

Pethox Parvus : dedicated, without permission, to the remnant of blind priests of that idolatry / by Iconoclastis.

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PETHOX PARVUS.

DEDICATED, WITHOUT PERMISSION,

TO

THE REMNANT OF BLIND PRIESTS OF THAT
IDOLATRY.

..... O what are these,
Death's ministers, not men, who thus deal death
Inhumanly to men, and multiply
Ten thousand fold the sin of him who slew
His brother: for of whom such massacre
Make they but of their brethren, men of men.

MILTON.

BY ICONOCLASTIS.

James Moore Esq.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. MURRAY, FLEET STREET;

By C. Squire, Furnival's-Inn-Court.

1807.

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PETHOX PARVUS*.

PETHOX Parvus is undoubtedly of illustrious birth; for he arose in the dark ages. Indeed, some venerable theologians have been induced by certain obscure pas-

* Some may object to this name as barbarous. We adopt it notwithstanding, and stamp it on the front of this allegorical savage. Is the word *Variola* preferable, which has no better authority than the base Latinity of the doctors of the seventh century, incomparably inferior to the classical purity of modern physicians? Besides *Variola* is feminine, and not a very appropriate appellation for a masculine monster.

Dean Swift, who is unrivalled in correctness of language, inscribes a poem to Pethox the Great: this authority is decisive.

sages in Scripture to carry back his origin almost to the flood. Among others, a monk in the sixteenth century attempts to prove, that Satan raised up this monster to subdue the temper of the man of Uz. But as Satan was only permitted to try the patience of Job, and not of all mankind, the boils with which he was infested were certainly of a less malignant race : for Pethox Parvus was never contented with one victim. Had he been once concocted, he would have assailed Job's comforters with similar boils : his wife, especially, could not have escaped ; and one of his miseries would thus have ended, in spite of the devil*.

Some oriental antiquarians have searched

* There is a worse supposition respecting this eruption made by another polemic, which only shewed how ignorant he was in surgery.

the mystical writings of the Bramins for information on this subject. The Gentoos boast of an antiquity reaching far beyond the fabulous age of Egypt and Greece ; but we presume it may be doubted whether their sacred books are antecedent to that period. It is however recorded in them, that about three thousand four hundred years ago, divine honours were regularly paid to a certain *Gootee ka Tagoran*, the Goddess of spots. This personage is conceived by Holwell to be the identical Pethox Parvus, and that she existed in Indostan from time immemorial. But the ancient records of the Bramins, however venerated in the East, are not considered by us as equally authentic with Doomsday-book, and would not obtain credit for a pedigree even at the Herald's office. Besides had *Gootee ka Tagoran* been the personification alluded to, she could not have remained so long

in obscurity. No effort to check her forwardness would have prevented her bursting early into public notice ; for though horrid in her aspect, and frank in bestowing her loathsome favours upon all who unluckily approached her, yet she would have inflamed and killed more victims than the most fascinating and cruel beauty,

Had then so terrible a deity flourished at the period that is pretended, Bacchus, Sesostris, or at least Alexander must have become acquainted with her. Their armies would have felt her power ; even merchants, though intent on gain, could not have overlooked her dimples, and must have carried the indelible impression into Europe. But no such events occurred ; a decisive proof, that the Goddess of spots, whoever she was, was of a much gentler nature.

The classical writers are universally silent on this subject; but in later times, when Pethox Parvus had actually appeared, some of their imitators asserted, that he sprang from the Eumenides. This pedantic conceit was little regarded; as the snakes of the Furies, and the bolts of Cupid, had long lost their terrors; the Muses were then entirely neglected; Venus was forced to hide her charms under ground; and the Graces had been tossed into the Tiber. Hercules, Mars, even Jupiter himself had fled with affright; and Mahomet usurped Olympus. Thus, although Homer boldly thundered conviction, and Ovid sweetly insinuated the belief of Pagan genealogies, the collegiate parentage of Pethox Parvus, feebly chanted by the minor poets, never inspired faith. I am, however, accidentally enabled to establish his real origin, which Rhases the

Persian was probably not ignorant of: yet, in a treatise which he wrote, he disguises his knowledge by a delusive theory; being unwilling to signify that this merciless demon sprang up among true Mussulmen, the prime favourites of Heaven. The truth is however hinted at by this author in an Arabian manuscript in the library of the university of Leyden, and fully unfolded in an ancient work lately discovered by the French Scavans at Grand Cairo*. It is there stated, that in the eighth year of the Hegira, an old Arab gained his livelihood at Medina by healing horses' and camels' hoofs when cracked or festered by travelling through the sandy desert. This man

* Information concerning this curious manuscript was given to Lord Hutchinson by an old Aurnout; his Lordship seized it, and sent it to London, where it is at present buried, together with the other Egyptian antiquities, in the British Museum.

acquired the leprosy to a shocking degree, and his hands especially were infested with foul blotches. Though perishing with the malady, he still continued his wonted employment; and before he expired, when his hands were covered with hot ichor from foul distempered hoofs, and the leprous ooziings of his chopt skin, he unfortunately milked a female camel.

From this compound of fermenting virus Pethox Parvus was generated. The Fiend suddenly sprung up, and stalked through the land; Horror preceded, Agony and Death accompanied, Blindness and Struma followed his progress.

No conqueror, no eruption of barbarians, not even persecution, can be compared to him in destructive energy. Eastward he crossed the Deserts, moving insidiously with

the caravans, and ravaged India and China. Turning to the south, he quickly reached the hidden sources of the Nile, and travelled without opposition through the most interior parts of Africa. He found more resistance in advancing to the north; but at length he forced his way, and the Tartar trembles at his name.

Westward the Europeans, roused by Peter the Hermit, madly ventured to meet him. When too late they repented their fanatical zeal: for he not only aided the Saracens to bury their hosts in the Holy Land, but followed the miserable survivors to Europe, where he still dwells triumphant. And no sooner was America discovered, than Pethox Parvus was wafted across the Atlantic: he there contributed largely, with the fire-arms and blood-hounds of the ruthless Spa-

niards, to exterminate the tawny natives.

But a more loathsome Fiend was there met with; who secretly poisoned the conquerors, when revelling in pleasure: the venom penetrated to their marrow; it was conveyed to their innocent homes, and amply avenged the wrongs of the New World. The race of man continues, it is true, though assailed by these destructive pests; but the vital tree has never flourished in full perfection, since its blossoms and fruits were so frequently withered and blighted.

Fortunately, it was observed, that the American demon, like the lion of old legends, respected the chaste. Holy men living in rigid celibacy, and maidens scorning guilty love, were safe from his fury.

Constant husbands and faithful wives, when virtuously matched, likewise defied his approach. It was also discovered, that even when the blood was polluted, it could be purified again, like turbid and acescent wine, by a deleterious mineral.

But neither drugs nor virtues subdued the malignity of Pethox Parvus ; nor was his ferocity softened even by the charms of a virgin ; infancy and beauty, indiscriminately with age and deformity, became his prey : and those he could not completely destroy, he often maliciously disfigured ; clouding the brightest eyes, harrowing the most polished skin, and tainting the purest blood.

One thing alone mitigated his fury : he usually treated those persons, who spon-

taneously invited him, with less severity than those whom he casually encountered. And he very rarely, some think never, attacked an individual twice: many, therefore, solicited his presence from prudence. Yet this expedient was not always successful; for even when cautiously invited, and when the most solicitous preparations were made for his reception, he sometimes broke out with inflamed violence, and either poisoned his guest, or smote him with as much cruelty as those who shunned his approach.

What honours, what riches, would that man merit, who, by intellectual researches and curious experiments, should terminate this calamity? To tame this sphinx; or to famish him for want of prey, while his food was man, and the world inhabited, appeared impossible: yet an Œdipus has at last been found to solve these riddles. He

was born on the banks of the Severn; and in his youth was instructed by a sage from the north *, who explained to him many of the hidden arcana of nature, and cleared his intellectual eye from those gross films, which obstruct the vision of less favoured mortals.

Being thus enabled to investigate the qualities of the elements, and to render them obedient to his power, he formed a Sylph, armed with a slender dagger, whose bright point was dipt in a transparent quintessence

* The penetrating sagacity of John Hunter distinguished Œdipus among his pupils; he invited him to reside in his house, and become his companion in philosophical pursuits. But the love of rural scenes and calm contemplation induced this singular youth to decline so tempting an offer, and fixed him in that spot where he happily found the materials for his genius to work upon.

from the juices of a steed and a milch cow.

This liquid surpassing the virtues of the Stygean flood, renders the human body for ever invulnerable to all the attacks of Pethox Parvus. Thousands have tried the virtues of the enchanted fluid, and found it infallible: but the multitude are so habituated to the grim visage of Pethox Parvus, that they no longer dread him: like the inhabitants of a volcano, who have no apprehension of eruptions; and even after a village has been consumed, the surviving peasants build their cottages on the cooling crust of the lava: such is the influence of habit!

Whereas the Sylph, though of the gentlest disposition, startles the timid by the novelty of his appearance; and the igno-

rant and prejudiced refuse to bare their arm to his preserving dagger. Time will, of course, remove this apprehension: but it is lamentable, that the present race should, without necessity, continue to be the victims of a monster. This could easily be prevented by two salutary regulations:---Let all who are visited by the Demon, or who are so absurd as to invite him, be confined strictly to their homes, to prevent his encountering others: and let that house, which is his den, whence he issues forth to the destruction of the unwary, be guarded like a lazaretto, or converted to some useful and pious purpose.*

* Hospitals were originally founded by humane men to preserve the lives of the poor: but the Small-pox Hospital so far deviates from this purpose, that it has become one of the principal sources of mortality in this

By adopting these humane and easy precautions, we could soon rid ourselves for ever from one of the most fatal evils to which mortals are exposed. For the youthful Sylph, waving his brilliant lance, flies with swiftness and benevolence

town. Above 2000 persons are infected annually with a contagious disease at this house, which is likewise a market where infectious matter is sold at an unconscionable price to all who apply for it; by which means the contagion is perpetually disseminated through all the streets, lanes, and narrow courts of this crowded city. It is difficult to judge of the motives which actuate the Governors. Do they believe it charity to bestow death? And do they agree with Mr. Malthus, in considering it a benevolent act to sweep away a redundant population? Whatever are their motives, we are astonished that any medical men should consent to be the executioners of this species of patriotism. We hope the legislature will soon relieve them from any notion of political duty they may entertain, and will snatch the murderous lancet from their hands.

to every quarter of the globe; and, if permitted to touch every infant with its guardian point, posterity would for ever be secured from the destructive visitations of Pethox Parvus.

THE END.

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