

THE CALCUTTA MONTHLY JOURNAL.

JULY, 1836.

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from establishing new seminaries at places where they are required, while it is impossible for them to exercise the same care in the selection of such a multitude of books as each Local Committee would be able to do, if it provided for its own wants. We hope, therefore, that the society of each station will annually open a subscription for the purchase of the necessary books and stationery, and those who are disposed to make more extensive donations, may apply them with advantage to the purchase of maps, globes, orreries and other scientific apparatus, or in building or purchasing houses for the use of the seminary or for the residence of the masters or professors, who ought, wherever it is practicable, to reside on the spot. It will be observed that the proper application of all such donations may be looked to by the donors themselves.

 HINDU COLLEGE ESSAY.

On Printing.

To preserve from oblivion the religious ceremonies laws and renowned actions of sages and heroes, mankind, in the primitive ages of the world, had recourse to metre. The simple and crude laws of the early inhabitants of ancient Greece were set to music and chanted in halls and other public places in times of festivity and merriment. But experience taught our barbarian ancestors that oral tradition could hardly be credited after the lapse of a few centuries. So many and so extravagant were the errors that crept into unrecorded but genuine history, that a more lasting monument of their exploits was deemed requisite. Amongst the variety of objects with which men are surrounded, it is natural that those should be selected, which are comparatively speaking of an unperishable nature. The decrees of Solon, the laws of the 12 tables, contracts, wills, epitaphs, treaties and conventions were all engraved on stone, metal or wood. Before the invention of the Divine Art of Printing, as it has been emphatically called, men were absorbed in the grossest superstition. Alfred and Charlemagne, by erecting schools and endowing monasteries, had shed only a temporary lustre over the intellectual horizon of Europe. The monks being the only instructors of youth, the communication of knowledge was very slow and imperfect. Incredible legends, unedifying homilies and trite expositions of the scripture were the only learning of that dark period. The contracted ideas of the monks, their outward austerity, their religious opinions, their depraved morals, rendered the communication of knowledge in their hands utterly unfit. Science degenerated into barbarous sophistry and genius remained mute and inglorious in the fervour of theological controversy. Learning was thought incompatible with primitive simplicity and genuine piety, the ancient poets were represented as seducers to the path of destruction. Virgil was a pimp of hell, Ovid a lecherous fiend, and Cicero a foolish declaimer. But the human soul was soon roused to exertion by the instruction of some enlightened Arabs, who were then the preceptors of Europe. A more liberal way of thinking was introduced, a taste for ancient literature revived, more useful branches of science were taught, and the minds of men were prepared to appreciate the advantage of an invention that soon followed. Printing was invented in the middle of the 15th century and in the course of a hundred years attained its noon-day splendour. This wonderful invention was at first of a rude and simple nature, consisting of whole pages carved on blocks of wood or marble. The formation of

moveable type was a grand step towards its present improved state. The Clergy, finding it inimical to their interests, became its inveterate foes. They attributed the origin to the Prince of Darkness; thunders of the Vatican were directed against it; it was called the great Dragon, the Anti-Christ, foretold in sacred history. But still it flourished. It soared with unwearied wings far above the artillery of malignant monks. Ere a century expired, Europe saw the embers of learning in a blaze, saw the expiring lamp relum, witnessed the decay of Popery, of abject despotism, and a material change in the habits and opinions of mankind. In short, the invention of Printing made a complete revolution in the human mind. Happy is it for mankind, that it has withstood all the artifices and hostility of its selfish opponents. Had it been strangled at the very moment of its existence, had some dreadful fatality, some unaccountable intrigue checked its growth, in what a state would the world have been now? Just conceive that we were living in an age when Popery was the universal religion. Just conceive that the utterance of a single word derogatory to the dignity of the Vice-gerent of Christ, the proud representative of the humble fisherman of Galilee, subjected us to be condemned by the Inquisition as a public malefactor or murdered by the decree of holy Vheim and you will perceive the benefits of Printing. Prior to the invention of Printing, there existed only few copies of works of genius. No private individual could defray the expense of copying. And then what liability there was of their being destroyed by some barbarian hand. How many instances there are of such wanton acts of tyranny? What loss has there been to the intellectual world by the devastations of Alaric, Genseric, Odoacer, Edward 1st, and Caliph Omar! How will posterity brand the memory of the 1st Edward for destroying the literature of Cambria! How will the grim-visaged Omar answer the charge of intellectual destruction of the Sacred Nine before the eternal tribunal. The barbarian fury of Alaric and Genseric, the machiavelian policy of the 1st Edward, and the blind fanaticism of Omar have left a chasm in the intellectual world which ages must pass ere it can be closed. Those persons who had collected by considerable labour and expense, a number of books, considered themselves extremely fortunate. They took care not to lend them to any person without a sufficient guarantee for their return. When a person who had an ardent passion for literature wanted to buy some books, he knew not where to procure them. There were no gazettes, no printed advertisement to inform you where and of whom they were to be had. And even when it was known where they were to be produced, it was difficult for a man of ordinary rank in society to make them his own. The extravagant expense of copying placed them beyond the reach of the greater portion of mankind. What innumerable errors must have crept into philosophy, and what rubbish must have been thrown over true learning, what trash, what sophistry must have supplied the place of genuine wisdom, when the fallacious notions of one philosopher were not rectified by the correct ideas of another, when the atheistical opinions of one were not refuted by the good sense of another, when the sophisms of cavillists remained unexposed and the assertions of dreamers passed uncontadicted! What infinite reveries, numberless extravagancies must have made their way unchecked, unchallenged, to the seats of learning! How much on the other hand must have been uncommunicated and individual learning! The mind of man is the same in every period of the world; it undergoes no important change; the passions and impulses that had an influence over it in the antediluvian ages have the same mastery over it now! If we peruse the glowing pages of Homer and of Virgil, if we study the logic of Aristotle, the philosophy of Plato, if we read the eloquent harangues of Demosthenes or Cicero, we seem bewildered at the cause of the barbarity

of mankind at the time when they flourished. But when we consider that there was no method of transmitting knowledge, that the genius of Homer, the talent of Aristotle could have only been beneficial to those that surrounded them, the illusion vanishes. How slow must have been the diffusion of learning and the progress of truth, when the discoveries of one philosopher were not accessible to another! How rude must have been the state of society when leaves, barks and parchments were the instruments of communication. In what a barbarous state mankind must have been when the edicts of the greatest potentates of the earth were promulgated by the trumpet and preserved on marble. But what a change has been made by the invention of Printing. What glorious improvement in literature, philosophy and medicine! How easily can an author convey the fruits of his study or imagination. How easily can the works of the highest genius be procured! What an infinitely less expense is necessary to form a library. When we consider with what facility instruction can be conveyed, when we consider with what wonderful rapidity a discovery made in the remotest corner of the globe can be divulged, when we consider that a speech in the British Senate of the most momentous consideration which took 12 hours in the delivery is printed and made known to thousands of persons the next morning, the advantages of Printing become obvious. Just consider for a moment what would have been the surprise, the pleasure of Demosthenes or Cicero had he found on his table, after a short repose, his yesterday's address to the Senate! If now by some dreadful convulsion of nature, some mysterious agency of the evil spirit, the invention of Printing were forgotten, consider of what benefit the genius of Scott, of Byron, of Campbell, and of Moore, would be to mankind. What would the learning of Brewster, of Herschel avail, when the inventions of their highly gifted minds could be known only to their most intimate friends! It would be the most dreadful state of society. The use of Printing is as the air we breathe; without it we languish and die. Student of History, think for a moment and tell me what calamity is greater than the destruction of every volume of the annals of mankind, and no trace of its former existence to be preserved even in memory. Tell me ye politicians, ye philosophers, ye divines, what ravages of heroes, what pestilential disease, what fall of empires and crush of nations can equal this dire calamity. But the invention of Printing has also its peculiar disadvantages. The world has been filled with such an infinite number of idle books, tending to increase the love of pleasure, of dissipation and of vice, such trashy articles have gone abroad, amongst which can be numbered the present essay, that instead of instructing they distract the attention of mankind; such heresies have been propagated; such private scandal has been published, that we cannot but lament that with so glorious an invention there should have been wedged such injurious consequences. But the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. What though there has been an infinite number of worthless publications? What though there has been a partial perversion of morals and primitive piety, what though there have been wanton innovations to gratify the avarice, the vanity and the misanthropy of hungry, foolish, and wicked men! The extensive general beneficial effects on morality and religion will endear it to the latest of posterity! The evils will pass away in the triumph of time, of civilization over barbarism, of truth over falsehood. Two centuries only have elapsed since the invention, and behold the mighty consequences. Is it possible that from a commencement so feeble, there has gone forth a progress so steady, an expansion so gigantic, a benefit so glorious? During the middle ages, the universities, the monasteries and the libraries only of the great contained books. But now behold the splendid saloon of the lord of a hundred manors in England and the hut of the poor cultivator of one acre of ground, and tell me whether or not you will

find in both the works of Scott and Lardner. The invention of Printing then may be deemed the most glorious in the annals of mankind. May angels continue to hover over its safety, and may that God in whose hands are the issues of all things, perpetuate to us the inestimable boon, which through the agency of some obscure men of Germany, he has bestowed, and continue to render it the happy instrument of exposing the enormities of kings, of the heinousness of private individuals, of the diffusion of knowledge and the increase of civilization.

KYLAS CHUNDER DUTT,
Hindu College 1st Class.

16th February, 1836.

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No. 3.

Circular letter directing the formation of Libraries and prescribing Rules for their management.

Sir,—I am directed to inform you that it is the intention of the General Committee of Public Instruction to establish Libraries in connection with each of the Seminaries under its control, for the use of the Masters and Students.

2. With a view to this object, you will shortly receive a selection of juvenile books printed in America, and a still larger number of standard works have been ordered from England.

3. It is also hoped that the Libraries will be increased from time to time by private contributions. The donation of appropriate books to the Seminary Libraries will be a cheap and effectual way of aiding the spread of sound knowledge in this country.

4. The enclosed Rules may be adopted for the management of the Libraries, with such alterations as local circumstances may render desirable.

5. The General Committee will be prepared to sanction the appointment of a Librarian on a salary not exceeding 10 Rs. a month. This office may be conferred as a reward on a deserving student, who may be exempted as far as may be necessary for this purpose, from the ordinary school routine.

I have the honor to be, &c. &c. &c.

J. C. C. SUTHERLAND, Secretary G. C. P. I.
Fort William, the 18th June, 1836.

LIBRARY RULES.

1st. The books are intended for the advantage of all those persons belonging to the Seminary who are capable of making use of them.

2nd. They will be available upon application to the person who has charge of the Library.

3rd. The Library will be open from 9 till 4 every day, Sunday excepted, during which time any of the persons above adverted to may consult or read any of the books in the Library itself.

4th. The same person will be allowed to take any books home with them on the following conditions.

5th. No more than one volume must be issued at the same time to the same individual. That volume must be returned before a second is delivered.

6th. A duodecimo volume must not be kept longer than a fortnight; an octavo than a month; a quarto than two months.

7th. A register will be kept of books lent out, in which a person taking away any book must sign a written receipt which will be cancelled on his returning the volume.