

Historical Sketches.

From the Virginia Argus.

HISTORICAL LETTERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE VIRGINIA ARCHIVES. LETTER I.

In a series of historical sketches, some account of the Globe we inhabit with propriety occupy the first place. There are different opinions entertained relative to the duration of the world—that is to say, the interval between the creation and our days. This interval divides itself into two parts: that since Jesus Christ to our time, upon which all the world is agreed; and that subsequent to the creation until Jesus Christ, respecting which men's opinions vary. Meanwhile Holy Writ forms the basis of all these opinions, and the different copies of it, alone occasion the variation.

The Hebrew text, which is that most generally adopted, reckons from the creation to Jesus Christ 4004 years or 40 centuries; the Samaritan text 4305 years or 43 centuries; the translation of the Seventy or the Greek text, 5270 or 52 centuries.

These variations have given place to different systems of Chronology, which divide men of learning; and it seems almost impossible to come at the truth.

DIVISIONS OF ANCIENT PROFANE HISTORY.

If, adopting the Hebrew text, we reckon forty centuries from the creation till Jesus Christ, and as there are seven centuries from the creation to the deluge altogether unknown to profane history, it results that there remain but twenty-three centuries, which are commonly divided into 3 equal parts, to wit:

- 1. The times of Uncertainty—in which is placed the origin of the most ancient nations, embracing 5 centuries.
2. Fabulous or Heroic Times, or the times filled with Mythology, embracing 10 centuries.
3. Historical Times, when history began to obtain some authenticity, which contains 8 centuries.

LETTER II.

OF THE EGYPTIANS.

The Egyptians are allowed to be the most ancient civilized nation upon the earth; their commencement is unknown to us. In searching into their history, we find them at an early period familiar with the arts and sciences, and with every species of human knowledge which proves a long existing state of society. They are themselves as ignorant as we are of the antiquity of their origin, which they magnify into a duration of twenty thousand years. Their history is as fabulous as their chronology. They represent to us that the gods were their first rulers; after that the demigods; and subsequently numberless dynasties, and a throng of sovereigns; in which are to be found much of fable, a great deal of obscurity, and very few incidents. They boast, however, of a Sisowis, whose conquests, or more properly speaking, whose military march (if we could give credit to it) embraced the major part of Asia, and who penetrated to the verge of Europe. Be that as it may, it is certain this is the only time that this people are mentioned as conquerors. Their destiny has uniformly been that of subjugation or submission. We may reduce to three principal points all that is worthy of observation, of the numerous details which fill the different volumes that give an account of the Egyptians, that is to say: 1st. The state of their civilization. 2d. The colonies which they founded. 3d. The monuments which they have left behind them.

CIVILIZATION OF THE EGYPTIANS.

The Egyptians lived under a regular government; they were acquainted with the distribution of power into civil, military and religious. They had respectable magistrates, wise laws, established morals and reigning customs. In a word, they possessed all those branches of order, which characterise a state of complete civilization. Many of their laws and customs merit our attention as well as curiosity.

The marvellous period of Egyptian history, that which excites our astonishment and awakens our admiration, either by the wisdom of her laws or the immensity of her monuments, is precisely that which is least known to us, and it would be altogether unavailing to attempt to penetrate. We do not possess a single literary work of the ancient

Egyptians. All that we know anciently of these people is derived from the Holy Scriptures, or from the Greeks, and chiefly from Herodotus, who saw the objects which he describes, and received those interpretations with respect to their monuments, which he has transmitted to us.

About three centuries thereafter, Manetho, an Egyptian, the high priest and guardian of the sacred archives, has given us the history of his country, by order of one of the Ptolomies. It is from him that we learn the existence of the dynasties, which, according to his calculation, gives to the Egyptian Monarchy, computing from its origin to the time of Alexander the Great, a duration of 5,300 years. It is well however to observe to the reader, in order to regulate his confidence in the assertions of Manetho, that although high priest, he was not enabled, owing to the many revolutions that had occurred in Egypt, to do more than afford a general interpretation of the hieroglyphics, there remaining at the time he wrote no faithful tradition of the exact sense in which they were originally intended. Moreover, this work has been lost—and we are no otherwise acquainted with it than by those fragments cited by Josephus, the Jewish historian.

Much later still than Manetho, and about the times of Augustus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo and Pliny wrote upon the same subject. The concurrence or disagreement of these different testimonies constitute, and will most probably continue to constitute at all future periods, the sum of our knowledge relative to the primitive Egyptians.

In vain the expedition of the French into Egypt—the talents and the zeal of those philosophers who followed in the train of Bonaparte's army, held out the prospect of new discoveries! The labors of the French Institute at Cairo, the travels of M. Denon, the writings of Gen. Andreossi, and those of several other Frenchmen and Englishmen, have furnished us with a perfect topographical description of the country, and with accurate and curious details with respect to the Egyptian monuments. They have presented us with interesting dissertations, hypotheses, and in a word, they have enriched the arts and sciences; but they have thrown no new light upon the early period of the history of Egypt.

COLONIES FOUNDED BY THE EGYPTIANS.

All the world knows that the Greeks, those venerable models of good taste, of arts and of science, received from the Egyptians the first germs of their knowledge; and if we may be permitted to believe the plausible theory of M. de Guignes, the Chinese of our day were originally a colony from Egypt. M. de Guignes thinks he has discovered that the sovereigns of China are precisely the same as those of Thebes in the Upper Egypt. He demonstrates a considerable resemblance between the Chinese alphabet and the Egyptian hieroglyphics. Whether the conjectures of this gentleman be true or not, it is certain that he has discovered an extraordinary similitude in the manners, the genius, the morals and the characters of these two widely separated nations.

From the Natchez Weekly Chronicle.

WEST FLORIDA.

As some of our neighbouring editors have expressed their ignorance of what led to the revolution in West Florida; and as much misrepresentation is afloat, we feel it a duty we owe our country, as well as the people of Florida, to give a succinct account of what led to the revolution, and what will be its probable issue. In doing this we shall be guided by facts coming within our own knowledge, (the editors having been alternately in Florida since the first movement) and from information derived from authentic sources.

Ever since the commencement of the difficulties in which the mother country (old Spain) has been involved, little or no attention has been paid to Florida. The officers have not been paid by the government; and to make up these deficits, they have fleeced the people. The great body of the population of West Florida, have migrated from the United States, the Government did not suit the genius of the people. But so desirous were they to evince their loyalty, that so long as there was the semblance of justice left, so long were they faithful to their legitimate sovereign.

A regulation had been adopted by the officer presiding over Florida, for the admission of emigrants. This regulation

operated to the exclusion of men of probity and fortune, whilst the worthless vagabond found a ready asylum. Corruption in every department of the provincial government had grown to so alarming a height as to be no longer tolerated. The officer finding from the embarrassed condition of the mother country, that he could not be arraigned before a tribunal competent to punish him for his misconduct, gave a loose to his propensities—the Spanish law was lost sight of—and only the shadow of a Spanish government existed. The avenues to justice were closed, and before a civil officer, gold decided questions of right and wrong. The dissolute part of the community who had every thing to gain and nothing to lose by a revolution, discovered a desire to rule. A spurious constitution was circulated through the province, and every thing had the appearance of approaching anarchy and plunder. These movements gave the alarm to men of character and property—it became essentially requisite to adopt measures to disappoint the lawless revolutionists. Governor Delassus was applied to for permission to have an election by the people, of delegates to meet in convention to deliberate on the extraordinary state of the province, and to adopt such measures as to them might seem proper for promoting the prosperity of the country. Every thing was done in the name of Ferdinand 7th—the acts of the convention are before the public and they can judge of their merits. Let it be remembered, that the election and meetings of the convention were sanctioned by the governor, and the acts were submitted to and ratified by him, before they were declared to have the validity of law—such was the confidence the convention reposed in Governor Delassus, that they bestowed on him the highest appointment in their gift, (president of the supreme court) with a salary of three thousand dollars per year. When they were about to adjourn, the convention gave the Governor a splendid dinner, which was considered as celebrating the union between the representative of the sovereign and the representatives of the people.

Regulations being established to preserve the peace and tranquility of the country, and to ensure a faithful administration of justice, the convention adjourned, acknowledging their dependence on the ancient Spanish monarchy, and proud that their labors had terminated for the present favorably to the public repose.

This pleasing calm was momentary—Governor Delassus, who had approved with his hand, was at heart an enemy to the proceedings of the convention. As soon therefore as the convention adjourned, he set his engines in motion, not only to circumvent their proceedings but to seize and deport the members. Reports were industriously circulated, that Governor Folch was on his way from Pensacola, with 500 men; to reduce the province to obedience—the refugees and Tories from the United States, passed through the settlements of Pichla, Tanchipallo and Pearl river, poisoning the minds of the people, and urging them to arm against the convention—several bodies of men, to the amount of near 400 had actually assembled—an attempt was made to seize one of the deputies—another had to leave his residence; and all were threatened with the most dreadful punishment. In this dilemma, but one course remained for the convention; which was to take the government into their own hands, declare independence, and call upon the nations of the earth to acknowledge them as a free state. The execution was as prompt as the thought—the fort of Baton Rouge was carried—the Tories and refugees reduced—and the misled people returned to their homes, and took the oath of fidelity to the new government.

MR. IRVING'S ANSWER

To the letter of Mr GEORGE BARON, of New York, Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy, published in the Register of April 26.

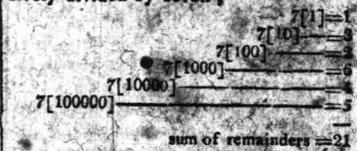
DEAR SIR,—I have perused your friendly letter, addressed to me, in the N. York Commercial Advertiser, on the subject of commencing the publication of the 2d vol. of the 'Mathematical Correspondent'. I regretted very much, at the time that work was abandoned, that there could not be found, in this populous and enlightened country, patronage sufficient to support it. Such a work is really a desideratum. We are in pos-

session of no proper vehicle, at present, for conveying to the public discoveries & improvements in science; and I think it small reflection upon the taste & understanding of the American people. Our modern Scientists seem willing to contribute to every thing that is showy and superficial; but works of a profound cast—works which require a laborious exercise of the reasoning faculty, appear to them almost as terrific as the Bohon U-piz. The first volume of the Mathematical Correspondent had begun to awaken a taste for the recorde and exact sciences; though, like the faint illuminations of the glow-worm, I acknowledge its rays were confined within a narrow periphery; but I believe, Sir, could we devise means to secure the public support, it might be made, in its recommencement, to beam forth as a star of the first magnitude, shedding a baleful light, indeed, on the charlatans in science; but conducting her friends and legitimate children to the sanctuary of her temple. The European presses abound with the most contemptuous reflections on the juveneness of American genius and American talent. And why? In a great measure, because we have so few public works possessing the character necessary to rouse talent into action, and to fan genius into its fervid blaze.—A newspaper is ephemeral—is evanescent. A man of science feels unwilling to commit an important discovery, or even an improvement, to a type that may find an earlier grave than himself. I am in possession of some scientific improvements, to which I would willingly give publicity, could I find for them an appropriate receptacle; and you have confidentially convinced me that you are in possession of many more, which, if promulgated, I am well persuaded would prove no inconsiderable addition to the stock of general information. Your theory of Differential may with great propriety be considered an entire new system; for it bears much less similitude to the intricate mass of analytical confusion, hitherto dignified with that appellation, than the Newtonian illustrations of the celestial phenomena, to the enigmatical chaos of Egyptian astronomy. Your observations on the science of Infinitesimals, particularly the Summatory Calculus, have induced me, since I last saw you, to bestow more than ordinary attention on that subject; and I am now satisfactorily convinced that they were founded on fact—and that the Newtonian, Leibnizian, Agnesian and other methods for the investigation of Integrals are susceptible of very great improvements, emanating from arcana, in the science, hitherto undeveloped. The accurate determination of the longitude at sea, has proved the most baffling subject that has ever exercised the energies of the human intellect; & altho' many have thought themselves entitled to imitate the luminary of Syracuse, when he was fortunate enough to solve the hydrostatical question of King Hiero; yet have they all been compelled finally, to acknowledge, that its difficulties are insuperable. And indeed, I have sometimes been induced to believe that some physical impediment, arising from the perplexity of figure, motion and relation, is placed by the Omnipotent, as an insurmountable barrier to the attainment of this desirable object; as well for the purpose of humiliating the pride of the human understanding, as to serve, through succeeding generations, for a perpetual 'cos ingenitum.' Should Providence, however be so kind as to spare your life until you complete your new system of navigation, with which I am happy to learn, you are so rapidly progressing, I doubt not, from the idea which I now entertain of it, but it will prove an adequate succedaneum for the long sought-for discovery. I am, indeed, so well convinced of its utility, simplicity and superiority to all other systems of navigation hitherto divulged, that I cannot but urge you with the earnest importunity of a friend, to accelerate the completion and publication of a work, the sterling excellence of which must secure you the respect of your contemporaries, the gratitude of posterity, and entitle you, without vanity, to direct that your epitaph shall be extracted from the 30th Ode of the 3d Book of the immortal bard of Venusa.

With regard to your question, relative to the number seven, I will observe—Exegi monumentum are perennius, Rotasque sibi pyramidum alius; Quid non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens, Possit diruere, aut innoxia bilis Annorum series, et fugax temporum.

—that my vocational engagements have been so literally incessant, since the receipt of your favour, that I have not been able to give it that mature investigation, which from its importance, its European bearing on numerical operations, and the locus, which it occupies in the scale of our notation, it unquestionably deserves; the profound dissertations—the sage remarks—the non me tantum suggestions of the erudite W. S. to the contrary, notwithstanding. However from the little reflection, which I have been able to bestow on it, I have discovered one reason, why six equal digits will divide, exactly, by this hebdomadal and dignified number; I say dignified, because it expresses, ordinarily, the day on which the Almighty Fabricator of the universe is said, in figurative language, to have "rested from his work."—It is well known, that one number will exactly divide by another when the first, or dividend is a multiple of the second, or divisor. It is also known, that, if a succession of dividends should leave remainders, whose sum amounts to a multiple of a divisor, the aggregate of the dividends will itself be a multiple of that identical divisor. Now, in the question proposed; if we take six units, they make, according to our notation, one hundred and eleven thousand; one hundred and eleven; which is only the aggregate of one, ten, one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand and a hundred thousand, summed together. If we inquire, then, whether these numbers are respectively, multiples of the septenary; we shall soon discover, that this property belongs to none of them; but we shall, at the same time perceive, that, on their being successively divided by the number seven, they will leave a set of remainders, whose sum is a multiple of the septenary; and that, therefore, the aggregate must be exactly divisible, by that number. Now if this be true of six units, it must be true of six twos, of six threes, of six fours, and in fact, of any six equal digits; because every digit is a multiple of the unit.

To substantiate this reasoning, I shall subjoin the following illustration. As we know that 111111 means the same thing as 1+100+1000+10000+100000—let the small right hand square\* in the annexed diagram, represent a unit; and let that number be divided by seven. It is obvious that the remainder will be one. Let the second square, marked ten, also represent the number ten; and let it be divided by the same divisor, seven; it is equally obvious, that the remainder will be three. Let then, all the succeeding squares represent, respectively, the numbers which they enclose, and let them be successively divided by seven;



as they are all incommensurable, they will all necessarily leave remainders; and these in the order of their evolution, will be found to be one, three, two, six, four, five.

Now, it is plain that 1+3+2+6+4+5=21, the sum of the remainders, is a multiple of the septenary; and consequently that the aggregate, 111111, must divide exactly by the number 7. Five equal digits will not do this; nor will seven, nor in fact, will any other number that is not a multiple of six; and for this obvious reason; because the sum of their remainders will not be a multiple of the septenary. I would willingly make some further observations on this curious, I might almost say mysterious digit, but my time will not permit; I have only a sufficiency to add; should the Mathematical Correspondent be fanned into existence again, by the genial breezes of popular patronage, you may count with certainty upon my most ardent wishes for its success, and my feeble exertions to contribute to its utility; if they can prove in the smallest degree, auxiliary to eminent a divumvirate of mathematicians, as George Baron, of New York, and Thomas M'Laughan, of Quebec. I have the honor to be, my dear Sir, with sentiments of respect and esteem, your friend and obedient humble servant.

THOMAS P. IRVING.

Newbern (N. C.) April 29th, 1811.

\* For the want of suitable types, we have been obliged to convert the squares, in the diagram alluded to, into brackets.—Ed.