Devanagari characters, possesses several original elements, whence it has been conjectured that an ancient style of writing was known in Siam prior to the introduction of Buddhism and the *Pali* language in the fourth century. There are thirty-five consonants and the vocal *a*; this latter is often placed in a word as a sort of pivot on which the vowel points are arranged, forming, as it were, the body of each of the simple vowels. There are sixteen simple vowels or finals, besides twenty-nine distinct and complex vowel combinations. The nasals are quite as diversified as the Chinese; the letters *b*, *d*, *r*, which are rejected by the Chinese, are adopted in this language, but on the other hand the letters *ts*, *sh*, *ch*, *fh*, *hh*, which belong to Chinese, do not exist in Siamese. Words are not generally divided in writing, and a small blank supplies the place of our colon and semi-colon. Siamese differs from most of the Eastern languages in not admitting but little construction of sentences; the words follow each other much in the same way as in English; for instance, the nominative almost invariably precedes the verb, and verbs and prepositions precede the cases which they govern. No orthographical changes whatever mark the variations of number, case, or person, but prefixes and affixes are in common use. The language has been represented as copious; yet it rather, says Crawford, "possesses that species of redundancy which belongs to the dialects of many semi-barbarous nations, and which shows a long but not a very useful cultivation."

The translation of the New Testament into Siamese was commenced by the Rev. Charles Gutzlaff, and completed by the Rev. Dr. Jones, Baptist Missionary. It was published in 1846. Other portions of the scriptures have been translated by Presbyterian missionaries. The priests frequently apply for copies of the sacred volume: and "the Siamese now declare," it is stated, "that were they but fully satisfied as to the existence of a future state, they would gladly embrace Christianity as the only system which provides for the forgiveness of sins: for they have been brought to acknowledge the sinfulness of their own nature and practices, and they clearly perceive that Buddhism, which is in fact practical Atheism, offers no means or hope of pardon. "But the people are fickle, and their idolatry is strongly entrenched in government support. It is a curious circumstance that their sacred *Pali* books contain predictions that a certain religion of the West will vanquish Buddhism."

TELINGA, OR TELOOGOO.

Telinga is the most soft and polished of the languages of Southern India, and contains the greatest proportion of Sanscrit words. Yet the Sanscrit terms with which it unquestionably abounds form no part whatever of the basis of the language, but appear to have been engrafted on the elements of the original Telinga at some period far too remote for inquiry. The grammatical construction of Telinga is alone sufficient to prove that it has no claims to be regarded as a mere Sanscrit dialect. In the declension of its nouns, effected by means of subjoined particles, in the mod of conju-

gating the affirmative, and in the possession of a negative verb, in the use of a plural pronoun applicable to the first and second persons conjointly, and in the peculiarities of its syntax, it offers obvious points of deviation from the forms of Sanscrit grammar, while at the same time it exhibits decided affinity in these respects with the cognate languages of the Deccan. The Telinga language possesses no word exactly corresponding with our article: the indefinite article is sometimes expressed by means of the numeral *one*, but in general the article is considered as inherent in the noun. Like the *Tamul* and the *Canarese*, the Telinga possesses that singular part of speech called the relative participle, which displays the combined force of the definite article, the relative pronoun, and the verb. It also resembles these languages in the possession of two dialects, the common or popular medium, used for all purposes of business and conversation, and the high or refined dialect, in which the literature of the nation, consisting chiefly of poetry, is written. The dissimilarity between these dialects is so great, that commentaries are requisite in the perusal of native works, even in the case of individuals who have acquired the most complete familiarity with the colloquial dialect. The Telinga possesses great facility in the naturalization of foreign terms: yet, with the exception of a few words obtained from the neighbouring provinces of Orissa, Mahratta, and Guggirat, it does not appear to borrow many words from foreign sources. The Telinga, like other Indian alphabets, is distinguished by the perplexing multiplicity of its initials; but, however numerous they ever, are merely abbreviated forms of the original initial letters; others are only used as marks for certain consonants when doubled; and some are peculiar to words of Sanscrit origin. "Hence," says Mr. Campbell, ("Teloo-goo grammar," p. 2), "all native grammarians concur in reducing the characters to thirty-seven, by excluding forty-four, which they acknowledge to belong to the language, but which they will not admit into the alphabet."

The Telinga language is spoken within 23 miles of Madras, and prevails for about 500 miles along the coast. It is also diffused to a greater or less extent through various countries of Southern India. The roaming tendencies of the Telinga people serve to account in part for the diffusion of the language. On this subject the missionaries have remarked that "in intelligence, migratory habits, secular prosperity, and infrequency of return to their native land, this people are in relation to other parts of India, what the Scotch are in relation to England and the world."

The scriptures were first translated into this language by Schultze, a Danish missionary, whose translation was finished in 1732, but was not printed. The Serampore missionaries published a translation of the New Testament in 1818. Other versions of parts of the New Testament have been issued by missionaries of the London Missionary Society, and by the Rev. Dr. Jewett, of the American Baptist Missionary Union.

The great difference between Eastern and Western languages necessarily increases the labour of Missionaries. But they are prepared for it. It is their vocation. They do not inquire whether a population is unpolished or polite, easy or difficult of access. A language may be crabbed, or smooth: that is no concern of theirs; they have to master it, anyhow, and they will master it. The word *hard* is not in their vocabulary. A missionary's faith

"Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, It shall be done."

The more God empties your hands of other work the more you may know He has special work to give them.—Garrett.

CHURCH MUSIC.

II.

We maintained in our former article that congregational singing requires a steady guide gradually to accustom the voices to some degree of order and discipline. This guide should be a well-trained choir supported by the rich, majestic tones of the church organ. But it is to be lamented that even where there is in some respects a good choir, the music is not invariably performed as it should be. It is oftentimes indecently hurried over, as a task in which the vocal organs only are concerned. Perhaps it is an evil incident to the stated performance of any moral duty, that there will be a tendency to the preponderance of mere form; but it is an evil which may, and which ought, to be checked.

That this design of congregational singing may be successfully carried out without any of those drawbacks to its operation which we have already mentioned, it is necessary that the congregation should consist, in part at least, of such as have some little knowledge of music. This is certainly not an unreasonable condition. A large proportion of the people attending church in the city of New York every Sunday have some musical education. The mere fact of musical entertainments being so largely patronized here proves that many, very many, must have a tolerable acquaintance with the requirements of good music. Hundreds of the wives and daughters of New York men are good musicians. Let them commence the work of educating the children in the Sunday-schools attached to the churches, and the work will be done. A great number of Sunday-school teachers are capable of performing this office very creditably. And throughout the country similar work might be done. In almost every small country church there are probably two or three people who could act in this capacity. Thus the plan might be effectively accomplished.

In Germany, where the meanest peasant understands something of part singing—where, indeed, music is a portion of the every-day education of the people—you enter a cathedral on a Sabbath morning, and find the immense space crowded with worshippers. The introductory voluntary commences. The powerful organ fills and crowds every arch and corner of the grand pile with its massive harmonies. The air around you is a sea of music, the rich surging of which break majestically and solemnly on vaulted roof, on lofty pillar, and—silent heart.

While this is proceeding, the devotional multitude are finding from the book in the hand of each, the first hymn, indicated as is usual in the German churches, upon tablets placed at convenient points upon the sides of the building. Gradually the tide of organ notes flows into the familiar strain of a solemn church choral. At that signal, the assembled multitude, from the monarch to the peasant, arise, as by a common impulse, to their feet; and as the introductory strain ceases, and a clear trumpet (concealed from the eye) leads off, with the organ, the choral melody, then, from every voice and heart of the vast multitude, arises a mighty song of praise to God—a song which the massive roof seems scarcely capable of repressing—lofty, sublime, soul-thrilling. As the last echoes of this choral *hallelujah* die upon the ear, the clergyman for the first time makes his appearance, and pronounces in a deep-toned and solemn voice the opening prayer. He retires, and again the unseen organ renews the choral strain, and once more the thousand-voiced chorus swells to the skies. The sermon succeeds, followed by the closing choral. Here, then, unpremeditatedly and unconsciously to those worshippers (for each is engaged in his own devotions), here is an effect, devotional and musical, unsurpassed, we think, by the conscious and premeditated effects of any