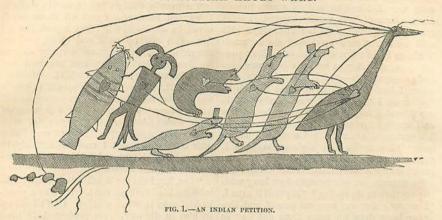
OUR DEBT TO CADMUS. BY REV. WILLIAM HAYES WARD.



T is a very delicate piece of analysis to | separate a word into its vowel and consonant sounds. It seems simple enoughand it is simple enough, now that we understand it-to articulate separately the score or two of sounds in a language; but it took a genius to make the first discovery that it could be done. It was a great deal easier to make pictures to represent the words, and we have several different kinds of picture writing.

The first stage of picture writing is that rude style with which we are somewhat familiar as practiced by the North American We can hardly call it writing, for Indians. general ideas rather than words are expressed. A story is told by a drawing, and the sentence is not analyzed into words. The accompanying illustration from Schoolcraft gives an example (Fig. 1). It is a petition presented by Indian chiefs to the President of the United States for the right to certain lakes near Lake Superior. The several petitioners are represented by the crane, martens, fish, etc., which are their totems. They have their eyes connected by lines with that of their leader, to show that their views coincide with his; and their hearts are similarly connected, to show that their feelings agree. The leader has a line from his in the art of writing. It was a

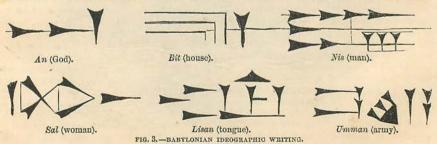
eye directed forward to the President, and another backward reaching to the lakes.

But in order to have true writing separate words must be indicated. This would be easy in the case of such nouns as man, sword, serpent, tree: but something more arbitrary would have to be devised to express the other parts of speech. In the case of such words a picture might be selected to suggest rather than to express the meaning. So a knot might suggest the conjunction and, a stick might represent the verb strike, and a pyramid might indicate the adjective firm. These pictures might in the course of ages be altered and modified so as to be entirely arbitrary, and we then have such a written language as the Chinese (Fig. 2), in which each character represents a word, or the most ancient Babylonian, which Sir Henry Rawlinson calls the Scythic or Accad (Fig. 3).

But this is a childish stage

FIG. 2.

CHINESE IDEOGRAPHIC WEITING.



du 212 Nabiākudurriuzur Nebuchadnezzar,

Sar Babilu asri kansu

King of Babylon, lord-paramount,



powerful, worshiper of the Lord of lords. FIG. 4.—ASSYRIAN SYLLABIC WRITING, FROM NEBUCHAUNEZZAR'S TEMPLE OF THE SUN.

brilliant idea of some unknown genius, who found that there were a great many words for which he could not make pictures, to write his sentence in a sort of rebus, in which a picture shall represent a syllable, and two or more shall be required to make up a word. Then, as another step, a picture of a ba-sin may represent its first syllable, ba, and a picture of a ser-pent may represent its first syllable, ser; and if the two pictures are used together we have the adjective ba-ser, which it would have been impossible to put into picture writing in any other way.

Here was the first step in analysis-the dividing of words into syllables. It may seem a very little thing, but it first made writing possible. This we will call syllabic But it is a very tedious sort of writing. Think how many syllables there are in a language, O ye who have toiled over

> ba ab bo ob ub,

and so on through page after page of the primer! Then add to these simple syllables the possible combinations with two consonants, like

bra bre bri bro bru, cad dad fad bad gad,

etc., and the number of simple syllables becomes enormous. But the oldest alphabets were all of this sort, simply because men were not yet advanced enough to think out a simpler system. Turn to Menant's Grammar of the Assyrian Inscriptions, the language of the arrow-headed writings of Nineveh and Babylon, and you will find the first twenty-five pages taken up in giving a list of the characters, and they are not yet all known. The first volume of Norris's dictionary of the same language gives 361 separate characters, and the second and third volumes add over one hundred more to them, while two more vol-

have taken years to learn familiarly, had a copious literature, of which enough has been dug out of the valley of the Euphrates to fill several volumes of the size of the Bible. An example of it is given in Fig. 4. No wonder that in those times a scribe—one who knew how to write-was looked upon as truly a learned man!

It seems to us as easy and as natural to divide a word into its elemental sounds as into its syllables, but it is not. In 1823 a Cherokee Indian named Sequoja, or Guest, as he is also called, learned enough in the principles of European writing to set him to thinking whether he, too, could not do as much. He had got an inkling of the fact that we divide words into parts and give signs to these fractions; so he made him an alphabet. It was syllabic. This was all the analysis he was capable of. It never occurred to him that he could divide a syllable into any thing more elemental. His first draft had two hundred characters, though he afterward was able to reduce them to eighty-five. If it seems strange that so few syllables could exist, it must be remembered that the Indian languages are very simple in their vocal structure, and that in many of them two consonants can not come together, and that every syllable must end in a vowel. We can pronounce the word speak, a single syllable which begins with two consonants and ends with Many savage tribes could not pronounce that word; and in the copy of the New Testament translated into the Negro-English of Guiana, which lies before me as I write, this word is always given "peekee." Even after being brought into contact with English, Dutch, and Spanish masters and drivers, nine-tenths of the words are softened by the negroes in this way. So "I will repay, saith the Lord," is "Me sa pai bakka; so Massa takka"-that is, "Me shall pay back; umes are to follow. And this cumbersome so Massa talks." As another illustration of alphabet, or rather syllabary, which it must the way syllables are simplified by the

negroes, take another verse, which shows final consonants only when they are liquids: "And behold a voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This is rendered, "En lookoo, wan tongo oo tappo takki, Datti da me lobbi Pikien, na hem me habbi switti plessiri"that is, "And look, one tongue from top talked. That there my loved Pickaninny (!); in him me have sweet pleasure."

A language like this would analyze into a very few syllables, and Sequoja did not have an endless task to learn his syllabic alphabet. We know of one other case in which, under similar circumstances, a native of Africa, Doalu Bukere, invented a mode of writing ten years later. This, too, was syllabic. And these two cases prove how much more natural is a syllabic than a purely al-

phabetic writing.

The Egyptian hieroglyphics have in part passed through this stage of syllabic analysis, the only kind known to the ancient Assyrians, into the next stage of analysis into vocal elements. We give a selection of the simple letters of their alphabet (Fig. 5), and might give a very much larger one of characters which represent syllables or entire words, and which they used mixed up with the purely alphabetic characters. But, curiously enough, they have retained carefully the old pictures unmodified, and have quite a number of different pictures, for each letter or syllable, of objects whose names begin with that letter or syllable. Fig. 6 is the cartouche of Ptolemy (Ptulmis), as given by Lepsius from the Dekret von Kanopus. Mr. Gliddon, formerly United States consul in Egypt, has made it clear to a child how hie-

roglyphics took their rise. He says: Suppose we wished to write the word "America" in our language in hieroglyphics, as the Egyptians did, we should draw a figure beginning with

A, for instance, an asp, the emblem of sovereignty:



M, of military dominion, a mace:



E, the national arms, an eagle:



R, sign of intellectual power, horns of a ram :



I, the juvenile age of the country, an infant:



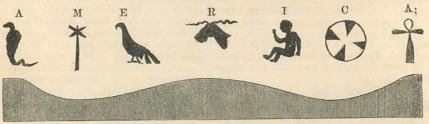
C, civilized religion, sacred cake:



A, the Egyptian emblem of eternal life:



To show that by this we mean a country, I add the sign . We thus obtain



COUNTRY.

For their ordinary writing the Egyptians used a much more expeditious method, being a sort of short-hand pictorial script, in which the pictures were hardly recognizable. This has received the name of hieratic, and is the basis of the earliest true alphabetic writing.

Would that we knew the genius who first recognized consonants, and made them the basis of a shorter alphabet! The oldest alphabet of letters that we know is the Phœnician, and that was probably syllabic in its earliest form, if we can judge from the fact that it has not a single vowel. Its syllables were ba, ga, da, etc., beginning with the suc- tian hieroglyphics. The second letter, Beth

cessive consonants. Afterward the vowels were neglected, and not written at all, just as in phonography; and the signs represented only the consonants. This was an imperfect alphabet, but it was now for the first time truly an alphabet, and even to this day the Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic, which are derived from it, are generally written without any vowels, in true stenographic style.

But whence came this alphabet-this patriarch of letters? We can not be sure. Probably it is a modification of the Egyp-



FIG. 5.—EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHIC LETTERS.—(AFTER LENORMANT.)

or Bayith, means a house. At first the picture of a house was the hieroglyph for the word. Then it stood for the first syllable, ba, and finally it represented only the first letter, b. This stage of development, during which the pictures were gradually altered to conventional signs scarce suggestive of their origin, we know nothing about. It may have taken ages, and it may have been the stroke of genius of some greater than Gutenberg, whose name the world has let die. One or two of the letters still show some trace of the original hieroglyph. Thus Ayin, which occupies in the Phænician alphabet the place of our o, means an eye, and, sure enough, in the oldest monuments its shape

We do not know how old this first of all alphabets, this venerable Phenician, is. Its origin is lost in antiquity. Very likely Moses knew it, and wrote the law in its then youthful characters. But the monuments of Egypt of that period give us no trace of it. It may have been adopted from the Egyptian writing or modeled after it, but the improvement is probably due to strangers. We call it Phenician, but there is not an atom of proof that the Phenicians invented it: in



FIG. 6.—THE NAME OF PTOLEMY (PTULMIS) IN HIEROGLYPHIOS.

fact, there is proof that they did not, or, at least, if they did. they were then a different people from the trading, maritime Phœnicians with whom we are acquainted. The names given to the letters show that they were originally pictures of objects familiar in a pastoral life. We have the camel and the ox, the tent, the tent door, and the tent pin; but no article of trade or commerce, and nothing suggestive of the sea, unless it be a fish and a fish-hook. Besides. at that time we do not know that Phœnicia had begun its career of trade and coloniza-It may have been no more maritime than were the other tribes of Canaan, or the English in the times of Queen Boadicea.

But what was just this first, most archaic alphabet? Can we not see its letters, and pay due reverence to their antiqui-

ty? This is not quite impossible. If we can not be sure of every letter, we can give quite nearly the first pure alphabet that the world ever saw. The oldest piece, probably, of alphabetic writing that we possess is on a little seal stone, of which we give an exact

copy in Fig. 7. We do not know how old it is; but it goes back very likely as far as the time of David or Solomon, a thousand or twelve hundred years before Christ. It has on it four consonants, MLSL. These must be read from right to left, and give us the word "le-Shallum"—that is, "belonging to Shallum."

Who the Shallum was that



FIG. 7.—SEAL OF SHALLUM, B.C. 1000.

owned this seal we do not know; but we are indebted to him for the oldest specimen of alphabetic writing known to exist on the globe. He was no Jew, though his name sounds Jewish, for we see him worshiping the Egyptian Thoth, god of arts and letters, as is indicated by the roll in his hand.

But this little scarabæus gives us only three separate letters. We want the rest of the alphabet. For this we are indebted to one of the kings of Moab. We learn from the books of First and Second Kings that Mesha ruled over the land of Moab in the time of Ahab, nearly nine hundred years before Christ. He paid to Ahab, king of Israel, an enormous annual tribute of lambs and fleeced rams. But after the death of Ahab, as we are told, Mesha rebelled and refused to pay his tribute. Ahab's son made preparation to bring him back to submission, but his own death after a year's reign prevented. Then his successor, Joram, took up the war vigorously, we do not know through how many campaigns, nor with just how much success; but we do know that in one of these campaigns Mesha was so closely besieged in his fortress by Joram, who had secured the aid of the kings of Judah and of Edom, that in his extremity he offered on the walls of the city his own eldest son and heir, in the sight of the allied armies, as a sacrifice to his god Chemosh. His superstitious foes were frightened, and raised the siege, fearing some terrible vengeance from the word of mind, before leaping on his horse tore the wet impression paper from the stone, and carried it to Jerusalem, where it reached M. Ganneau, ragged and almost succeeded it, so excited the Bedouins on the subject that they determined that the stone which had brought good luck to their harvests should not be carried off. They therefore built a fire about it, and then poured water over it, breaking it into a multitude of fragments, which they divided among themselves to be preserved as tallis.

In some of his campaigns against Israel, whether before or after this is not quite certain, Mesha gained considerable successes against Israel. He captured quite a number of his ancestral towns that had long been annexed to the territory of Israel, and inhabited by the tribe of Dan. In honor of his victories he set up a memorial pillar, according to a local custom, in his native city of Dibon. On it he wrote a boastful account of his successes, but not a word of his defeats, and a recital of his restoration to its ancient glory of the city in which he had been born, and which he made his capital. For nearly twenty-seven centuries that column remained in Dibon with its writing uneffaced, and it was not till January of 1870, and after the attempt to secure it had caused its demolition by the suspicious Bedouins, that the inscription was ever published. For only a few months had it been known to exist. A Prussian and a Frenchman both tried to secure it, and the Frenchman succeeded, by free use of money, in getting about as poor an impression of it on paper as it is possible to imagine. He sent three Bedouins for the purpose, and while the paper was drying upon the stone one of the frequent Arab quarrels arose, and his three messengers just escaped with their lives. One of them received a severe sabre cut across his forehead; but another, with

horse tore the wet impression paper from the stone, and carried it to Jerusalem, where it reached M. Ganneau, ragged and almost illegible. This attempt, with some which succeeded it, so excited the Bedouins on the subject that they determined that the stone which had brought good luck to their harvests should not be carried off. therefore built a fire about it, and then poured water over it, breaking it into a multitude of fragments, which they divided among themselves to be preserved as talismans. But the persistent Europeans succeeded even after this in getting good impressions of the larger fragments, and finally nearly all the fragments themselves, of the column. This is the oldest connected specimen of alphabetic writing known to scholars. It contains every letter of the alphabet but one, and the characters are generally in the oldest form. No other monument is so valuable to us as indicating the original shape of the letters. We give two illustrations of Mesha's column, the one (Fig. 8) containing a few letters copied accurately and of full size, from a photograph of one of Captain Warren's impressions of the stone, or from casts of some fragments in the possession of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and the other (Fig. 9) representing a few lines from the top of the inscription.

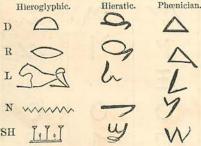
But we can not help wishing that we could trace our alphabet a little further back. Perhaps we can, inferentially. We can follow the course of modifications, and see the groove they run in, and perhaps can guess pretty well what some forms that have evidently been rounded were before they had thus been changed. Besides this, as we have said, there is reason to believe that the Phœnician came from the Egyptian, and the writing of the Nile we can trace back a thousand years further. The Egyptians





FIG. 9.—UPPER PORTION OF THE MOABITE STONE.

used two kinds of writing—the original hieroglyphic pictures, and these same characters cut down into a short-hand, which The oldest we have called the hieratic. hieratic writing known is what is called the "Papyrus Prisse," belonging to the Twelfth Dynasty, a period before the invasion of Egypt by the Hyksos, or shepherd kings, and probably as long ago as the time of Abraham. This takes us pretty well back into the history of writing. Now if we compare the Phœnician letters with the hieratic characters of the Papyrus Prisse, we shall find some remarkable resemblances. Thus, compare the following letters:



-EGYPTIAN AND PHENICIAN CHARACTERS.

Other letters show a similar resemblance. In fact, more than half of the Phœnician alphabet shows evident traces of its Egyptian origin. Probably Moses used this new Phœnician alphabet in writing his history of the exodus from Egypt, and some even suppose that he invented it; while others, again, imagine that it is due to the Hebrews while living in Egypt. It is quite possible, though we would hardly suppose them to be so literary or mercantile a people as to have much occasion for writing. Still, even in their deepest oppression, their task-masters-or,

Hebrews, and kept accounts. But it is probable that the alphabet was older than Moses. The patriarch Judah had a seal ring, which he put to a bad use, and which may have had writing on it. Long before the invasion of the shepherd kings there was a Phœnician colony in the Delta of the Nile, and very likely they adapted the hieratic writing to their own language.

But what was this most venerable of all the alphabets? Can our curiosity be satisfied with a view of it? Not precisely. But we can see the exact shape which the letters soon after assumed. Fig. 11 shows the oldest form of the Phænician letters which has come down to us. They are not taken from any one monument, but not one of them is taken from an inscription less than 2600 years old. For some we are indebted to seals or gems, for others to weights dug up at Nineveh, and for others to the great Moabite inscription. In the succeeding columns are given the very earliest Greek and Latin (or rather Italic) alphabets, also reaching back to the eighth or ninth centuries before Christ, a period as remote as the founding of Rome. At this time the writing was from right to left, like the Hebrew. These columns are accompanied by the earliest forms after the writing had been reversed to its present direction. In the first column we have given the Hebrew names of the letters, accompanied by the English corresponding to them either in position or sound.

Having found Cadmus in possession of his letters and giving them to the Greeks as far back as the ninth century before Christ, and we know not how much earlier, it is time for us to leave Phœnicia and all the descendants of Shem, and turn to the new race, destined to develop letters into literature. Henceforth the East-or Cadmus, if you please, for Cadmus is no historical charas we should call them, "drivers"-were acter, only the Phoenician word Kadm, "East,"

		T	Dhamisis	cian of Greek. Italic.			
		English.	Phœnician of Cadmus, 1000 B.C.	Right to left. 800 B.C.	Left to right, 600 B.C.	Right to left.	Left to right,
	Aleph.	A	*	1	A	A	A
	Beth.	В	4	4	B	В	В
	Gimel.	CG	7	٦	Г	>	< C
	Daleth.	D	Δ	Δ	Δ	0	D
	He.	E	F	3	F	=	E
	Vav.	FV	Y	F	F		F
	Zayin.	GZ	I	I	I	I	G
-	Cheth.	Н	HB	日	日	日	Н
	Teth.		H		0		
	Yod.	1	I	4			
	Kaph.	K	7	K	KF	K	K
	Lamed.	L	1	1	^	1	11
-	Mem.	M	7	y	M	M	M
1	Nun.	N	Y	7	M	M	N
	Samekh.		丰	Ŧ	Ŧ	w) .	
	Ayin.	пО	0	0	0	0	0
	Pe.	P	1	7		1	Г
	Tsade.		W	M	W	M	
1	Koph.	Q	9	9	9	Q	Q
	Resh.	R	.4	4 }	4 4	9	R
	Shin.	S	W	3	4	23	5 5
	Tav.	T	X	T	T	J	T

FIG. 11.—THE ARCHAIC ALPHABET.

OEO S: A OOY: E FIG. 12.—GREEK INSORIPTION FROM SIGEUM, READING IN BOTH DIRECTIONS.

personified-may round off the angles and straighten out the zigzags of its alphabet as it pleases, until it is degenerated into the too simple and scarcely legible characters of the New Carthaginian of the time of King Juba, or may double and square it up into the modern Hebrew. We are done with it, so far as our debt to Cadmus is concerned.

in inscriptions upon gravestones and other monuments of the eighth and ninth centuries before Christ, the alphabet has already been adopted all over Greece, the Ægean Islands, and those parts of Asia Minor inhabited by the Ionian tribes. It was accepted bodily by the new language and the embryonic civilization. Our comparative table shows a resemblance in almost every And more than

tions is from right to left, just as in Phœnician, though some few examples show the transition stage to the other direction in a very curious way. In these cases (see Figs. 12 and 13) the letters in one line face in one direction, and in the next, like soldiers on parade, they have turned right about face, ous literary history. It was found in the

and not only is the line read the other way, but each letter has had its strokes which pointed to the left all turned over so as to point to the right. And this was the first change which the alphabet suffered at the hands of the Greeks. They turned each letter over, and made it face the other way. Our table of the alphabet shows both of When we first meet the Greek language these forms. They were not long content

case, and often an absolute Fig. 13.—The greek word χρήσιμος written in both directions, from THE TEMPLE OF BEDESIEH, EGYPT.

this, the writing in the oldest Greek inscrip- | with writing forward and backward the way a team plows, this way and then that, across a field, but they fixed the alphabet in its new form.

> To show how closely the earliest Greek inscriptions resemble the Phænician we give (Fig. 14) a specimen which has had a curi-



FIG. 14.—GREEK INSCRIPTION READING FROM RIGHT TO LEFT.

island of Thera, and over the picture of a fish contains the name of the artist in the not quite classical Greek, $[T\iota]\mu\omega\nu$ ἔγραφέ με. But the inscription, which reads backward, is in such excellent Phenician letters that Professor F. Hitzig, of Halle, one of the best Hebrew scholars of Germany, has within twelve years published a translation of it as if it were Phenician, and has tried to make it fit Phenician words. In this he has shown himself as wild and rash as in some of his attacks on Biblical history.

The same Phœnician alphabet that was accepted by the entire Greek race was also received in very early times by the tribes that inhabited Italy. No two tribes had precisely the same form of letter, any more than the alphabet of the Ionian Greeks was precisely the same as that of the islands of the Ægean or of the Peloponnesus. All these slighter variations it is not important to detail, nor the additional letters that were adopted in later times. But a careful comparison of the ancient Greek with the Phœnician letters will show some discrepancies. In one or two cases we probably do not have the oldest Phænician forms; and probably the order of the letters was lost in the case of the sibilants, so that while the shapes were preserved in the right order, the names, as of Sigma, Xi, and Zeta, have got mixed up.

Thus we have found Cadmus, and have received from him the great idea of alphabetic writing, which makes literature possible. It would be tedious to follow out the changes to which these letters have been subjected before reaching the facile, cursive style of the brevier type in which this page is printed.

This may be all our debt to Cadmus, but it is not the entire debt of the world. From that old alphabet of the East, there is reason to believe, is descended every other alphabet, except Chinese, that is now in use in the world. From it, through the Latin, came the alphabet of Western Europe and of America. From it, through the Greek, came the Old Gothic, the gift of Ulphilas, and the alphabet of Russia, the gift of the Sclavonic evangelist Cyril. The Arabic, used all over Western Asia and Northern Africa by Turks, Persians, and Berbers, is Phœnician slightly modified. Modern and ancient Syriac are a slightly different modification. The Malay and Hindoostanee are directly from the Arabic; and if Prinsep is right, there is reason to believe that many centuries before Christ the Sanscrit, the literary language of India, also borrowed its letters from the old Phœnician origin. If this is so, it carries with it the descendants of the Sanscrit, including all the alphabets of India, Burmah, Java, and Thibet that do not have a Mohammedan parentage. Over thirty years ago Prinsep, who had been deciphering Hindoo rock inscriptions of great antiquity, announced

sy-turvy," and some later students agree with him. Certainly the most ancient forms are much simpler and far more like the Phœnician than the complicated letters now in use, which make Sanscrit one of the most barbarous alphabets in existence. And a still more barbarous-looking alphabet, the Mantchoo Tartar, with the Mongolian and Tungusian, is formed from an Aramean form of the Phænician, though greatly modified, so as to assimilate to the columnar structure of the Chinese writing. When we see, then, how every alphabet in use in the world, and every style of writing except the non-alphabetic writing of the Chinese, is derived from the Phænician, we may try to reckon up what a debt the world owes to the obscure trader, it may be, or immigrant from Sidon, who first, in the Delta of the Nile, after learning the Egyptian hieroglyphics and hieratic, conceived how needlessly cumbrous they were, and had the genius to plan a new analysis, and to write down on a bit of papyrus some twenty characters, which all the succeeding centuries have been fain to adopt. Alas! he has missed being canonized, chief in the calendar of literary saints, simply because he neglected to sign his name to the document!

LOVE AND LIFE.

Life is like a stately temple. That is founded in the sea, Whose uprising fair proportions. Penetrate immensity; Love the architect who builds it, Building it eternally.

To me, standing in the Present,
As one waits beside a grave,
Up the aisles and to the altar
Rolls the Past its solemn wave,
With a murmur as of mourning,
Undulating in the nave.

Pallid phantoms glide around me In the wrecks of hope and home; Voices moan among the waters, Faces vanish in the foam; But a peace, divine, unfailing, Writes its promise in the dome.

Cold the waters where my feet are, But my heart is strung anew, Tuned to Hope's profound vibration, Pulsing all the ether through, For the seeking souls that ripen In a patience strong and true.

Hark! the all-inspiring Angel
Of the Future leads the choir;
All the shadows of the temple
Are illumed with living fire,
And the bells above are waking
Chimes of infinite desire.

For the strongest or the weakest There is no eternal fall; Many graves and many mourners, But at last—the lifted pall! For the highest and the lowest Blessed life containeth all.

O thou fair unfinished temple!
In unfathomed sea begun,
Love, thy builder, shapes and lifts thee
In the glory of the sun;
And the builder and the builded
To the pure in heart—are one.