Knav. Coral Fishery.

"Coral, that beauteous product only found
Beneath the water and above the ground,
If fish'd for as it ought, from thence might spring
A Neptune's palace for a British king."

Queen. Furnishing Funerals to all Parts of Great Britain.

"Come all ye sickly mortals, die apace,
And solemn pomp's your funerals shall grace;
Old rusty hackneys still attend each hearse,
And scarecrows in black gowns complete the face."

King. Temple Mills.

"By these old mills strange wonders have been done,
Numbers have suffer'd, yet they still work on;
Then tell us, which have done the greater ills,
The Temple lawyers, or the Temple Mills?"

JNO. SUDLOW.

BIRTHPLACE OF THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE.

It is commonly believed that the Island of Martinique was the birthplace of Marie Josephine Rose Tascher de la Pagerie, better known as the Empress Josephine. It would seem, however, from the following circumstances; that St. Lucia has a preferable claim to that distinction. By the treaty of Paris (10th February, 1763), St. Lucia, until then one of the neutral islands, was ceded to France, and was made a dependency of Martinique. The first step adopted by the local authorities on that occasion, was to offer extensive grants of land in St. Lucia to such families in Martinique as might be disposed to settle in the former island; and among those who took advantage of the proposal was M. de Tascher, the father of Josephine. In the course of the year 1763 he came over to St. Lucia, and settled with his family on the crest of a hill called Paix-Bouche, within a few miles of the site now occupied by the principal town. Here they continued to reside until 1771, when M. de Tascher, having been selected for the office of President of the Conseil Souverain in Martinique, returned with his family to that island, taking with him a child seven years old, to whom Madame de Tascher had given birth at Morne Paix-Bouche on the 24th June, 1764, and who was destined to become the wife of Bonaparte and the Empress of France.

The fact that M. de Tascher and his family settled in St. Lucia after the Treaty of Paris, is too well established to require corroboration. The fact that his residence there extended from 1763 to 1771, is no less certain. While collecting materials some years ago for the history of St. Lucia, I met with the most authentic proofs of this circumstance; but having returned the books and documents to the several parties to whom they belonged, I am unable at this moment to give a special reference under this head. As regards the particular date of Mademoiselle De Tascher's birth, I am indebted for a knowledge of it to no less an authority than M. Sidney Daney, the author of a voluminous history of Martinique, who, while asserting that she was born on the paternal estate in that island, records the date in the following words:

"Cette année 1764 fut signalée par la naissance d'une femme qui, tout en parvenant à la plus glorieuse des destinées humaines, devait être à la fois le symbole le plus doux de cette divine charité. Le vingt-quatre Juin naquit aux Trois-Ilets, sur l'habitation de ses parents, Marie Josephine Rose Tascher de la Pagerie."

That the claim of St. Lucia to the honour of having given birth to that remarkable woman is no idle dream, no imaginary pretension, now set up for the first time, can be shown by many circumstances. From her coronation in 1804, to her death in 1814, there were several persons in St. Lucia who asserted their knowledge of the fact. Some of them were still living in 1823, when the late Sir John Jeremie came to St. Lucia and collected information on the subject. In 1831 that able judge published in a local newspaper a short historical notice of St. Lucia, in which he gives the following unequivocal testimony on this question. I quote from the St. Lucia Gazette and Public Advertiser of 23rd February, 1831:

"On the summit of one of its (St. Lucia’s) highest mountains, the Paix-Bouche (a word which in Negro-French is significantly expressive of silence), on a spot surrounded by trees, apparently the growth of centuries, it might be supposed that here at least the very name of the extraordinary being who has given an impulse to the age of Napoleon had scarcely reached. A few yards from the almost impracticable and faintly traced path is the mouldering foundation of a decayed cottage. That was the birthplace of Josephine. The inhabitants of Martinique, with whom all the St. Lucia families are connected, lay claim to Josephine as their countrywoman. The fact is, however, as I have stated it; and this was admitted by one of her own family at Martinique to a lady of our island, but with the truly French addition, ‘qu’elle n’avait fait qu’y naître.”

The companion of her childhood was Mr. Martin Raphael, late a councillor of the royal court, who is still living, and who on visiting France was kindly received by her at Malmaison. Madame Delomel, who died but a few months ago at a very advanced age, knew her well."

On my arrival in St. Lucia in 1831, an old woman of colour, named Dédé, was pointed out to me as having been in the service of the Taschers at Morne Paix-Bouche. She was then residing with the family of Mr. R. Juge, the President of the Court of First Instance, and that gentleman assured me that nothing was more certain than that Josephine was born in St. Lucia. I afterwards had several conversations with Dédé on the subject, and she confirmed Mr. Juge’s statement, adding that she was present at the time of Jo-
sephonie's birth, and was employed as her bonne until the departure of the family for Martinique. Dédé was an intelligent old dame, then about eighty years of age, and was greatly respected by every one.

I am aware that all this is at variance with the biographical records of our time, which assign Martinique as the place of Josephine's birth. But this inaccuracy may be accounted for on the following grounds. 1st. St. Lucia is within a short distance of Martinique, and at the period of Josephine's birth was a dependency, a portion, as it were, of that colony. 2nd. The family had long been settled in Martinique before they came to St. Lucia, and all their predilections were for the former island. 3rd. Their sojourn in St. Lucia was not of long duration, and in a few years the circumstance of their having been there at all was probably forgotten by the public. 4th. There was no priest in St. Lucia in 1764, by whom the child might have been christened, and the place of her birth established beyond dispute. 5th. When at a subsequent period she was baptized in Martinique, it happened naturally enough that there was no one present who had any knowledge of her having been born in St. Lucia, or who felt any concern in the matter. 6th. M. De Tascher had now become a personage of some distinction, and he was probably not unwilling to efface the recollection of his having been, at one time, a needy planter in the wilds of St. Lucia. 7th. Facts which have since acquired an obvious importance, were of none at all in 1771. The suppression of their existence, whether intentional or accidental, would have attracted no notice at that period of the history of the Taschers. It was not then anticipated that a member of the family would, at no very remote period, become associated with the greatest actor in the most extraordinary revolution in the world's history, and prove herself not unworthy of so exalted a destiny.

All that relates to the Empress Josephine receives an added degree of interest from recent occurrences. It would be strange if the wife who was discarded by Napoleon because she could not give him an heir for the imperial throne, should give him, if not an heir, his first successor, in the person of her grandson, Prince Louis Napoleon. As regards St. Lucia, too, there is a coincidence which may be worth mentioning. When Napoleon fell into our hands after the battle of Waterloo, St. Lucia was the place first selected for his exile; but in consequence of the dangers likely to arise from its proximity to Martinique, the scheme was relinquished, and the preference given to St. Helena.

St. Lucia.

HENRY H. BREEN.
waviering in respect to those supposed primary atoms. 

... I will add in respect to his [Lachmann's] dissertations, so instructive as a microscopic examination of the poem, 1. That I find myself constantly dissenting from that critical feeling on the strength of which he cuts out parts as interpolations, and discovers traces of the hands of distinct poets: 2. That his objections against the continuity of the narrative are often founded upon lines which the ancient scholiasts and Mr. Payne Knight had already pronounced to be interpolations: 3. That such of his objections as are founded upon lines undisputed admit, in many cases, of a complete and satisfactory reply.”

Grote's own opinions on the subject are difficult to arrive at, but what he has said is mostly true. These three different views of the Homeric controversy have, as I have said, occupied the world since thinking on the subject began; each hypothesis has found most able, critical, and quibbling adherents and opponents, each affirming and proving, after his own way, what the others denied and scouted.

There is another author who has likewise discussed the subject of Homer, and in a way more attractive to the general reader; and that is the finely-feeling and learned Walter Savage Landor, in his Pericles and Aspasia. Speaking in the person of Pericles, he says ↑:

“I have no paradox to maintain, no partiality to defend. Some tell us there were twenty Homers; some deny that there was ever one. It were idle and foolish to shake the contents of a vase in order to let them settle at last. We are perpetually labouring to destroy our delight; our composure, our devotion to superior power. Of all the animals on earth we least know what is good for us. My opinion is, that what is best for us is our admiration of good. No man living venerates Homer more than I do. He was the only author I read when I was a boy; for our teachers are usually of opinion that wisdom and poetry are, like fruits for children, unwholesome, if too fre-. Simodides had indeed grown somewhat sound; Pindar was heating; Aeschylus . . . ay, but Aeschylus was almost at the next door. Homer then nourished my fancy, animated my dreams, awoke me in the morning, marched with me, sailed with me, taught me morals, taught me language, taught me music, and philosophy, and war.”

Agreeing with my honoured friend in what I have italicised above, I think it is time that the Homeric question were set at rest, and, to atone for our error in shaking the vase, let it remain at peace for ever. I offer my reflections on the subject with extreme diffidence, yet, though I confess myself open to correction, and desirous of it, as a friend to literature, I cannot say that I think my views will be found far from an approximation to the truth, which, at this remote age, is all we can possibly arrive at. As Plinius Secundus held that there was no book so bad but that something might be learned from it, so I hold that there is no theory so bad (always excepting that one put forth by some escaped Bedlamite, of Shakespear's non-being, and that his works were the composition of the monks), but that there lies some truth at the bottom of it. On that principle I have endeavoured "to lay the keel" (as Southey used to say of his planned poems) of a reconciliation between all the beliefs of all the theorists.

I will state my theory, as I have done the others, in the plainest possible terms; and, to begin at the beginning, I must go back to the origin of song. Is it possible that an army like that of the Hellenes when at Troy, had no idea of passing the weary evenings except in drinking and talking? No: surely not. We find Phemios singing, in the Odyssey, lays of much the same kidney as those in Athenæus, and in Xenophon's Symposium. These were short recitals of some particular circumstance of antiquity, half religious and half earthly. No doubt the common soldiers of that age had, like the common sailors of some fifty years ago, some one qualified to "discourse in excellent music" among them. Many of these, like those of the negroes in the United States, were extemporaneous, and allusive to events passing around them. But what was passing around them? The grand events of a spirit-stirring war; occurrences likely to impress themselves, as the mystical legends of former times had done, upon their memory; besides which, a retentive memory was deemed a virtue of the first water, and was cultivated accordingly, in those ancient times. Ballads at first, and down to the beginning of the war with Troy, were mere recitations with an intonation. Then followed a species of recitative, probably with an intoned burden. Tune next followed, as it aided the memory considerably.

It was at this period, about four hundred years after the war, that a poet flourished of the name of Melesigene, or Meonsides, but most probably the former. He saw that these ballads might be made of great utility to his purpose of writing a poem on the social position of Hellas, and as a collection he published these lays, connecting them by a tale of his own. This poem now exists under the title of the Odyssey. The author, however, did not affix his own name to the poem, which, in fact, was great part of it remodelled from the archaic dialect of Crete, in which tongue the ballads were found by him. He therefore called it the poem of Homeræus, or the Collector.* But this is rather a

* Welcker, Der Epische Cyclus, p. 127. Professor Wilson, in his System of Hindu Mythology (Introduct. p. lxxii.), has the following passage, quoted by Grote: "The sage Vyasa is represented not as the author, but
proof of his modesty and talent, than of his mere drudging arrangement of other people’s ideas, for, as Grote has finely observed, arguing for the unity of authorship, “a great poet might have recast pre-existing separate songs into one comprehensive whole; but no mere arrangers or compilers would be competent to do so.”

While employed on the wild legend of Odysseus, he met with a ballad recording the quarrel of Achilles and Agamemnon; his noble mind seized the hint that there presented itself, and the Achilleis grew under his hand. Unity of design, however, caused him to publish the poem under the same pseudonym as his former work; and the disjointed lays of the ancient bards were joined together, like those relating to the Cid, into a chronicle history, named the *Iliad.* Melesigene knew that the poem was destined to be a lasting one; and so it has proved. But first, the poems were destined to undergo many vicissitudes and corruptions, by the people who took to singing them in the streets, assemblies, and agoras. However, Solon first, and then Peisistratos, and afterwards Aristotle and others, revised the poems, and restored the works of Melesigene Homer to their original integrity in a great measure. But that this was of no great avail is evident from the corruption *ολοκώτατο τε πάντα,* in the opening. All birds are carnivorous, and therefore the passage must be wrong: besides, the words immediately following, savouring somewhat of interpolation, and, indeed, being condemned by some as such, would lead to the fair assumption that the whole line was corrupted.

I said before (Vol. v., p. 99.) that the Cyclic poems illustrated the history of the Homeric compositions, just as the letters of Poplicola, and those of Philo Junius, illustrate the history of Homer; but I am not inclined to deprive them all of credit as the compositions of the same poet. For instance, part of the *τιμίος βαθύς* was probably done from the notes of Melesigene, who was, like Herodotoz, always at work upon some matter.

The origin of writing has been made a stumbling-block in the Homeric question, and most foolishly; as the arranger and compiler of the Vedas and the Purânas. His name denotes his character, meaning the arranger or distributor; and the recurrence of so many Vyūsas,—many individuals who new-modelled the Hindu Scriptures,—has nothing in it that is improbable, except the fabulous intervals by which their labours are separate.

As for me, I leave my speculations to the mercy of those who do not think like myself. I am satisfied that they are not far from the truth, and as near as we can hope to come in these days. Indeed, it is a well-known fact, embodied in the old proverb, “What’s one man’s meat is another’s poison;” and that which is convincing to one is the contrary to another.

Ere I “close” my “scribblings,” however, I must tender my thanks to the Editor of “N. & Q.” for his kind admission of these articles to his pages.

HAVETO!

KENNETH R. H. MACKENZIE.

March 3, 1852.

FOLK LORE.

Ancient Custom on Interment.—I have read that it was a custom to inter an hour-glass with the dead, as an emblem of the sand of life being run out; or perhaps (as I should rather suggest) to intimize that the departed, having entered upon eternity, had done with time. I believe that in the early part of the last century the custom had not entirely disappeared, and that small hour-glasses were given to the friends of the deceased attending at funerals, and were put beside the corpse (like rosemary), or thrown into the grave? Does the custom still linger in any remote parts of the country?

W. S. G.

Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Pure Rain Water.—Pure rain water is said to be an infallible cure for sore eyes, and cases are reported to the writer by persons who have tried and fancy they have proved its efficacy. The rain water must be collected in a clean open vessel, in the month of June, and must not be contaminated by being previously collected by any other means; it will then remain pure for any length of time, if preserved in a bottle.

T. D. Gainsbro’.

Cure for Hooping Cough.—This complaint is very prevalent in my neighbourhood just now. I overheard a conversation the other day between some farmers: one was recommending the patient to inhale the breath of a horse as a certain cure; another gravely informed his audience that the sight of a piebald horse would afford immediate relief!

G. A. C.

SAINTED KINGS INCORRUPTIBLE.

In the Appendix to Evelyn’s interesting Diary (last edition, 1850), your readers may recollect...