

THE AUGUST MAGAZINES.

THE ATLANTIC. The contents of the August number of the Atlantic Monthly are as follows:— Joseph and his Friend (VII), Bayard Taylor; The English Governess at the Siamese Court (IV); The Burden of the Day, Bayard Taylor; Oldtown Fireside Stories, Harriet Beecher Stowe; A Virginian in New England Thirty-five Years Ago (I), James Russell Lowell; The French Claims, E. H. Derby; Dorothy in the Garret, J. T. Woodbridge; The Grand Traverse Region of Michigan, H. W. S. Cleveland; Mr. Hardback on the Sensational in Literature and Life; Color-Blindness; Half-Way (I), G. S. Barrow; A Ken- tuckian's Share in the Coup d'Etat, Sydney Hyde; A Day's Pleasure (II), W. D. Howells; Ode, G. P. Cranch; Some Memories of Charles Dickens, James T. Fields; Reviews and Literary Notices; Dall's Alaska and its Resources; Disraeli's Lethargy; Mackenzie's Translation of Hesekiel's Life of Bismarck; Reggie's Method of Shakespeare; Allibone's Critical Dictionary; Coffin's Seat of Empire; Sartor's Race for a Wife.

From the "English Governess at the Siamese Court" we take this brief sketch of Siamese literature:— The fact is remarkable, that though education in its higher degrees is popularly neglected in Siam, there is scarcely a man or woman in the empire who cannot read and write. Though a vain people, they are neither bigoted nor shallow, and I think the day is not far off when the enlightening influences applied to them and accepted through their willingness, not only to receive instruction from Europeans, but even to adopt in a measure their customs and habits of thought, will raise them to the rank of a superior nation.

The language of this people advances but slowly in the direction of grammatical perfection. Like many other Oriental tongues, it was at first purely monosyllabic; but as the Fall or Sanskrit has been liberally grafted on it, polysyllabic words have been formed. Its pronouns and particles are peculiar, its idioms few and simple, its metaphors very obvious. It is copious to redundancy in terms expressive of royalty, rank, dignity; in fact, a distinct phraseology is required in addressing personages of exalted station. Repetitions of word and phrase are affected rather than shunned; sententious brevity and simplicity of expression belong to the pure spirit of the language, and when employed impart to it much dignity and beauty. But there is no standard of orthography, nor any grammar, and but few rules of universal application.

Every Siamese writes in his own hand, and the purism of one is the slang or gibberish of another.

The Siamese write from left to right, the words running together in a line unbroken by spaces, points, or capitals; so that, as in ancient Sanskrit, an entire paragraph appears as one protracted word, "That like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along."

When not written with a reed on dark native paper, the characters are engraved with a file of brass or iron, one end sharp for writing, the other flat for erasing; on palm leaves prepared for the purpose.

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The literature of the Siamese deals principally with religious topics. The "Kammakanya," or Buddhist fable—a work for the priesthood only, and, therefore, like others of the Yimaya, little known—contains the vital elements of the Buddhist Moral Code, and, as such, is perfect; on this point all writers, whether partial or captious, are of one mind. Spence Hardy, a Wesleyan missionary, speaking of that part of the work entitled "Dhamma-Padam," which is freely taught in the schools attached to the monasteries, admits that a compilation might be made from its precepts, "which in the purity of its ethics could hardly be equalled from any other heathen author."

M. Laboulaye, one of the most distinguished members of the French Academy, remarks in the *Debate* of April 4, 1853, on a work known by the title of "Dharmma Matrie," or "Law of Charity":—"It is difficult to comprehend how men, not aided by revelation, could have soared so high and approached so near the truth. Besides the five great commandments—not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to be, not to get drunk—every shade of vice, hypocrisy, anger, pride, suspicion, greed, gossip, cruelty to animals, is guarded against by special precepts. Among the virtues commanded we find, not only reverence for parents, care for children, submission to authority, gratitude, moderation in time of prosperity, resignation and fortitude in time of trial, equanimity at all times, but virtues unknown to any heathen system of morality, such as the duty of forgiving insults and of rewarding evil with good."

All virtues, we are told, spring from *mettri*, and this *mettri* can only be rendered by charity and love.

"I do not hesitate," says Burnout, in his *L'ous de la Bonne Loi*, "to translate by 'charity' the word *mettri*, which does not express friend- ship, or the feeling of particular affection which a man has for one or more of his fellow-creatures, but that universal feeling which inspires us with good-will towards all men, and to see in every man a being to be loved. I may here add the testimony of Barthelme Saint-Hilaire. 'I do not hesitate to add,' he writes, 'that save Christ alone, there is not among the founders of religion a figure more pure, more touching, than that of Buddha. His life is without blemish; his constant heroism equals his conviction; and if the theory be extolled as false, the personal examples he affords are irreproachable. He is the accomplished model of all the virtues he preaches; his abnegation, his charity, his unalterable firmness, never betrays themselves. In the age of twenty-nine he retires from the court of the king, his father, to become a devotee and a beggar. He silently prepares his doctrine by six years of seclusion and meditation. He propagates it, by the unaided power of speech and persuasion, for more than half a century; and when he dies in the arms of his disciples, it is with the serenity of a sage who has practised goodness all his life, and knows that he has found Truth.'"

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favorite subjects being passages from the Hindu Avatars, the epic "Ramayana," and the "Mahabharata," or from legends, peculiar to Siam, of gods, heroes, and demons. Throughout their literature, mythology is the all-pervading element; history, science, arts, customs, conversation, opinion, doctrine, are all alike colored and flavored with it.

From the article on "Color-Blindness" we quote as follows:— Contrary to what would naturally be supposed, defective perception of color is most common in the educated classes; at least this is a conclusion of Wilson of Edinburgh, who investigated the subject a few years since, advertising for persons with this defect, and thereby enlarging greatly his field of observation.

Another singular fact in relation to the whole subject is that the existence of color-blindness should never have been discovered, or if discovered never mentioned, until the year 1796, when Dalton published an account of his own deficiencies in this respect. He could not tell blue from pink, and hardly saw more than two colors in the rainbow.

When this inability to distinguish between green and red, or blue and yellow, is not the result of disease, but of a congenital defect, it is called color-blindness. A gentleman, in relating his own case, complained of not being able to find his red sealing-wax upon his green-covered writing-desk. He once gathered as a curiosity some lichens from the roof of a house. The lichen being, in his sight, of the same color as the red of the roof, he thought he had made a remarkable discovery. The lichen, however, to his great chagrin, proved to be bright green.

In a severer grade of the affection blue and yellow are the only colors recognized, and this form of disorder is the one most frequently met with. Mix the blue and yellow, the sole colors which the color-blind recognize, and the product, green, they cannot see. A person relating his infirmity of this nature observed that green, to him, was no color unless it were red; pale blue and pink were the same, but yellow, light, dark, and medium, and all blues except the very pale, he knew perfectly, and could distinguish with readiness.

There is a still worse form of this defect where yellow alone can be distinguished, or where, in a few instances, even, individuals have been discovered totally blind to all color, and able merely to tell lighter from darker shades. Such persons have frequently had an accurate perception of form, and an excellent eyesight. The case of Harris, related in the *Philosophical Transactions*, is one of this kind. He could never understand why bright red was called red, and could do no more than guess at the name of any color. He could see merely that white and any bright colors were not black, and that a striped ribbon differed from a plain one. The case of a young woman is also recorded in the *Transactions*, who, on being tested, was found to know white and black simply; and of a man to whom all colors appeared as tints of gray, or as different shades between black and white. Fermis relates the case of a man who knew no colors, but was yet fond of painting. He had frescoed his apartment in colors, and was very proud of his work.

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"I do not hesitate," says Burnout, in his *L'ous de la Bonne Loi*, "to translate by 'charity' the word *mettri*, which does not express friend- ship, or the feeling of particular affection which a man has for one or more of his fellow-creatures, but that universal feeling which inspires us with good-will towards all men, and to see in every man a being to be loved. I may here add the testimony of Barthelme Saint-Hilaire. 'I do not hesitate to add,' he writes, 'that save Christ alone, there is not among the founders of religion a figure more pure, more touching, than that of Buddha. His life is without blemish; his constant heroism equals his conviction; and if the theory be extolled as false, the personal examples he affords are irreproachable. He is the accomplished model of all the virtues he preaches; his abnegation, his charity, his unalterable firmness, never betrays themselves. In the age of twenty-nine he retires from the court of the king, his father, to become a devotee and a beggar. He silently prepares his doctrine by six years of seclusion and meditation. He propagates it, by the unaided power of speech and persuasion, for more than half a century; and when he dies in the arms of his disciples, it is with the serenity of a sage who has practised goodness all his life, and knows that he has found Truth.'"

The Siamese have an extravagant fondness for the drama, and for poetry of every kind. In all the literary forms, preeminently, and their compositions are commonly adapted for instruction and accompaniment. Their dramatic entertainments are mainly musical, combining ruddy the opera with the ballet—monotonous singing and listless, mechanical dancing. Dialogues are occasionally introduced, the

favorite subjects being passages from the Hindu Avatars, the epic "Ramayana," and the "Mahabharata," or from legends, peculiar to Siam, of gods, heroes, and demons. Throughout their literature, mythology is the all-pervading element; history, science, arts, customs, conversation, opinion, doctrine, are all alike colored and flavored with it.

From the article on "Color-Blindness" we quote as follows:— Contrary to what would naturally be supposed, defective perception of color is most common in the educated classes; at least this is a conclusion of Wilson of Edinburgh, who investigated the subject a few years since, advertising for persons with this defect, and thereby enlarging greatly his field of observation.

When this inability to distinguish between green and red, or blue and yellow, is not the result of disease, but of a congenital defect, it is called color-blindness. A gentleman, in relating his own case, complained of not being able to find his red sealing-wax upon his green-covered writing-desk. He once gathered as a curiosity some lichens from the roof of a house. The lichen being, in his sight, of the same color as the red of the roof, he thought he had made a remarkable discovery. The lichen, however, to his great chagrin, proved to be bright green.

In a severer grade of the affection blue and yellow are the only colors recognized, and this form of disorder is the one most frequently met with. Mix the blue and yellow, the sole colors which the color-blind recognize, and the product, green, they cannot see. A person relating his infirmity of this nature observed that green, to him, was no color unless it were red; pale blue and pink were the same, but yellow, light, dark, and medium, and all blues except the very pale, he knew perfectly, and could distinguish with readiness.

There is a still worse form of this defect where yellow alone can be distinguished, or where, in a few instances, even, individuals have been discovered totally blind to all color, and able merely to tell lighter from darker shades. Such persons have frequently had an accurate perception of form, and an excellent eyesight. The case of Harris, related in the *Philosophical Transactions*, is one of this kind. He could never understand why bright red was called red, and could do no more than guess at the name of any color. He could see merely that white and any bright colors were not black, and that a striped ribbon differed from a plain one. The case of a young woman is also recorded in the *Transactions*, who, on being tested, was found to know white and black simply; and of a man to whom all colors appeared as tints of gray, or as different shades between black and white. Fermis relates the case of a man who knew no colors, but was yet fond of painting. He had frescoed his apartment in colors, and was very proud of his work.

When questioned as to his object in painting earth, sky, trees, houses, and figures all blue, he replied that he wished the picture to match the furniture in color. He was not aware that the latter was red. Another individual admitted that the rainbow appeared to him as a "band of lighter color than the other parts of the sky, but a little darker at one side than the other, and gradually shaded off between the two sides."

When not written with a reed on dark native paper, the characters are engraved with a file of brass or iron, one end sharp for writing, the other flat for erasing; on palm leaves prepared for the purpose.

In all parts of the empire the boys are taught by priests to read, write, and cipher. Every monastery is provided with a library, more or less standard. The more elegant books are composed of tablets of ivory, or of palmyra leaves delicately prepared; the characters engraved on these are gilt, the margins and edges adorned with heavy gilding, or with flowers in bright colors.

The literature of the Siamese deals principally with religious topics. The "Kammakanya," or Buddhist fable—a work for the priesthood only, and, therefore, like others of the Yimaya, little known—contains the vital elements of the Buddhist Moral Code, and, as such, is perfect; on this point all writers, whether partial or captious, are of one mind. Spence Hardy, a Wesleyan missionary, speaking of that part of the work entitled "Dhamma-Padam," which is freely taught in the schools attached to the monasteries, admits that a compilation might be made from its precepts, "which in the purity of its ethics could hardly be equalled from any other heathen author."

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