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FOR THE IRIS.

CAIN,

A MYSTERY.

IN pointing out the aberrations of a splendid intellect, and the self-degradation of genius, I disclaim all those petty motives of malice and envy which so frequently excite the anathemas of the critic. I admire the genius of Byron; I lament its degradation. But still it should be remembered, that he is so far above the host of petty scribblers who criticise his works, in intellectual greatness, that it becomes us to point out the excellencies and defects of his productions, with the utmost modesty, when they do not affect the cause of religion and of morality; but when they are assailed, every honest man, and every christian, ought loudly to enter his protest against the assailant, however dignified his rank, or exalted his genius.

It must grieve every true admirer of poetry to see the course which his lordship has lately taken;—to see that genius, which had it been devoted to the interests of religion and morality, (which even he himself acknowledges to be the highest aim of poetry), would have rendered the name of Byron, a blessing to the nation and to posterity, as it now is and will be—a curse! That genius might have produced images of purity and excellence, which would have been fondly cherished in the choicest recesses of our memories; which has been expended in administering to the basest and most degrading of passions, in a tale which can only be openly shewn and acknowledged in a brothel; and whose images can only be cherished by those whose every better feeling is lost in brutal sensuality; and in the production now before me, which can only excite unmixed feelings of pain in the mind of the christian, and of a sullen triumphant feeling of savage joy in the infidel.

The attacks of such men as Hone and Carlile, upon the institutions which we venerate and adore, are puny and impotent, and can only affect the uneducated and uninformed; but when the Herculean powers of a Byron assail them, we tremble, not for fear of their destruction, for they are imperishable; but for the temporary injury which may be occasioned, by misleading the minds of the unthinking and unreflecting. It is a national calamity, when one of the great 'master spirits' of the age, so per-

verts and misapplies his talents: all ranks of society are influenced by such an example, and its demoralizing effects spread from one circle to another, until they pervade the whole.

This is not idle declamation, as every one who has traced the retrograde movements which his lordship's muse has made from morality, from Childe Harold down to Beppo, Juan, and Cain, will most readily allow. He has now arrived at the 'ne plus ultra' of libertinism, illiberality, and infidelity; and whatever may succeed can only be the variations on the preceding subjects, unless his lordship takes Burn's advice to his Satanic majesty,

'Oh would thou tak a thou and mend.'

and dedicate his pen to the service of that morality which he has mocked with his praise, and insulted with his practice.

There is very little of human action, or of human feelings, depicted in this 'Mystery,' as it is not unaptly termed. All the personages, which the inspired historian represents as virtuous, are here depicted dull and insipid. Cain's own description of them is a correct picture, as his lordship has drawn them.

'My father is

Tamed down; my mother has forgot the mind
Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk
Of an eternal curse; my brother is
A watching shepherd boy, who offers up
The firstlings of the flock to him who bids
The earth yield nothing to us without sweat.'

The piece opens with all the mortal characters of suffering a sacrifice; when all but Cain, humbly adore the Deity; upon which Adam questions his first-born as to his silence, and is answered with a sneer. Adam in agony of mind says,

"Oh, God! why didst thou plant the tree of knowledge?"

CAIN.

And wherefore pluck'd ye not the tree of life?
Ye might have then defied him!

After a short conversation Cain is left alone and Lucifer enters. His approach is thus described by the former.

'Whom have we here?—A shape like to the angels,
Yet of a sterner and a sadder aspect
Of spiritual essence: why do I quake?
Why should I fear him more than other spirits,
Whom I see daily wave their fiery swords

Before the gates round which I linger oft,
In twilight's hour, to catch a glimpse of those
Gardens which are my just inheritance,
Ere the night closes o'er the inhibited walls
And the immortal trees which overtop
The cherubim-defended battlements?
If I shrink not from these, the fire-arm'd angels,
Why should I quail from him who now approaches?
Yet he seems mightier far than them, nor less
Beauteous, and yet not all as beautiful
As he hath been, and might be: sorrow seems
Half of his immortality.'

A conversation ensues, in which the bold discontented spirit of Cain is powerfully wrought upon; by the subtlety of Lucifer, in whose character, all the metaphysical doubts and speculations, which have agitated the minds of men for ages, are concentrated, and expressed with a boldness which startles, and with a subtlety which cannot fail very much to injure minds, which are not previously well fortified against such attacks. I shall only make one or two extracts of this nature, by way of shewing the justice of my remarks.

Lucifer speaking of himself and Cain, says, that they are—

'Souls who dare use their immortality—
Souls who dare look the Omnipotent tyrant in
His everlasting face, and tell him, that
His evil is not good! If he has made,
As he saith—which I know not, nor believe—
But, if he made us—he cannot unmake:
We are immortal!—nay, he'd have us so,
That he may torture:—let him! He is great—
But, in his greatness, is no happier than
We in our conflict! Goodness would not make
Evil; and what else hath he made!

Cain's feelings, on the subject of death, are thus forcibly and beautifully expressed.

— 'although I know not what it is,
Yet it seems horrible. I have look'd out
In the vast desolate night in search of him;
And when I saw gigantic shadows in
The umbrage of the walls of Eden, chequer'd
By the far-flashing of the cherubs' swords,
I watch'd for what I thought his coming; for
With fear rose longing in my heart to know
What 'twas which shook us all—but nothing came.
And then I turn'd my weary eyes from off
Our native and forbidden Paradise,
Up to the lights above us, in the azure,
Which are so beautiful: shall they, too, die?'

Lucifer leaves him, after having fill'd his mind with fresh matter for gloomy and discontented thoughts, which he communicates to his wife Adah, who endeavours to sooth him. A little glimmering of kinder

When a prince to the fate of a peasant has yielded,
The tapestry waves dark round the dim lighted hall;
With scutcheons of silver, the coffin is shielded,
And pages stand mute by the canopied pall:
Thro' the courts at deep midnight, the torches are gleaming,
In the proudly arch'd chapel the banners are beaming
Far down the long aisle sacred music is streaming,
Lamenting a chief of the people should fall.

But meet for thee, gentle lover of nature,
To lay down thy head like the meek mountain lamb,
When wilder'd, he drops from some cliff, huge in stature,
And draws his last sob, by the side of his dam;
And more stately thy couch, by this desert lake lying,
Thy obsequies sung by the grey plover flying,
With but one faithful friend to witness thy dying,
In the arms of Helvellyn and Catbedecam.

SCOTT.

REPOSITORY OF GENIUS.

TO VERAX.

A Solution of his Enigma in your last.

I thank you for your kind Essay,
Where you require to guess,
'What is't that has so much to say?'
--What can it be, but S?

Without this letter I should ween,
We'd ne'er be in distress:
And yet methinks that it would seem,
We're worse off without S.

For pounds and guineas then would be
(Oh! shocking, what a mess!)
Transform'd at once to uni-y,
Without sweet letter S.

And then, oh dreadful! one's dear self
If wanting such a dress,
Would change to goblin, alias elf,
And mourn for letter S.

Alas! no more could I to thee
Declare my love dear Bess;
When thou wert two thirds of a Bee,
And all for want of S.

One thing is certain as the day,
Read but my name and guess,
I should but be the vowel A;
If wanting double S.

A. S. S.

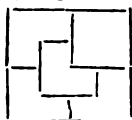
18th Feb. 1822.

The Change required in our last.

Four two-penny pieces add to a pound note,
Will answer the question excepting a groat;
If the groat you divide into farthings sixteen,
The work is complete, which is plain to be seen.

S. T.

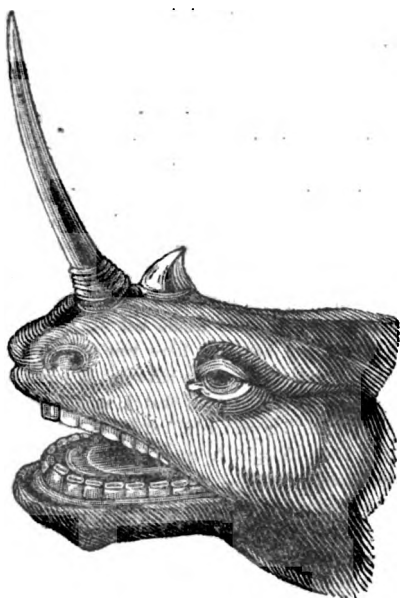
Solution of the puzzle in our last.



Required, the way to arrange 100 numbers in a square, so as to make the sum of 505, when added, in lines either downwards or across, in 20 different ways; and also to furnish a rule, by which so tedious an operation may be most easily performed.

T. W. P.

QUERY.—What is the side of that Pentagon, whose area cost as much paving at 10d. per foot, as the pallisading the five sides did at 20s. per yard?



THE UNICORN.

From the Rev. John Campbell's Narrative of a Second Journey in the Interior of Africa, vol. I. pp. 294—5.

'During our absence from Mashow, two Rhinoceroses came into the town during the night, when the inhabitants assembled and killed them both. The rhinoceros, shot by Jager, on the preceding day, having been cut up, were brought, the one in a wagon, the other on pack-oxen. We divided one among Kossie, Munameets, and Pelangye. They brought also the head of one of them, which was different from all the others that had been killed. The common African Rhinoceros has a crooked horn resembling a cock's spur, which rises about nine or ten inches above the nose and inclines backwards; immediately behind this is a short thick horn; but the head they brought had a straight horn projecting three feet from the forehead, about ten inches above the tip of the nose. The projection of this great horn very much resembles that of the fanciful Unicorn in the British arms. It has a small thick horny substance, eight inches long, immediately behind it, which can hardly be observed on the animal at the distance of a hundred yards, and seems to be designed for keeping fast that which is penetrated by the long horn; so that this species of rhinoceros must appear really like a unicorn when running in the field. The head resembled in size a nine-gallon cask, and measured three feet from the mouth to the ear, and being much larger than that of the one with the crooked horn, and which measured eleven feet in length, the animal itself must have been still larger and more formidable. From its weight, and the position of the horn, it appears capable of overcoming any creature hitherto known. Hardly any of the natives took the smallest notice of the head, but treated it as a thing familiar to them. As the entire horn is perfectly solid, the natives, I afterwards heard, make from one horn four handles for their battle-axes. Our people wounded another, which they reported to be much larger.'

The following extracts, illustrative of the above, are from the Missionary Sketches.

'The skull and horn excited great curiosity at

* The head being so weighty; and the distance to the Cape so great, it appeared necessary to cut off the under jaw and leave it behind; (the Mashow who cut off the flesh from it had ten cuts on his back, which were marks for ten men he had killed in his lifetime.) The animal is considered by naturalists, since the arrival of the skull in London, to be the Unicorn of the ancients, and the same as that which is described in the 39th chapter of the book of Job. The part of the head brought to London, may be seen at the Missionary Museum; and, for such as may not have the opportunity of seeing the head itself, the above drawing of it has been made.

Cape Town, most scientific persons there being of opinion that it was all that we should have for the Unicorn. An animal of the size of a horse, which the fancied Unicorn is supposed to be, would not answer the description of the Unicorn given in the Sacred Scriptures, where it is described as a very large, ferocious, and untameable creature; but the animal in question exactly answered it in every respect.

The Hebrew name by which it is called is *Reem*, which signifies *Might* or *Strength*. The translators of the Old Testament into Greek called it *Monoceros*; in the Latin (or Vulgate) translation it is *Unicornis*. In various countries it bears a name of similar import. In Gees it is called *Arwo Harich*, and in the Amharic, *Awaris*, both signifying 'the large wild beast with the horn.' In Nubia, it is called *Girnamgira*, or 'horn upon horn.' This exactly applies to the skull in the Society's Museum, which has a small conical horn behind the long one. From the latter we presume this animal has been denominated the Unicorn, it being the principal, and by far the most prominent horn, the other, as before intimated, being scarcely distinguishable at a short distance. The writer of the article 'Unicorn,' in the Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, observes, (defining the term) 'the Scriptural name of an animal, which was undoubtedly the one-horned Rhinoceros.'

Some authors, both ancient and modern, have described an animal, which they call the Unicorn, said to resemble a horse, or deer, with a long horn, represented in English heraldry as one of the supporters of the royal arms; but there is reason to doubt the existence of any such quadruped. It is probable that the long horn ascribed to such an animal is that of a fish, or, as termed by some, a Sea Unicorn, called the *Monodon*, or *Narwhal*, confounding the land and sea animal together. The horn of the fish here alluded to, was formerly imposed on the world as the horn of the Unicorn, at an immense price. On the whole, it seems highly probable that the Rhinoceros, having one long horn projecting from its face, is the only Unicorn existing, and although it has a kind of stump of another horn behind the long projecting one, yet that it has been denominated Unicorn, (or one horn,) from that which is so obvious and prominent; and certainly its great bulk and strength render it such a formidable and powerful animal as is described in the Sacred Scriptures.'

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—In your last week's Iris, there is a letter signed L. wishing to know who is the author of the verses beginning—

'Take, O take those lips away,' &c.

I cannot positively inform your correspondent who is really the author, but I send you extracts from Percy and Drake, which, if they will in any way satisfy him, are perfectly at his service.

Percy, in his 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,' vol. I. p. 243 says, 'The first stanza of this little sonnet, which an eminent critic justly admires for its sweetness, is found in Shakspeare's Measure for Measure. Both the stanza's are preserved in Beaumont and Fletcher's Bloody Brother. Sewell and Gildon have printed it among Shakspeare's smaller poems; but they have done the same by twenty other pieces, that were never writ by him, their book being a wretched heap of inaccuracies and mistakes. It is not found in Jaggard's old edition of Shakspeare's Passionate Pilgrim, &c.

Drake, in his 'Literary Hours,' vol. II. p. 95, speaking of Gallus, Joannes Secundus, and Muretus, observes, that 'in the Lydia of the first of these poets, may be found the origin of that exquisite song of Fletcher,—

'Take, O take those lips away,' &c.

He also subjoins Fletcher's name to the same poem, in a list of Amatory pieces, vol. II. p. 99.

Your's,

Manchester, Feb. 20, 1822.

J. O. U.