

THE LITERARY EXAMINER.

A Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language, with a Preliminary Dissertation. By John Crawfurd, F.R.S., Author of 'The History of the Indian Archipelago.' Two vols. Smith, Elder, and Co.

Few books that issue from the press are the result of so much labour and research as have gone to the production of these two volumes—ineestimable, both of them, to the philologist as well as to the eastern traveller and trader, the first of them most interesting to all educated readers. We say the first only, because in that are included the Preliminary Dissertation, and the Grammar. In the second is the Dictionary; and a Malay dictionary is not quite the sort of reading to be chosen from a circulating library, although an important gift to a large section of the community.

And why so important? It is a question easily answered. Throughout the islands of the Indian Archipelago from Sumatra to New Guinea, as in the Philippines,—in all these regions of trade and travel the Malay language will carry a man on, as the French language was wont to carry on the travellers in Europe. To a great naval and commercial country, therefore, the use of a Malay Grammar and Dictionary is obvious enough. The late Mr Marsden had supplied the want of it, strongly felt in his day, as well as he was able at that time; and a copy of his dictionary corrected with his own hand, together with materials for its enlargement, appears to have been given by Mr Marsden, a few months before his death, to aid in the construction of the present work. Beyond this advantage, it is to be borne in mind that Mr Crawfurd is himself the best living authority upon a subject which he has studied now for forty years. Twelve of those years were passed in countries of which Malay is the spoken language. Materials have also been supplied to him by many Englishmen who have resided within the large district of which Mr Crawfurd treats, and who have placed at his disposal vocabularies of many native dialects and languages. Finally, all that relates to Sanscrit in the book is derived from, or confirmed by, the high authority of Professor Wilson; the nomenclature of plants has been assisted by the science of the first botanist in Europe, Robert Brown, as well as of George Benthams, and Nathaniel Wallich; while Doctor Thomas Horsfield has aided with his knowledge of the Natural History of the Archipelago. The result is a book of standard and enduring value.

Now we have not ourselves any desire whatever to acquire the Malay language, but not the less have we read Mr Crawfurd's first volume with the greatest interest. Ethnology and philology are fashionable studies now, and pleasanter studies could not readily be found. For, in the first place, their anatomy is neither dry nor disagreeable. They who dissect therein must grope among the most entertaining passages in books of travel,—those, namely, which have a human interest. Then again, ethnology is so easy;—easy as chemistry used to be when there were only four elements. It is a science as yet in the first blush of its happy infancy. Those who begin now the study of ethnology begin indeed at the beginning, and those who have begun will be taken on by Mr Crawfurd's Dissertation one step in advance.

Mr Crawfurd, from the vantage ground of better knowledge, knocks into fragments our old simple idea of the unity of the Malay race. The island populations painted green and clipped within a green line in the Physical Atlas as Malay, in the teaching which has been current hitherto, are, like the old elements of air and earth, not quite so simple in their constitution as we fancied. Upon the strength of Malay words in all their languages, Malay has been pronounced to be the stem of which they are the branches. Mr Crawfurd not only denies this fact,—but he denies boldly, and we think shows solid argument against, the common theory of the philologist that names expressive of the simple wants of life are those to which we must look for words which indicate the true and ancient language of a people.

Upon this theory Mr Crawfurd says, in an admirably suggestive passage of his Dissertation,

It has been imagined by some writers that when the class of words expressing the first and simplest ideas of mankind are the same in two or more languages, such languages may be considered as derived from the same stock. This certainly does not accord with my experience of the Malayan and Polynesian languages, into which, from the simplicity of their structure, I find that well-sounding foreign words very readily gain admission. Instead of words expressing simple ideas being excluded, I should, on the whole, owing to the familiar and frequent use of the ideas which they express, consider them the most amenable to adoption of any class of words whatsoever. Accordingly, such words will be found, either to have supplanted native terms altogether, or to be used as familiar synonyms along with them. Thus, to give some examples in Malay, the most familiar words for the head, the shoulder, the face, a limb, a hair or pile, brother, house, elephant, the sun, the day, to speak, and to talk, are all Sanskrit. In Javanese we have from the same Sanskrit, the head, the shoulders, the throat, the hand, the face, father, brother, son, daughter, woman, house, buffalo, elephant, with synonyms from the hog and dog, the sun, the moon, the sea, and a mountain. In the language of Bali, the name for the sun in most familiar use is Sanskrit, and a word of the same language is the only one in use for the numeral ten. It is on the same principle that I account for the existence of a similar class of Malayan words in the Tagala of the Philippines, although the whole number of Malayan words does not exceed one fiftieth part of the language. Head, brain, hand, finger, elbow, hair, feather, child, sea, moon, rain, to speak, to die, to give, to love, are examples. In the Maori, or New Zealand, the words forehead, sky, gnat, stone, fruit, to drink, to die, are Malay or Javanese, yet of these two tongues there are not a hundred words in the whole language. As to the personal pronouns, which have often been referred to as evidence of a common tongue, in as far as concerns the language under examination, they are certainly the most interchangeable of all classes of words, and cannot possibly be received as evidence. Some of them, for example, are found in the Polynesian dialects, where, in a vocabulary of five thousand words, a hundred Malayan terms do not exist. The nu-

merals must surely be considered as out of the category of early-invented words, for they imply a very considerable social advancement, and seem to be just the class of words most likely to be adopted by any savages of tolerable natural capacity. The Australians are not savages of such capacity, and although with the opportunity of borrowing the Malayan numerals, they have not done so, and, in their own languages, count only as far as "two."

The words which appear to me most fit to test the unity of languages are those indispensable to their structure,—which constitute, as it were, their framework, and without which they cannot be spoken or written. These are the prepositions which represent the cases of languages of complex structure, and the auxiliaries which represent times and moods. If a sentence can be constructed by words of the same origin, in two or more languages, such languages may safely be considered as sister tongues,—to be, in fact, dialects, or to have sprung from one stock. In applying this test, it is not necessary that the sentence so constructed should be grammatical, or that the parties speaking sister tongues should be intelligible to each other. The languages of the South of Europe can be written with words common to them all, derived from the Latin without the assistance of any of the foreign words which all of them contain. The common stock, therefore, from which they are derived is Latin, and they are sister tongues. English can be written with great ease with words entirely Anglo-Saxon, and without any French word, although French forms a sixth part of the whole body of its words, but no sentence can be constructed consisting of French words only. The parent stock of our language, therefore, is not French or Latin, but Anglo-Saxon. By this test the Irish and Gaelic are shown to be, virtually, the same language, and the Welsh and Armorican to be sister dialects. But it will not prove that the Welsh and Irish, although they contain many words in common, are the same language, and derived from the same source.

Applying this test to the Malayan languages it will be found that a sentence of Malay can be constructed without the assistance of Javanese words, or of Javanese without the help of Malay words. Of course either of these two languages can be written or spoken without the least difficulty, without a word of Sanskrit or Arabic. The Malay and Javanese, then, although a large proportion of their words be in common, are distinct languages, and as to their Sanskrit and Arabic elements, they are extrinsic and unessential. When the test is applied to the Polynesian languages we find an opposite result. A sentence in the Maori and Tahitian can be written in words common to both, and without the help of one word of the Malayan which they contain, just as a sentence of Welsh or Irish can be constructed without the help of Latin, although of this language they contain, at least, as large a proportion of words as the Maori or Tahitian do of Malayan. The Maori and Tahitian are, therefore, essentially the same language, and their Malayan ingredient is extrinsic.

Mr Crawfurd in his Dissertation proceeds to show, and to the best of our judgment perfectly succeeds in showing, that the languages spoken in the regions called Malay are not, with the usual exception of the Papuan negroes, derived from the same stock; but that there exist within these limits many languages which are radically distinct. He adds also arguments to prove that even the Oriental negroes are not to be classed as the same race; since not only are the physical distinctions very great among them, but the philological distinctions prove that they also speak various languages which are not in any way allied. On the other hand, the two great and most civilised tribes, Malays and Javanese, roaming about, trading to and fro, and settling here and there, have naturally left words of their own more or less naturalised among foreign islanders. Exigencies of trade also have compelled the island chiefs, who are the leading traders, each on his own soil, to learn the language of the seafarers. Malay has thus been chosen by them as a language of convenience.

The languages of the two predominating races, the Malay and Javanese, excluding their foreign elements, are found to be distinct as to the number of their words in this proportion. Out of a thousand Malay words, two hundred and eighty-five are common to it and to Javanese; and in a thousand Javanese words, the proportion of two hundred and forty are Malay. The rest are in each tongue perfectly distinct. A little Sanscrit is retained in the Malay from the old days of subjection to the Hindu priests. The language contains also Arabic, resulting from the slow and peaceful conversion to Mahometanism of the Malays and other islanders by Arabian and Persian traders. Between the first and last conversion there elapsed a period of 289 years, commencing 574 years after the death of Mahomet. From the Portuguese also the Malay picked up a few words, the softness of that southern language making it adaptable to the smooth tones of the Malay. But no intercourse with the Chinese who have settled among them have ever grafted on the tongues of the islanders more than half a dozen Chinese words, so great is the opposition between a monosyllabic and a polysyllabic language. They are the two poles of philology.

Readers of the Dissertation will remark among its curiosities the account given by Mr Crawfurd of the ceremonial language of the Javanese. There are some in England who for politeness call the sky, the sky; and would call a boar, a law; but in Java this sort of thing is systematically done. No common words are suffered in the ceremonial language, unless they have had at least a vowel altered. Often indeed the vulgar word is altogether ignored, and a foreign substitute is used habitually—just as there are some polite men in England who must be permitted to make a remark "en passant," instead of remarking "by the way." The Malay ceremony also substitutes for some words a periphrasis, disdaining to be too matter-of-fact. It is the parallel to our own polite expression of "a high quarter," when we mean the Queen; or "a certain place" when we mean the House of Peers, or a house lower and less dignified.

We give a few examples of polite Malay. Sometimes the word in the polite dialect is an epithet, and sometimes a translation, true or fanciful, of that in the vulgar language. Thus the sugar cane, in the vulgar tongue, is tabu, and in the ceremonial, rosan, which means the thing with joints, or "the cane." Tobacco, in the common language, is tãmbaku, but in the ceremonial, sata, "the cock." Bebek, in the common language, is the domestic duck, but in the ceremonial, kambangan, which means "the object that floats on the water." The areka palm, in the vulgar tongue, is

jambe, but in the polite, wohan, "the fruit." Bawi and cheleng, are the hog, in the vulgar, but in the polite dialect, chamangan, and andapan, which mean "respectively," "the black object," and "the low object." Untu, is a tooth in a common mouth, but in the mouth of a king it is waja, "steel." Maripat, is an ordinary eye, but the eye of a king, when spoken of, is socha, or "a gem."

This is the language always used towards, never used by, the king. It is employed in letters—even, says Mr Crawfurd, by superiors to inferiors, "unless the party addressed be of very inferior rank indeed;" but it is not used in royal letters, edicts, or proclamations, "all of which are in the vulgar tongue, that is, in the language of authority and command." At the discretion of the writer it is used also in books, "indifferently with the ordinary language." Mr Crawfurd derives from these curious facts the unquestionable proof of an ancient and a considerable civilization, as well as of a thorough despotism.

Of books among these men of the antipodes we will presently note a word or two. But before passing to the Grammar, in which Mr Crawfurd treats of Malay literature, we may say that in the Dissertation an objection is urged against the assumption that even the Australian languages spring from a common stock. Mr Crawfurd declares this to be not proven. They are of course never reckoned as Malay. So low in intellect are the Australians that they have not been capable even of picking up Malay words, though their own languages are insufficient for a thinking being. The mere generalization implied in words that correspond to the ideas of a tree, bird, or fish, is not to be found in any of them; though of specific names they have no lack. These languages, moreover, only count as far as two. The native men in Australia are not less remarkable than the peculiar native beasts for a deficiency in mental power.

The Grammar by Mr Crawfurd, which stands in his volumes between the Dissertation and the Dictionary, is also capable of furnishing to the most general reader information and amusement. Here we find a notice of Malay literature. It consists chiefly of extravagant romances in prose and verse, differing from one another much more in the words than in the nature of the story. There is a set stock of comparisons, which are used over and over again; there is also a fixed run of incident. Thus if you read one romance, you read them all. We had ourselves a branch of literature not very different from this, some little time ago; and traces of it still survive. But we have never been without our literary men of note. Now the Malay literary men never think their names worth mentioning. Sometimes a name and date are found appended to a "novel"; but the name is that of the transcriber, and the date that of the completion of the copy—corresponding to the "Bradbury and Evans, Printers, Whitefriars," which winds up Mr Crawfurd's labours. One star differs not from another in Malay, and it is of no use to attempt distinction where there exists no difference.

Of the comparisons which in our phrase we should call 'stereotyped' for the Malay romancer, Mr Crawfurd furnishes a number of examples. Here are some. "Each mounted his horse, and they proceeded, princes and dependents following in a train, like one flower garden."—"After three days' sail their ships came in sight, appearing like scattered flowers in a vase."—"Her voice was melodious as the Eolian bamboo, blown upon by the wind at early dawn."—"Her person perspired, and, by the rays from the lamps and the hanging lamps and the tapers, emitted a perfume like that of a rose full of dew, when struck by the rays of the morning sun." Is there an instance of any literature, saving the Malay, which makes so much of a heroine odorous with perspiration?

The rest of the Malay literature is made up of efforts at a peculiar style of composition called the Pantun. It is a quatrain stanza, rhymed; the two first lines of which contain a fact, and the last two apply it by the way of parable. The parable is commonly intended to be dark, so that the detection of its meaning is designed to be a sort of riddle to the Malay hearers; to the Europeans commonly it is a thing beyond the mind of Oedipus.

Will any one explain this utterance of a Malay Sphinx?

The turi tree on a hill,—
A place to dry the nutmeg,—
My heart is full of hope,
As there are hairs on the head.

Do you give it up?

We must add that there is a much simpler one, which Mr Crawfurd quotes from Marsden's History of Sumatra. Here it is:

What is the use of lighting a lamp
If it be without a wick?
What is the use of playing with the eyes
If you be not in earnest?

We feel that we have touched but lightly on the solid merits of this great work of Mr Crawfurd's. Ethnologists must have it in their libraries, and study carefully the Dissertation if they wish to learn, or pick a theory from the Vocabularies if they wish to teach. Business men who look upon the Malay simply as a living language widely spoken in a region of clove and nutmeg, of camphor, benzoin, and cube pepper, and of many other marketable things, will have pleasure in confessing their acknowledgments to Mr Crawfurd for the facilities he has afforded to their enterprise. The work, in short, at once establishes its claim to take rank as the best authority now extant on the matter about which it treats, and in other respects will long remain a monument of the writer's diligence, conscientiousness, and great learning. It is dedicated to the Baron Alexander Von Humboldt, "on account (says Mr Crawfurd) of the high respect which, in common with the rest of the world, I entertain for yourself; and in testimony of my veneration for your distinguished brother, whose correspondence on "the subject of my labours I hold in grateful recollection."