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**THE YALE LITERARY  
MAGAZINE. VOL.  
VII, SEPTEMBER  
1842, NO. 9, PP. 417-465**



THE  
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CONDUCTED

BY THE

STUDENTS OF YALE COLLEGE.



"DUM MEUS GRATA MANET, NOMEN LAUDISQUE YALENSIS  
CANTABUNT SCHOLAE, UNANIMQUE PATRES."

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VOL. VII.

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AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES.

THERE appears to be no passion more common to the human mind, than that for investigating the records of nations long since swept from existence; whether these records are to be found upon the page of written history, or exist only in the masses of blackened ruins, which serve to mark the spot where once they flourished, in all the pomp of war or the splendor of civilization. It is, indeed, in their written history, that we are to seek for the origin, the exploits, and the fate of nations; but in their unwritten history, the magnitude of their empire, the degree of civilization and refinement in the arts and sciences, to which they attained, and the causes of their ruin, can be traced with unerring fidelity. The vast masses of ruins which are strewn in such rich profusion over the entire surface of the Eastern Continent, have served as guides, in leading to the discovery of the authors of those vast fabrics, of which they are but the relics, exhibiting to the patient investigator conclusive proofs of their characters, resources, and exploits. The people who reared these monuments of their wealth and grandeur; as well as memorials of their destiny, are now no more, and the unsparing hand of time has obliterated the inscriptions which were vainly intended to transmit the knowledge of themselves to the remotest generations; yet, from the style of architecture observed in these works of antiquity, and their easily detected design, a far surer index of national characteristics is afforded, than could possibly have been given on the page of written history. And, though the bones of their builders have crumbled into dust, beneath the ruins of the structures they themselves had reared, and the intervening ages of barbarism have conspired to envelop them in an almost impenetrable mystery, still, the untiring industry and patient research of modern

investigators, have, in a great measure, succeeded in divesting them of this cloud of mystery, and in distinguishing them by their authors and the periods in which they had their origin. Since the commencement of the systematic and scientific examination of these venerable remains of slumbering nations, some two or three centuries since, the ardor for investigation seems to have lost none of its force, but, on the contrary, to have been increased, as every succeeding traveler has given to the world the results of his toil and research. New and beautiful theories are started, and new objects of admiration are brought before the learned world, as new facts are developed, and more recent discoveries are made known.

The tourist of the present day enters on the investigation with his mind stored with the knowledge obtained by those who have preceded him in this extensive field of observation, and consequently is enabled to push his researches much farther, and examine more minutely those objects which have been but rapidly scrutinized by others. And notwithstanding the multiplicity of works, which, in late years, have been given to the world upon the remains of antiquity, and the extensive knowledge imparted by them upon this subject, the field is still ample, and lies invitingly open to the philanthropist, the scholar, and the antiquarian. Those mighty fabrics, which have reared themselves for ages, amid the desolation of Egyptian deserts, bidding a stern defiance to the ravages of time, which have consigned all else contemporary with them to the gloom of forgetfulness, are now considered, with respect to the object and period of their erection, as distinctly known; yet, a powerful interest is inwoven with every successive description of these vast monuments of human toil and industry. The scholar, as he beholds the shattered obelisks and massive blocks of elaborately wrought marble, beneath the blue waters of the Mediterranean—the richly sculptured capitals, severed from their lofty pillars and strewn the sands of an Asiatic desert, and the huge piles of ruins yet remaining upon the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, reads in their appearance the characters, wealth, and magnificence of the ancient Tyrian, Chaldean, and Jewish nations. Nor is this all, for in many cases, where the page of written history was either lost or rendered indistinct by time, the chasm has been filled up, and the chain of events again connected, by the indefatigable perseverance of those who have made the antiquities of the old world the subjects of their study. Nor have their efforts, crowned with such signal success, been suffered to pass without a guerdon. Contrary to the generally received opinion, that the world is wont to frown on him, who devotes his time and his talents to patient research

in the arcana of antiquity, and to draw from thence the germs of hidden knowledge, he has reaped a rich reward, not only in the favor with which his representations of newly-discovered objects of interest have been received, and the confidence reposed in them, but in the noble satisfaction of having added yet more to the knowledge and literature of his age, and of having aroused a spirit of investigation, which neither time nor difficulties will ever destroy, but continuing to increase with increasing information, like the successive waves of the sea, each augmenting in magnitude and strength, as it urges its way onward to the strand, will never be satisfied or stayed in its progress, till it has rolled upon the shores of knowledge the last relic of ancient magnificence, submerged by the lapse of ages.

Such a consummation of the labor of centuries, amid the relics of the departed nations of the old world, though much to be desired, as removing the necessity of research there, and consequently transferring the talents and energies engaged in it, to other and no less worthy objects, can hardly be expected for years to come. A field so vast in extent, so ample in material, and so interesting in the results already attained, ought not to be relinquished, till every object is fully identified, and every subject fully explored and revealed. And, although the western continent abounds in relics, not perhaps as rich as those that lie scattered on the surface of the eastern, still, the investigation of the former is no less important, and would be as productive of interest as of the latter, they being the remains, and the only ones, of nations, whose names, origin, manners, and customs were lost ages before the ships of the adventurous Genoese touched the shores of this newly-discovered world. Giving, therefore, the preference to the antiquities of the old world, as more generally known and better understood, and more intimately connected with the known history of the human race, we would nevertheless claim for those of the new, an interest and importance commensurate with their extent, from the man of science and the antiquary, and especially from the youthful aspirant for scientific and literary renown, whose lot has been cast amid the magnificent scenery and splendid natural productions of this young land.

It may at first appear singular, that there should exist the remains of ancient arts and science, indicating different degrees of civilization, in a land but recently discovered, and peopled by tribes of wandering savages, unacquainted even with some of the ruder arts. Indeed, the knowledge of the existence of these remains, is confined to a number exceedingly limited, and an intimate acquaintance with their forms and localities to a very few. But, from those ruins which are found along the