

## THE BOOKS OF PRIMEVAL HISTORY.

[In former numbers of *The Monist* we have published the following philosophical poems of the late Major J. W. Powell: "The Soul," April, 1895; "Becoming," July, 1911; and this third contribution glorying in the ancient records of geology, of the sites of ruined cities and the graves of primitive man, exhibits the same enthusiasm for the results of scientific research as did the former poems for philosophical subjects. We have selected this poem, here published for the first time, from the manuscripts which the author shortly before his death entrusted to the editor.—ED.]

### THE STONE BOOK.

The history of primal man is found  
In doomsday book of generations dead—  
The rock-leaved bible called Geology,  
With pages graved in elemental strife,  
Where every fossil letter cost a life.

The primal arts were born in every land,  
For widely scattered o'er all lands are found  
Stone tomahawk and spear and knife and dart—  
The cruder vestiges of man's first art.

The culture first expressed in tools of flint  
Began in every land, and long ago—  
A moment, reckoned right in scale of time,  
The geologic dial used by sage,  
But told in years of man, an unknown age.

That history in stone, spread o'er the earth,  
Whose pagination is in fossil forms,  
Records a meager tale of primal man—  
That being shared by every lowly brute,  
Without the trace of higher attribute.

The time-bleached casket erst that held the brain  
Reveals but ill the mind of early man,  
For nobler life of proud humanity  
Is not expressed in framework osseous  
Which petrifies in beds of ooze and clay,  
To be exhumed for cabinet display.

Fools dig for bones and measure them by rule,  
(Their art ycleped as "anthropology,")  
And vainly deem they resurrect the man  
In empty cranium of ancient mole  
And find a "dolichocephalic" soul.

These primal men of stone-book record lived  
In forest, round the sheltered bays of sea,  
On shore where wild bird's flight to reedy isle  
Was mirrored clear in quiet woodland lake,  
On bank where fishes played in purling brook,  
Near spring where flower bloomed in quiet nook.

The Eden fair of stone-book men was large.  
They could not wander out through polar zones,  
For, walled with ice, their Eden was enclosed.  
Between these frozen lands, where summer's sun  
The verdant hills and waving meadows warmed,  
Their garden stretched through all the zones of life.  
So all the lands to primal men gave birth—  
The universal denizens of earth.

Before they learned stone knives to fashion fair,  
Before they learned shell beads and plumes to flaunt,  
To build of bough and bark and reed and stone  
Their shelters rude from wind and drenching storm,  
These men had wandered over every vale  
And made their homes in every quiet dale.

These sylvan men and dusky mates of old,  
In tribes whose bonds were streams of kindred blood  
And cords of love entwined of marriage ties,  
Were scattered everywhere throughout the earth  
Before the human tongue was skilled in speech,  
Before the race had learned the trade of kings  
And force of laws and majesty of courts.  
They lived in plenty with the crudest arts,  
And high emotions kindled not their hearts.

But primal man expressed his thought in art,  
And fashioned stocks and stones for simple use,  
And slow evolved a lore of mythic life,  
And speech for mild or harsh exchange of thought,  
Invented social life for help and peace,  
And sports for wold illumed by fagot light  
That cleft the shadows dense of forest night.

From modern culture back to primal state  
These arts are traced in sure converging lines,  
The lore becoming more a mythic tale,  
The tongue more babbling in simplicity,  
The institutions ever found more crude,  
The sports more childish in their simple glee—  
To trace all this with just fidelity  
Is task of truer anthropology.

*Song.*

Book of the rocks adamantine,  
The drama of ocean and land,  
Mountain and forest and prairie  
And fountain and cataract grand,  
Eons of change is your story  
While islands of ocean were planned.

Book of the ages unnumbered,  
With record of flood and of fire,  
Headlands engulfed by the waters,  
And seas raging high in their ire,  
Eons of earthquakes your story  
And mountains on funeral pyre.

Book of biology primal,  
Of lives on diversified plan  
Blooming in Edens of verdure  
Or roaming by kindred and clan,  
Eons of life is your story,  
With postscript for primitive man.

## THE RUIN BOOK.

The vestiges of early homes are found  
In wild confusion scattered o'er the earth,  
On sites of thorps no longer used by man,  
All marked with relics rude and strange and waste,  
As tools of flint and potsherds scattered wide,  
And mealing stones, and bowls of steatite,  
And many a needle made of bone or horn,  
And kitchen fragments now in heaps forlorn.

For knife and spear and arrowhead man wrought  
The torrent-fashioned boulder of the stream  
And dornick quarried from the bank or scaur,  
And deftly wrought the stone to cutting edge  
With blow of granite hammer wrenched from cliff,  
Awhile the spalls were scattered o'er the glebe  
With reject forms that fitted not the plan  
Of primal, patient, toiling artisan.

Anon the failures found at quarry ledge  
Are made to tell of "paleolithic" man;  
The finished tools of village site give proof  
Of "neolithic" art and puzzled sage.  
So, wandering by river bank at work,  
The sylvan man belongs to primal age;  
But, home returned, is classed in higher stage;  
And two mysterious groups of men are found  
Whose occult arts bestrew the modern ground.

In humid lands clear tarns reflect the sky,  
With sapphire depths and drifting clouds of gray,  
While reeds and waterlilies fringe the shore,  
Whose creeping roots reluctant share the sands  
With driven boles of ash or oak or pine—  
Foundation weird of ancient palafitte,  
The clustered dwellings reared above the wave,  
Where spearman pierced the trout with antler glave.

Lacustrian dwellings now in ruins lie  
Beneath the storm-fed, wave-washed sands of time,  
To bury many a work of primal art  
That now a tale of ancient times impart.

In arid lands, where cliffs and ledges stretch  
Athwart the opalescent desert wild,

High mesas stand, as broad foundation built  
For pueblo homes in centuries ago,  
Whose ruins tell the tale of culture's dawn.

Where stalked the boasting chief the wolf now prowls;  
Where danced the tawny maid the raven hops;  
Where children nude disported in the sand  
The badger digs a home for owl and snake;  
In ancient tom-tom halls the bats now screech  
And gliding lizard turns its agile head  
To gaze on squirrel sporting o'er the dead.

Eternal rivers roll through high plateaus  
And cut their channels deep with flinty saws,  
Till canyon walls o'erhang the roaring wave,  
With buttressed shelves and adamant floors  
And stairways grand to storied halls of cliff,  
All carved by artist storms for homes of men,  
Primeval wanderers in canyon glen.

These homes have crumbled, cliffs have fallen low,  
And stairways grand have yielded unto flood,  
And primal arts are buried deep in sand,  
To be exhumed for lore of modern land.

In geologic time the earth was rent,  
And blast from subterranean furnace poured  
A storm of dust athwart the firmament,  
In streams pulverulent of pumice stone,  
Which fell to earth, awhile new mountains rose,  
And round whose summits purple clouds repose.

As storms are marshalled under banner red  
Along the craggy battle-field of mount,  
The cohorts plunge adown the steep defile

In torrent columns over pumice slope  
And open canyon lanes to valley low,  
While chalky cliffs are left to mark the way  
Of mighty rivers rolling on for aye.

High up these cliffs the ancient man made home  
In lodges excavate with maul of trap:  
Deep chambers, carved in pumice rock of white—  
The cavate dwelling strange of primal knight.

But patient time, who builds the continents  
And scatters them again o'er ocean floor,  
But smiles at tufa cliffs, and lays them low  
In ruined heaps, where buried arts now show.

The vales and plains that gather waters sweet  
To feed the crystal streams that pour their floods  
In midland sea that rocked the cradle soft  
Of early culture, now historical;  
The desert valley fed by tawny Nile;  
The bulbul vales of Tigris and Euphrate;  
The river lands of "Ind and Far Cathay";  
The table lands be-crowned with mountains huge,  
Are all the sites of ancient cities dead,  
Whose walls and turrets now are buried deep  
And kings and prophets tombed in final sleep.

Then comes the story of Vesuvius,  
With cities buried under fiery flood  
For many centuries of deep repose.  
The all-destroying element of fire,  
Its lust for slaughter sate with sacrifice,  
A moment paused to make a book of fate,  
A history devoid of love and hate.

But more: All over oriental lands  
From time to time great cities spread their walls,  
Whose ruins slumber deep on fertile plain,  
Where rivers flow in haste to join the main.  
Their roster vast is book of final doom,  
And every rolling hill is but a tomb.

In occidental lands, as ages came,  
A thousand thousand villages were built,  
To flourish under rule of chief and priest  
And be o'erwhelmed by war of man and storm;  
Their lengthened roll a scroll of many tongues,  
Their history the tale of many tombs,  
Their book of wars illumed by clubs and darts,  
Their book of deeds illumed by shards of arts.

*Song.*

Centuries come and centuries go;  
Solitude reigns where monarch was crowned,  
Battlements crushed and minarets low,  
The cities are strewn over desolate ground.

Gone are the years and gone are the folk;  
Lost is the tale of opulent life;  
Whelmed by the years or whelmed at a stroke,  
The cities are gone with their turmoil and strife.

Capitol wrecked, metropolis crushed,  
Palace in dust and temple in ash,  
Tyrant in tomb and orator hushed,  
The cities are gone in the centuries' crash.



## THE TOMB BOOK.

The peaks and crags and minarets of mount,  
With crimson coronets and golden glow,  
Forever and forever doff their crowns  
And hide their mourning heads in clouds of woe  
As souls depart from life in vale below.

Through many centuries of rolling years  
Mankind has marched, around this planet ball,  
Adown the broad highway of teeming life  
To death's grim portal, open wide to all,  
Beyond whose gate there spreads a mystic pall.

And on they course in armies to the gate,  
Their greeting e'er a song of joyous tone,  
Their farewell e'er a requiem of grief;  
From joy to grief the phalanx marches on,  
Beyond the pale where multitudes have gone.

Still on they come, adown the sequent years,  
With cheer and glee and loud exultant boast,  
In tribes and nations pouring down the way,  
Forever coming in a mighty host,  
Departing ever to the mystic coast.

Beside the cradle way to coming life  
Fair Joy forever stands with arms unfurled,  
In camis white, resplendent as the day,  
Her golden tresses by the breezes curled,  
To greet arriving hosts to beauteous world.

Beside the postern way from life to death  
Wan Grief forever leads the weeping band.

In trailing robes of sorrow's sable hue  
For hosts departing to the unknown strand,  
From region filled with light to shadow-land.

Wherever copse of blossom life is spread  
Has rocked some cradle watched by mother's eye;  
The soft south wind afanning baby cheek,  
A low sweet song ahushing baby cry,  
And fond caress asoothing baby sigh.

Wherever continents and islands rise  
Above the restless wave of boundless main,  
There every rood of land is ancient grave;  
And round this portal all the weeping train,  
With sobbing bosoms, chant the sad refrain.

The lullaby of Joy is never hushed,  
The threnody of Grief is ever rife;  
But canticle and ululation mix  
In weird and dithyrambic hymn of strife  
That echoes down the corridors of life.

Alas, pale Death has wandered round the world;  
His footprints mark the universal earth;  
His trails are meshed in every glade and wood,  
And tombs on tombs are piled to dismal height,  
And bones with bones in ossuary laid,  
And skull by skull in circling ranks displayed.

In mounds were placed the dead of early man,  
And multitudes of tumuli were built  
In tropic forest, palm grove, cypress wold,  
In fiord and glen and stony glacial plain,  
And on the sand spit built by stormy main.

That peace might reign they stored beside their dead  
The simple wealth acquired by skillless toil,  
As garments, weapons, tool of handiwork,  
And baskets, vases, ornaments, and toys,  
And all the primal store of childish joys.

The customary deed became a rite,  
Repeated o'er as sacred gift to love,  
Until at last religion sealed it meet  
As sacrifice to dear ancestral shade,  
An offering to unseen spirit made.

Where flows the Tennessee from mountain founts  
In sweeping curves to River Beautiful,  
Among magnolia groves of attar rich  
And tulip trees whose blossoms strew the ground,  
There ancient clustered graves are stone-wrought cists  
That hold the last remains of tribes unknown,  
Above whose forms the mighty oaks have grown.

On River Green that flows from mountain tarn  
To wed the River Grand, whose source is found  
Where asters, gentians, and lilies grow,  
Whose silent song is melody of light,  
There cairns are built above the long-lost dead,  
And every native swart who journeys by  
Adds stone to stone in pious memory.

Beneath Andean peaks whose summits rise  
Above the tide of wide Pacific sea  
A sand dune stretches bleak to naked shore,  
Where men are tombed in vestments wrought of wool,  
The wondrous tapestries of Gobelin,  
In weird necropolis of old Ancon,  
The city eld by hosts of time o'erthrown.

Where turbid Tiber creeps o'er ancient plain,  
Among the ruin vast of elder world,  
Past tomb of emperor and tomb of slave,  
The hosts of dead are stored in catacomb,  
The gloomy subterranean hall of Rome.

Where Kedron's rills roll on, as Jordan rolls,  
To fill the Dead Sea vased in Palestine,  
Jerusalem the mighty stands to guard  
The Sacred Sepulcher where Mary stood  
And wept her Lord and Love and Life and Hope.  
Anon the armies meet and warfare wage  
To win Redeemer's tomb as battle gage.

In Afric highlands, where the mountains rise  
To kiss the clouds and woo their welcome snows,  
Great rivers flow with waters sweet and pure,  
To join where lands are swept with wild simoons  
And waves of Nile are stained with drifting dunes.

The Nile-fed desert homed an empire vast,  
Once kingd by Pharaohs whom Moses knew,  
Who ruled o'er hosts of slaves, the spoils of war.  
These weary toilers, urged by tyrant lash,  
Wrought mighty blocks from distant granite cliffs,  
And built the pyramids as tombs for kings  
Who sought through mummied death new life to gain  
And wondrous immortality obtain.

Where mighty city stood in ancient time  
A mausoleum housed a silent king,  
Embalmed and wrapped in vestiges of waste.  
Now titles proud and history are lost,  
But refuse cerements have a story lore  
More highly prized than scripture tomes of yore.

A melancholy book, this tome of tombs,  
Whose leaves are scattered over all the earth.  
No pinion plucked from wild bird's soaring wing,  
And no papyrus from the reedy bank,  
No pitchy ink, compound of gum and soot,  
Were made to serve the author's unkennd task.  
Ah, little dreamed he of the curious lore  
He writ in silent sepulcher of yore.

The book of rocks and book of ruins sad  
And book of tombs that house the many dead  
Are triune tomes of archeology  
That tell the tale of long-departed men,  
The unremembered folk of years ago,  
Whose bards had not the skill of pen and press  
To tome their tales in book scriptorial;  
But yet in amber deeds their lives were cast,  
The prehistoric tribes and nations vast.

*Song.*

The wind drifts dust on ancient thorp,  
And the waves spread their ooze over hamlet of lake;  
The wild beast roams where pueblo stood,  
And the storm sweeps the sand over cliff-dweller's  
wake.

The talus tombs the cavate lodge,  
And the river engulfs the pantheon proud;  
The desert creeps o'er ancient mart,  
And the hurricane weaves for the city a shroud.

Volcano dooms Pompeii fair,  
And the gates of old Babylon swing nevermore;  
Palenque sleeps in tropic wold,  
And the Andes are dirging Huanaco of yore.

J. W. POWELL.