LITERATURE, &c

INTELLIGENCE OF THE ANCIENTS AND MODERNS.—So far as the epithet Classic is an accommodated word, employed by a kind of literary courtesy to designate superiority of intellect and knowledge, I am bold to affirm, that Britain is as classic as Greece was in the time of Homer, and as Rome was at any time between her foundation and the close of the third Punic war. I speak of the relative intelligence of the whole body of the people, rank for rank, in each of those countries, compared with the actual measure of information diffused through the corresponding orders in this island. In all the classic regions of antiquity, whether monarchies or republics, knowledge was a species of free masonry; none but the initiated were the depositaries of its secrets, and these privileged persons were almost universally princes, nobles, priests, or men of high degree, including those who, from bent of genius or other auspicious circumstances, were devoted by choice, or compelled by office, to the cultivation of letters and philosophy. The vulgar, the profane vulgar, the multitude, the million were jealously and cruelly excluded from the benefits of learning, except in so far as these were necessarily and benignly reflected upon them in the kinder conduct and more affable manners of their masters and superiors; for long before Bacon uttered the famous oracle, "knowledge is power," the ancients were aware of that mystery, unsuspected by the ignorant, whom they ruled by that very power—the power of knowledge, both in spiritual and temporal predominance, as their subjects and slaves. Now and then, indeed, an Æsop, a Terence, or an Epictetus, by the irrepressible buoyancy of native talent,—rose from the bottom of that stagnant gulph under which living intelligences were laid down in darkness like beds of oysters; rose from the mud of servile degradation to vindicate the honour of outraged humanity, and teach both kings and sages, that, within the thickest shell of a slave, there is the kernel of a man, which only grows not because it is not planted; or, when planted, only flourishes, not because it is unworthily beaten down and trampled under foot by those who ought to have cherished, and pruned, and reared it to fertility. Oh, what a waste of mind and worth! What havoc of talent and capacity, of every degree and of every kind, is implied in that perpetuated thraldom of uninstructedness (if I may coin such a negative) wherein the bulk of mankind, through every age and nation under heaven, have been held by tyrants as brutish as themselves, who knew nothing of knowledge except that they feared it; or by the more flagrant injustice of those who possessed, but durst not or would not communicate it to the multitude! The aristocracy of learning has been the veriest despotism ever practised on earth, for it was bondage both to soul and body in those who were its victims. Thousands and thousands of spirits—immortal spirits, have dwelt in human bodies almost unconscious of their own existence, and utterly ignorant of the unawakened powers which, had instruction been as general as it is at this day, and in our land, might, with Newton, have unfolded the laws of the universe; with Bacon, have detected the arcana of nature by the talisman of experiment; or, with Locke, have taught the mind with introverted eye to look at itself, and range at home through all the invisible world of thought. Had this been the case three thousand years ago, and thenceforward uninterruptedly, the abstrusest branches of natural philosophy and metaphysics themselves might now have been nearly as intelligible, and as certain in their data and conclusions, as are mathematics and mechanics, or the abstract principles of jurisprudence. That the bulk of the Athenians themselves, even in the ages of Pericles, were little skilled in reading and writing, is the almost inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the state of literature, in reference to the means of diffusing it in ancient times. Before the invention of printing, the slow production, the consequent scarcety, and the enormous value of books, when all were manuscript, placed the possession of them beyond the reach of the poor; and, where libraries existed, few but the learned and the great could have access to them. The mode of publishing new works (independent of private communication) was by reading to companies for hire, or gratuitously in the open market-place, the schools and walks of philosophy, or at the Olympic and other national games, when all Greece were assembled to witness the corporeal and intellectual prowess of her most distinguishes progeny.—*James Montgomery, in the Metropolitan.*

SOUTH AMERICAN CUSTOMS.—We were as yet unused to breathe the atmosphere of tobacco smoke that invariably fills these ball-rooms; every individual having, on these occasions, either a cigar or churumbela in his or her mouth, which they do not think of laying aside even while dancing. It is indeed considered a compliment to be presented by a lady with a cigar which she has half smoked, and it would be an unpardonable insult to refuse it. Supper was at last announced. It consisted chiefly of roast beef, cut into long narrow slices, and plantains; with cheese and honey, which is a favourite dish in most parts of South America. None of the guests sat down to table, nor were knives prodnced, as every thing that requires to be cut up is carved in the kitchen. We also found it was not customary for any individual to help himself, but each lady presented a morsel on a fork to a gentleman, who, in return, handed her something delicate that happened to be on the table. We were warned to beware of refusing any thing offered us; and, in compliance with the fashion of the place, persevered most politely, in spite of fatigue, heat, and a total disinclination to a hot meat supper in this climate.—*Campaigns and Cruises in South America.*

FROM THE SACRED OFFERING.

THE DEPARTED.

The friends we love have past away;
The forms so dear no more we see;
No more we meet the eye's mild ray,
Or catch the smile of sympathy

No—these are fled; but ask thy heart,
Are no fond traces lingering there,—
Memories we would not bid depart,
And hopes that bless our hour of prayer?

Is not a dream of heaven more sweet,
Bright with the living form of love?
Does not each trial that we meet
Raise our rapt spirits more above?

Yes! death, that pales our curdling cheek,
Tells of an angel's opening bliss—
Again we view the form we seek,
Bright with immortal happiness.

For faith, delighted, views that scene
Of fadeless glory and of grace,
Forgets the years that intervene,
And bids us see them "face to face."

What though a few brief ills of life,
A little pathway marked with tears,
Some struggles of the Christian's strife
Await us in those future years;—

Soon, soon they pass; and even now
Those angel forms may guard our way,
Weave the blest chaplet for our brow,
And guide our footsteps lest they stray.

In every thought to heaven allied,
In every virtuous deed and aim,
Are the departed at our side,
Whose memory fans the sacred flame.

And is this death? first born to God
To trace that pure celestial sphere,
And rise, in faith and hope unawed,
To joys we scarce can vision here.

Oh early blest, how vain our sighs;
Our fond, impetuous tears how vain;
To heaven we raise our weeping eyes—
Our loss is their eternal gain.

PICTURE OF THE SHORES OF THE ORINICO.—The scenery in this part of the river is strikingly beautiful, and, when viewed from a ship's deck as she glides slowly along the smooth water, presents a magnificent moving panorama. The banks, on each side, are covered with impervious forests of majestic trees, chained, as it were, to each other by the bejuco, or gigantic creeping plant of South America, which grows to the thickness of an ordinary cable. These ancient trees, when decayed through length of years, (for the axe of the woodsman has never yet resounded in these wilds,) are supported upright by these enormous plants, which beas a striking resemblance to the huge water-snakes that lurk in the swamps beneath. There are many other parasitical plants, which bear flowers of various brilliant colours, forming festoons on the trees to which they cling. Among the branches, monkeys of every description gambol, and follow the vessel, springing from tree to tree by means of the bejuco, which has obtained, from this circumstance, its Indian name of "monkey's ladder." The most conspicuous amongst this mischevious tribe is the Oraguato, a large red monkey, always seen in herds, the young ones clinging to their mother's shoulders. These are very destructive among the plantations, where they pull up and destroy more roots and fruit than they eat and carry away. Their howling, during the night, is much louder than could be supposed possible, considering the size of the animal. The noise they make may be easily fancied to proceed from panthers, or other large beasts of prey. This is so much the case, that, after leaving Angostura with the army, three English soldiers who had deserted, (when the troops landed in the evening for the purpose of cooking,) and who proposed returning by land to the city, were so terrified by the noise made by these animals in the middle of the night, that they hailed the boats which had anchored out in the stream, and begged to be taken on board again, declaring that they were surrounded by tigers. Parrots and macaws, with tucans and other birds of beautiful plumage, complete this splendid picture, and fill the air with their discordant screams, to which the metallic note of the Darra, or bell-bird, responds at measured intervals, at one moment sounding close to the ear, and the next dying away in the distance. Up the small creeks, which are completely embowered by magnificent evergreens, are seen pelicans, spoon-bills and garzons, or gigantic cranes, all busily employed in fishing. When to this is added the occasional appearance of that tyrant of the stream, the alligator, floating in conscious superiority among the bulky manatis, and the more agile tominos, which are incessantly rising and blowing in shoals; the scene altogether may be imagined, but cannot be adequately described.—Campaigns and Cruises in South America.

THE SHARK.—The capture of one of those voracious animals frequently beguiles a tedious hour during a long voyage. Its struggles, when brought on deck, are very great, but a few severe blows on the nose soon disable it from further exertions. When seizing any object, the animal turns on the side, not as is generally supposed, on the back. The shark, judging by an European palate, is not good eating; the fins and tail are very glutinous, and are the portions most relished by the seamen; and when dried, they form an article of commerce to China, where they are used in soups, and considered as an excellent aphrodisiac. I have seen several sharks and bonetos about the ship at the same time, but I never saw the former attempt to molest the latter. The shark is eaten eagerly by the natives of the Polynesian islands, and I have often seen them feasting on it in a raw state, when they gorge themselves as to occasion vomiting. It is not an unfrequent source of illness among these islanders, and they suffer so much in consequence, as to lead them to suppose that their dissolution is nigh, but they cannot be persuaded that the eating of raw fish is the cause. An emetic soon removes the symptom by removing the cause, and the sufferer considers the cure as almost miraculous. Attending the shark is seen that beautiful little fish the gasterosteous doctor, or pilot fish, who, first approaching the bait, returns, as if to give notice; when, immediately after, the shark approaches and seizes it. It is a curious circumstance that this elegant little fish is seen in attendance only upon the shark. After the shark is hooked, the pilot-fish stills swims about, and for some time after he has been hauled on deck, they then swim very near the surface of the water, and at that time I have seen them taken by a basket from the chains of the ship. When the shark has been hooked and afterwards escapes, he generally returns and renews the attack with increased ferocity, irritated, perhaps, by the wound he has received.—M. M. Bennett, in the Medical Gazette.

LUDICROUS ADVENTURE.—The following ludicrous adventure of Lady Davy happened in 1813, when Sir H. Davy was allowed by Bonaparte to visit Paris:—'While Davy was at the meeting of the Institute, a curious adventure occurred to Lady Davy, the relation of which, by showing the state of surveillance in which the citizens were held at that period, will enable us to appreciate the extent of the obligation conferred upon Sir Humphry by the emperor. Her ladyship, attended by her maid, had walked into the Tuillerie's garden. She wore a very small hat, of a simple cockle-shell form, such as was fashionable at that time in London, while the Parasian ladies wore bonnets of the most voluminous dimensions. It happened to be a saint's day, on which, the shops being closed, the citizens repaired in crowds to the garden. On seeing the diminutive bonnet of Lady Davy, the Parisians felt little surprised than did the inhabitants of Brobdingnag on beholding the hat of Gulliver; and a crowd of persons soon assembled around the unknown exotic; in consequence of which one of the inspectors of the garden immediately presented himself, and informed her ladyship that no cause of Reassemblement could be suffered, and therefore requested her to retire. Some officers of the imperial guard, to whom she applied, replied, that however much they must regret the circumstance, they were unable to afford her any redress, as the order was peremptory. She then requested that they would conduct her to her carriage; an officer immediately offered his arm; but the crowd had by this time so greatly increased, that it became necessary to send for a corporal's guard, and the party quitted the garden surrounded by fixed bayonets."

POLITICAL ADVANTAGES OF KNOWLEDGE.—"For what end do you set a-going academies and schools, and disseminate the sciences?" said the Vizier Moozafer to the Caliph Haroun al Raschid. "Don't you think that the people, when once they are instructed, will more easily get the better of you?" "Certainly," replied the Calinh, "the instructed people will be better able to judge of the justice of my laws, and the purity of my intentions," "But will they pay the taxes better?" "Certainly; they will find more means in their enlightened state to attain riches, and will, besides, comprehend that I do not ask more than what is absolutely necessary." "Will they fight your wars better?" "Much better, when they comprehend that the happiness of every family depends upon the welfare and the glory of their country; and, besides, they will fight more successfully under the guidance of able commanders." "But will not your wise men, your philosophers, think of meddling in the affairs of government? Will they not venture to notice the errors of your administration?" "Let them seek for them, find them, and tell me of them; I will be more upon my guard in the future, and govern them all the better." "How, would you, oh light of the world! allow your wiseacres to speak boldly every thing which might come into their head?" "If I did not, they could not enlighten us." "But cannot the wisest men fall into mistakes; may they not set up error for truth?" "One will fall into a mistake, and the other will perceive it and correct it." "My lord! I must at last warn you of the