The origin and progress of the art of writing : a connected narrative of the development of the art, its primeval phases in Egypt, China, Mexico, etc; its middle state in the cuneatic systems of Nineveh and Persepolis, to its introduction to Europe through the medium of the Hebrew, Phœnician, and Greek systems, and its subsequent progress to the present day / by Henry Noel Humphreys. Illustrated by a number of specimens of the writing of all ages, and a series of facsimiles from autograph letters from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century.

JAPANESE WRITING.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The Japanese method of writing is not entirely ideographic, for besides that system, which is represented by Chinese characters, either in the square or cursive form, the Japanese have a phonetic one, which is always in modern books used in connexion with the other. It is syllabic, resembling in this respect the Sanscrit and the Ethiopic, and has a syllabarium of 47 sounds, called from the first three Iroha. It appears under two modifications, both of which have been in use since the ninth century—*i.e.*, first, the Hiragana, which is the more cursive form, with several hundred characters, each of the 47 syllables having a number of variations (though frequently only slight) in shape. This sort is used with the cursive Chinese. Secondly, the Katakana, which contains only one character for each of the 47 syllables, and is employed with the square Chinese.

The above statements can be verified by reference to Aston's "Grammar of the Japanese Written Language," or Hoffmann's "Japanese Grammar," second edition.

The intermixture of the ideographic and phonetic elements in Japanese produces, therefore, a complicated and difficult system of writing, having some analogy with that of the Assyrian cuneiform and the ancient Egyptian.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

June 6. Y-BEN-A.

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EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING.

XVITH CENTURY, B. C.

THE

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

OF THE

ART OF WRITING:

A connected Narrative

OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ART, ITS PRIMEVAL PHASES IN EGYPT, CHINA, MEXICO, ETC.; ITS MIDDLE STATE IN THE CUNEATIC SYSTEMS OF NINEVEH AND PERSEPOLIS, TO ITS INTRODUCTION TO EUROPE THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF THE HEBREW, PHŒNICIAN, AND GREEK SYSTEMS, AND ITS SUBSEQUENT PROGRESS TO THE PRESENT DAY.

BY

HENRY NOEL HUMPHREYS,

AUTHOR OF THE "ILLUMINATED BOOKS OF THE MIDDLE AGES," "THE ART OF ILLUMINATION," "ANCIENT COINS AND MEDALS," ETC.

Illustrated by

A NUMBER OF SPECIMENS OF THE WRITING OF ALL AGES, AND A SERIES OF FACSIMILES FROM AUTOGRAPH LETTERS FROM THE FIFTEENTH TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

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PREFACE.

The impetus given to archæological study by the enterprising spirit of inquiry which characterises the present age, and which has led to so many deeply interesting discoveries, has, in a remarkable degree, influenced the public taste, and stimulated its curiosity in directions towards which it was cold and indifferent but a very few years ago. In nothing has that curiosity been excited with more lively interest than in the recent discoveries of those vast monuments of Assyrian splendour, the very existence of which was not dreamed of before the brilliant discoveries of Botta and Layard.

One of the most curious characteristics of these antique remains, which are contemporary with some of the most interesting portions of biblical history, is the fact of their being profusely inscribed with curious wedge-shaped characters, which have been found to contain the historic records of the Assyrian Empire. The successful deciphering of the cuneatic character in which these chronicles were recorded has drawn public attention with extraordinary interest towards the method of writing among ancient nations; and many publications have gratified the curiosity thus excited, so far as regards the cuneiform systems of Nineveh and Persepolis. But those phases in the progress of the Art of Writing form, alone, but isolated points of interest; and a knowledge of the systems upon which they were founded, and of those to which they gave rise, was naturally sought by the student, in order to enable him to appreciate the subject in a more enlarged and connected manner, and with more cohesion and completeness.

But no work was in existence by means of which this desire could be gratified. Astle's treatise on the progress of writing only seriously begins after the fall of the Roman Empire, when all the difficult steps in the creation of the first pictorial or hieroglyphic methods had been reduced to systematic alphabets; while the great work of the learned Benedictines was published long before the hieroglyphics of the temples of Egypt had been deciphered by the successful labours of Young and Champollion, and before

the remarkable cuneatic writing of Assyria had attracted the attention of the learned. The work of Messrs. Champollion and Sylvestre had also appeared before the cuneiform character had been successfully deciphered; and no book, therefore, was in existence in which the "Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing" was traced subsequent to the great recent discoveries, by means of which every missing link in the chain of its development has been furnished.

To supply this deficiency has been the aim of the author of the present volume; in which, however, he has not attempted to enter deeply into minute technicalities, but rather to condense and simplify the subject in such a manner as to make it easily intelligible; and by reducing it to the form of a continuous narrative, to render it entertaining to the general reader. At the same time he has endeavoured to produce a work sufficiently copious and complete to embody all the essential features of the subject, from the first rude dawn of the art in its pictorial form among semi-barbarous nations, to the curious development of the first phonetic characters and the eventual formation of perfect "alphabets;" and from that epoch to exhibit the subsequent modifications in the various modes of writing among European nations, to the present day.

In the space of such a volume as the present it would be impossible to quote every authority, and name every work which has been consulted with advantage, as such a course would encumber the text with a body of notes and references quite inconsistent with a work of strictly popular character. The author must therefore content himself with stating that he has been most deeply indebted to the *Nouveau Traité de Diplomatique*, to the works of M. Champollion Figeac on the great Egyptian discoveries of his illustrious brother,* and to his more recent paleographical work executed in conjunction with M. Sylvestre; also to the treatises of Dr. Young and S. Sharp, Esq., and to that on cuneatic writing by Colonel Rawlinson; and to Lord Kingsborough's magnificent work on the monuments of Mexico. For illustrations of the medieval period, he has been also much indebted to the valuable collections engraved by Astle and Casley.

H. N. H.

* When the author's chapter on the writing of the Egyptians was already in print, he had not yet seen Mr. Forster's recent work, which he expects will, in some important particulars, lead to considerable modification in the system of Champollion, notwithstanding the opposition it has met with.

FIRST PAGE OF A M.S. PSALTER IN THE LANSDOWNE COLLECTION.
(BRITISH MUSEUM.)

H. HUMPHREYS, LITH.

DAY & SON, LITH^rS TO THE QUEEN.

THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

OF THE

ART OF WRITING.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY OUTLINE OF THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF WRITING.

THE Art of Writing and its progress, superficially considered, may appear a trivial subject for investigation. Indeed, carelessly viewed, its study would merely seem to consist in the minute examination of the inscribed entries in the ledger of some London merchant, and accurately noting their superiority in flowing freedom and general neatness over those in the account-books of his ancestor, written a century ago. One might fancy, without due reflection, that such a comparison would, at all events, form an important link in the history of the art of writing; and with such a conception of the subject, it would doubtless present a very dry and barren aspect.

Even if, greatly extending the sphere of our observations, we should attentively examine a well-arranged series of autographs, of recent and even medieval periods, and carefully define the progress writing has made since the time of Richard II. (the first Anglo-Norman monarch who could write his name) down to our own day, and find some interest in tracing the gradual transition from the stiff gothic characters of the Plantagenet, through various shades of progress, to the dashing flow of the handwriting of the last note laid, fresh from the post, upon our library table, yet our notion of the *history* of writing, or its *origin*, would still remain restricted to a very narrow compass; for by such a course of observation we should not have acquired a single positively new idea respecting the first invention of that wonderful art, now the possession of every school-boy, but the origination and perfecting of which required the successive labours of succeeding generations thousands of years to accomplish.

The world has now possessed a purely *alphabetic* system of writing for three thousand years or more, and iconographic systems more than three thousand years longer; so that not only over those long periods must we travel,

but even farther back, to detect and examine the primeval efforts which eventually resulted in the development of those alphabetic characters, by means of which every sound of spoken language may be reduced to unmistakeable written signs, and every shade of thought reduced to the form of a permanent inscribed record; a result which, when rightly considered, must be deemed one of the sublimest conquests of intellectual progress, and the great motive power of all future advance in the path of general civilisation.

Aristotle remarks that *letters* are the *marks* of *words*, as words themselves are marks of thoughts; and the distinction between language and writing—between the art of conveying ideas by speech or by letters—has also been neatly expressed by St. Augustine, who says: *Signa* sunt verba visibilia, verba signa audibilia: "*Letters* are visible words—words, audible signs."

Writing, as multiplied by the printing-press, is the light which photographs, as it were, every step of human progress, in signs remaining visible and intelligible to all future generations; preserving and extending every branch of knowledge, and daily carrying the thoughts of the wisest into regions where knowledge has never penetrated.

It is a light whose rays are continually spreading, and which will continue to spread, till the whole earth shall be illuminated by it. Ignorance flies before the effulgence of the ideas it conveys, in vain endeavouring to take refuge in the everywhere decreasing darkness; and its companions, prejudice and superstition, are everywhere retreating without the possibility of return; this miracle being wrought by the sole agency of an art, the habitual use of which disguises its giant power, and deprives it of its really deep interest in our eyes. Change, of mighty import, is being daily wrought through the medium of the art which we simply and coolly term "writing," without troubling ourselves to think that its origin, its earliest development, and eventual progress to completeness, form one of the most interesting and important subjects for investigation that the story of man's intellectual progress affords.

The names of the first men who were fortunately able to make use of this engine in a form intelligible to future generations, and thus to embalm their highest thoughts, and record the great events of their time, and, as it were, speak to posterity, are, even now, those that stand highest in our memories of the past. Greater thoughts may have been conceived before them and after them, even by greater minds; but it is the earliest human thoughts thus embalmed by the sublime invention of writing that will ever occupy the first place. The words of their precursors passed away with the winds to which they were spoken; but the earliest human ideas that have reached us, wonderfully preserved by a few conventional signs,—those of Homer, of Moses, of Hesiod, of Herodotus,—are those which our race will ever look upon with fervent veneration. These men were the first who mastered the power (or their admirers for them) of transmitting the highest thoughts of *their* time to *our*

time, through the medium of written signs. Their thoughts, thus preserved in the mystic signs of a hieroglyphic or alphabetic system of writing, have reached us in all the purity and grandeur of their antique simplicity, unsullied (as mere *traditions* would have been) by the long dark ages of ignorance and misrule through which they have passed; and such relics of the wisdom, of the thoughts, of the very words of those great elders of our race, form noble illustrations of the value of the art by means of which they have been preserved.

What are our great modern inventions—our clocks, our railways, our electric telegraphs—to such a power as this, simple as it now appears after the accustomed use of ages? It is true the skilfully elaborated chronometer may, by measuring time with curious accuracy, lend powerful aid to the most important scientific discoveries; but without the art of writing to record them, they would be lost as fast as achieved. The railway simply annihilates space, and the electric telegraph outstrips its speed, and even conveys language to the furthest corners of the earth with the swiftness of lightning. It could be made to speak to the antipodes in a few seconds, as easily as it now speaks from London to Paris; but it can only speak with its contemporaries, it cannot speak to futurity: this high privilege is reserved for the art of writing, which can speak on to

"Ages yet unborn, in accents yet unknown;"

for with a true phonetic alphabet all languages may be written, and by its means a continuous chain of human thought will be extended to future races of men, when railways and telegraphs may have disappeared before appliances of science more perfect and more true—the result of the *written* thoughts of succeeding discoverers.

Seeing, then, the vast importance and unlimited power of the wonderful art we possess, the priceless legacy of earlier labourers in the field of progress, it must surely be deeply interesting to trace its origin, its earliest rude and feeble steps, its subsequent extension in various phases, and the eventual but gradual development of a perfect *phonetic alphabet*, by means of which every word of every language, every inflexion of which the human voice is capable, may be noted down with the same accuracy and facility as the seven musical tones of the diatonic scale.

So important was this step deemed among human arts by those who lived in times nearer to those of its first accomplishment, and ere the wonder of its extraordinary powers was blunted by long possession and common use, that its invention was invariably attributed to divine inspiration; and the Egyptians, the Chinese, and even the Greeks, have all their mythological legends respecting the manner in which the gift was conferred by Heaven upon man. But the principles of modern investigation seek other sources for the origin of knowledge than mythological fables, however closely interwoven with the history and progress of peoples; and the results of modern enterprise

and discovery have enabled us to take a purely historical and philosophical view of the subject, by furnishing us with positive monuments, illustrative not only of the first stages of the art, but of every subsequent phase of its progress.

Modern erudition has come to our aid in this curious investigation, and by explaining and deciphering at last those strange characters in which some of the earliest human records were made, and the meaning of which had been so long concealed by the veil of hoar antiquity, has supplied us with the missing links in the chain of progress of this greatest of human inventions: Champollion's and Young's recent interpretations of the hieroglyphics of Egypt, and Grotefend, Rawlinson, and Hinks's deciphering of the cuneatic character of Persepolis and Nineveh, furnishing the last aids to the elucidation of this interesting subject in the earlier and most instructive periods of its progress. With this, and other assistance of recent acquisition, we are now enabled to trace the manner and course of man's primeval attempts to achieve a system of writing: first, by the use of simple pictures, the meaning of which we are now enabled to interpret; secondly, in the subsequent adoption of pictorial characters which take the form of *ideographs*, by means of which more complex ideas, or even sentiments, in addition to mere objects, were also expressed; and thirdly, we may observe the first step towards representing a *sound*, instead of an *object*, and the means by which it was first accomplished. Finally, we may witness the gradual creation of a complete set of signs representing the *sounds* of language, instead of the *forms* of objects, a principle which we shall see gradually encroaching upon that of the pictorial characters of the earlier periods; till at last, on the transferring of such a combined system of writing to another language, we shall find all the pictorial signs abandoned by the new adopters of the system, and the sound-expressing characters alone retained—an event through which the triumph of a pure phonetic alphabet was at length effected.

We shall not be able to witness all these stages in one country, or in the progress of one system, as many intermediate monuments have perished. But as there can be little doubt that the art of writing grew up independently in many countries having no communication with each other, when they respectively arrived at that period of civilisation at which such an art became desirable, we shall be able to supply the missing links, from distinct sources, in the way about to be described.

In every country where the art of writing arose, as one of those social necessities sure to develop themselves in the march of progress, every link of advance in the art had, of course, its successive existence; but in no special country, as I have stated, have monuments of every phase of development been preserved; and we shall therefore have to examine those of widely different regions, in order to obtain specimens of each important epoch of the gradual creation of a system of writing. Thus, in the following pages, I shall have to seek, first, an example of the rude primeval origin of the art in the coarse

hieroglyphic, or rather simply pictorial records of Mexico, beyond which stage that nation never advanced, as the Spanish invaders discovered and destroyed it while its system of writing was still in this early period of its development.

The next step, however, we shall be able to examine among the Chinese; where we shall find interesting examples of the first transition from mere pictorial characters to that of their abridgment into forms more easily and rapidly executed, but still preserving their original import as direct pictographs. We shall accompany the Chinese system beyond this phase, to that of such excessive departure from the original forms of the objects, that the pictographs become in appearance, but appearance only, more like the arbitrary signs of a phonetic alphabet. We shall also witness the advance of the Chinese so far in the direction of *sound-expressing*, instead of *object* or *idea-expressing* characters, as to make use of these signs occasionally to express the spoken sound of the object depicted; and by combining one or two such objects, to express successfully the sound of some foreign name, or other abstract denomination, for which no accepted sign was in existence. But in these attempts in the direction of a phonetic system of writing, they never, even to the present day, advanced beyond a kind of partially adopted and imperfect *syllabic* system. To meet with the earliest examples of a *literal* system, or one in which characters similar in value to the separate letters of modern alphabets was adopted, we shall have to turn to the (so-called) hieroglyphics of the Egyptians. We have not been able, by means of any existing monuments, to surprise the Egyptians in the practice of the earliest stages of their system, but find them, at the epoch of the erection of the most ancient known monuments, prior to the time of Abraham, in the possession of a system of writing, in which the iconograph, the ideograph, and a certain number of *sound-expressing* characters, exactly similar to those of modern alphabets, were combined; the new and progressive elements having been grafted upon the old, and made to form a part of the apparently inconsistent original elements of the system. Beyond this system, so early achieved, and so complete after its peculiar manner, the Egyptians never advanced; and for the next step in the art we must look to the Assyrians,* who, borrowing their system of writing from the Egyptians, and in course of adapting it to their own dialect, threw out a large portion of the iconographic and ideographic elements, and probably increased the number of those of a purely phonetic capacity. The *cuneiform*, or wedge-shaped, character, in which this Assyrian system is expressed, was perhaps founded upon the Egyptian *demotic*, or more cursive manner of writing, but influenced in form by the nature of the material—stone—upon which most of their public documents were inscribed; and perhaps, also, by a natural attempt to *regularise* the forms, the Assyrian scribes not having, like the Egyptians, the feeling of their original

* The possible existence of an early Indian alphabet will be alluded to hereafter.

pictorial meaning before them, to influence them in the preservation of apparently mere objectless irregularities.

We shall find the Persians, in adopting the cuneiform system of the Babylonians and Assyrians, reducing the system still more nearly to a purely alphabetic one. But it is to the Phœnicians that we shall look for the first example of a *pure phonetic alphabet*, as we now understand that term. Their letters were evidently derived from some system founded upon the original and universal pictorial elements, being formed most probably by a selection of a limited number of the phonetic signs of the Egyptian system; whether directly, or through the Assyrian modification, will be matter for future discussion. The closely-allied Samaritan, or ancient Hebrew characters, the names of which are all founded upon those of the natural objects they once portrayed, form not only a sufficient general proof of their own pictorial source, but also of that of the Phœnician alphabet.

The names of the Phœnician letters, which have unfortunately been lost, were doubtless similar to those of the Samaritan, and became the immediate parents of those of the Greek letters, the names of which, as will be seen, closely resemble those of the Samaritan and Hebrew alphabets.

The ancient Roman alphabet we shall find was nearly the same as the Greek, and evidently derived from the same source; its later departure from which, and modifications of its ancient forms, being all traceable, in their different stages, through the means of inscriptions on funereal urns, buildings, coins, and other monuments.

Our own alphabet is but a slight modification of the Roman, so that we have now at our command, as I have shewn, the means of tracing the history of the wonderful art of writing from its earliest dawn to its common use in the present day.

The modifications which have taken place in our modern system of writing since the expiring empire of Rome bequeathed to us that valuable art in the fifth century, will not form the least interesting portion of the subject; for in the comparative darkness which followed the crash of Roman civilisation, and when there was but little demand for books, except of the Gospels and the rest of the sacred Scriptures, so elaborately did scribes decorate their writing, that these illuminations, as they have been termed, form a most attractive series of examples of the modern progress of the art, increasing, as they do, in splendour up to the epoch of the invention of printing in the fifteenth century.

In the gradual transition, about the eleventh and twelfth centuries, from the rounded forms of the Roman characters into the angularities of the Gothic style, we shall find interesting matter for investigation, as also in the similarly gradual return to the Roman forms about the fifteenth century. Some of these medieval illustrations of the progress of the art of writing will form brilliant subjects for illustrative examples; but though the illuminated chronicles of the middle ages are all glittering with burnished gold

and a profusion of richly-coloured ornament, yet the earlier stages of the history of writing are sometimes equally elaborate; for the mighty story of Egypt graven and painted upon the walls of her temples and palaces is in fact a series of "illuminated chronicles" of that "dark time of eld," of which we have no other record. Those inscriptions indeed, like those of the disinterred palaces of Assyria, are existing examples of that "*handwriting upon the* WALL," interpreted by the youthful Daniel; and they are still as sharp in their sculptured forms, and as brilliant in their decorative colouring, as when first executed by the glyphographic scribes of the Pharaohs.

In tracing the progress of the art of writing, through all its different phases, up to the period of the invention of printing, we shall find it almost entirely in the hands of scribes by profession, either calligraphers (that is, decorative writers), or tachygraphers (rapid writers). But by the great modern invention of printing the vocation of the public scribe was extinguished; for books being no longer multiplied by written copies, *calligraphy*, properly speaking, perished; while the acquirement of the art of common cursive writing increased among private individuals, as the aid of the fast-decreasing race of scribes became no longer available. In the modern history of writing, it is not till the fifteenth century that letters in the authentic handwriting of individuals first occur in any plenty, though a few earlier examples exist, but of doubtful authenticity as to the personal handwriting, which does not, however, interfere with their genuineness in other respects. It is from the first-named period, therefore, to the present time, that examples of the handwriting of private individuals will be given in this volume, as illustrations of the last stages of the progress of the art.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE CLAIMS OF DIFFERENT NATIONS OF ANTIQUITY TO THE INVENTION OF WRITING — OF ITS PROBABLE INVENTION IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES SIMULTANEOUSLY — AND OF THE NECESSARY CHARACTER OF THE PRIMEVAL STAGES OF THE ART.

ALL hypothesis respecting the original centre from which civilisation first emanated, point to India as the cradle of the human race and of its arts. But we cannot there find traces of the origin of writing. On its earliest monuments we only find the art in its alphabetic state, and never in its first or iconographic form. Whether from this it may be inferred that India must have received the art of writing in a perfected state from some more advanced nation,—the Egyptians, for example,—or whether we may more fairly infer that its first steps in India are lost, is, however, immaterial to our general purpose; in either case, India does not afford the means of tracing the progress of the art from its origin. Indeed, all Indian monuments of the art of writing are, comparatively speaking, modern, notwithstanding the traditions respecting the high antiquity of the art of writing among them, the Hindoos having a tradition that letters were communicated to them by the Supreme Being; which might seem to prove, at all events, that the original introduction or invention of writing in India dates beyond any existing record. Many Oriental traditions make all subsequent modes of writing derived from the Sanscrit; and some even consider that the Latin word *scribo* (to write), like the German *schreiben*, were given to a mode of writing founded on an ancient Sanscrite or Samscribe alphabet, and that the Pelasgians, and Indo-Germanic races in general, brought those terms with the art from India; but, as before observed, no traces of the primitive stages of the art of writing have as yet been discovered there. However this may be, the Sanscrit has long been a dead language, only preserved by the priestly castes of the East; and all existing monuments in that language are written in the *modern* alphabets of India; no other kind of inscriptions being in existence which might tend to shew the kind of character in which the Sanscrit was originally written. We have, in fact, no existing records of Indian writing previous to the conquests of Alexander, or shortly before the Christian era; therefore the claim of India to the invention of writing must remain at present involved in mystery.

In Persia, the daughter of India in most of the arts of civilisation, the ancient Zend dialect was the earliest recorded language, and was derived

from the sacred Sanscrit. The Hindoo monarchs of Persia were succeeded by a new dynasty, founded by Kaioumortz, about 3000 B.C., who built the celebrated city of Istakar, the Persepolis of the Greeks; and very early inscriptions occur connected with the subsequent phases of the Persian monarchy; but all are in cuneiform characters in the *alphabetic* stage, which were most probably derived from Egypt rather than India, to be spoken of hereafter; tending to shew that the art of writing, if it did originate in Central Asia, has left no monuments of its early phases of existence. Such may, however, be lost, or concealed in the darkness of deep antiquity. The same may be said of the writing of Assyria, which is of the same cuneiform character, and probably from the same Egyptian source.

The Hebrews have a tradition that Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, was the *inventor* of their art of writing; but there is no evidence of their ever having possessed the art in its primary stages. The tradition may therefore refer to its introduction to Palestine in the time of Jacob.

Of the writing of India, Persia, and Assyria, only the partially or entirely alphabetic stages are known; and of the Hebrews, no earlier examples occur than the inscriptions on the coins of the Maccabees, little more than a century before the Christian era. The earliest examples of the Phœnician and Hebrew writing belong to a purely alphabetic stage, and even the Assyrian cuneiform are of a character in which the iconographic element has nearly disappeared; they are all consequently modern as to epoch, compared with the earliest positive monuments of the art existing in Egypt.

In 1837, the third and least of the pyramids was entered and explored; and the sarcophagus of its original tenant was then discovered, though the sanctuary of the dead was found to have been violated long centuries before, and the royal remains scattered abroad. The name, however, of the monarch for whom the rich sarcophagus had been wrought, and in whose memory the pyramid had been erected, was found; for the *inscription*, on interpretation, was found to contain the name of Mencheres, a king mentioned both by Manethon and Eratosthenes as a monarch of the fourth dynasty. In the greater pyramid, the hieroglyphic or iconographic characters recently discovered reveal the name of Souphi, the predecessor of Mencheres. These *written* documents, therefore, may be assigned to a period at least 4000 years prior to the Christian era; and what is more singular, the writing thus discovered is that of the perfected Egyptian system, consisting of pictorial, of symbolic, and of phonetic signs, systematically combined, exactly as we find them in subsequent successive periods down to the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great, and through the whole period of the dynasty of the Ptolemies, and even the Roman era, as late as the Antonines; for the Egyptians, though they advanced in the perfecting of a system of writing far beyond the Chinese, yet, having attained that point, they remained permanently stationary.

From the preceding remarks it will be seen that no monuments of the

earliest stages of the art of writing exist in India or any of the more western portions of Asia: the cuneatic writing of Assyria and Persia, dating from the seventh, to at the farthest twelve centuries before Christ, being the most ancient monuments of either India or Western Asia, while Egypt exhibits monuments of the art forty centuries prior to that epoch, and even then in an advanced state; so that, had Egypt originally received its first principles of the art of writing from India, it must have been long anterior even to that remote period. The only country whose positive monuments can vie in antiquity with those of Egypt is China, where it appears evident that writing in its *earliest* forms was known 3000 years before Christ; which high antiquity, however, still leaves China far second to the pretensions of Egypt.

Nevertheless, in the total absence of authenticating monuments, the opinion that India was the centre from which all the civilisation of the nations of the old world originally flowed, does not lose ground; and a work entitled *India in Greece* has just appeared, in which all the old arguments in favour of the hypothesis are restated with great force, and many new ones most ingeniously brought to bear upon the case. Among others, the etymological ones. The Athenians, for instance, are made, not, as they boasted, autochthons, or children of the soil, but attacthons, or people of Attac, an ancient town on the banks of the Indus, "942 miles from the sea," as the author particularly states. The Bœotians are made *Baihotians*, or people of Behoot, which is a river of the Punjaub; while Corinth, or Corinthus, is *Cor-Indus*, in reference to the coast stretching from the Cori to the Indus, from whence the author supposes the Corinthians to have emigrated to Europe. But, notwithstanding these somewhat fanciful views, indisputable traces of India are pointed out in the Greek language, and the book is altogether one of great interest to the scholar and philologist.

It will be interesting, after the foregoing statement of facts, to glance at what the most eminent thinkers and writers of Greece and Rome have recorded upon the subject of the origin of the art of writing, though their statements are often based upon ancient and fabulous traditions, such as its gift to man by the gods, &c. &c.; for, as Bishop Warburton remarks, most of those inventions or adaptations which are lost in the darkness of remote antiquity, such as seed-corn, wine, writing, civil society, &c., were seized by the gods as their property by "that kind of right which gives strays to the lord of the manor." Even Plato, though following the track of some other ancient writers, in a passage about to be quoted, nevertheless, in another place, ridicules the gist of such fables in a similar manner, when he says sarcastically, that "some, when they cannot unravel a difficulty, bring down a god, as in a machine, to cut the knot." After the words just cited, it is somewhat startling to find the great philosopher himself bringing down a god, "as in a machine," to explain the origin of writing, in the following passage of the *Phædrus*, cited

by Champollion Figeac. Plato, who had visited Egypt, places in the mouth of Socrates the following sentence: "I have learned that, in the environs of Naucratis, a city of Egypt, there was an ancient god, to whom the bird called the ibis was consecrated; his name was Theuth. He is said to have been the first inventor of figures and the science of calculation, of geometry, and of astronomy, and also of the game of chess, and of LETTERS. Thamus was then king of all Egypt, and resided in the great city of Upper Egypt which the Greeks call the Egyptian Thebes, the god of which was called Ammon. Theuth went to this king, and explained to him his discoveries, telling him that he must spread the knowledge of them among the Egyptians. Thamus begged him to explain the utility of these things; and while he satisfied this demand, the king occasionally praised that which he thought good, or blamed that which he thought faulty." It would take too long to relate all that Thamus said respecting each of these discoveries; but when Theuth came to the LETTERS, "Great king," said he, "this science will render the wisdom of the Egyptians greater, and will give them a more faithful memory; it is a remedy against the difficulty of learning and retaining knowledge." "Wise Theuth," replied the king, "some are more apt at discovering arts, and others at judging in what degree they may be useful or injurious. Thou, father of letters, hast allowed thyself to be blinded by thy inclination, till thou seest them different to what they are. Those who learn them will leave to those strange characters the care of recalling to them all that they should rather have confided to memory, and they will themselves preserve no actual recollection of them. Thus, thou hast discovered not a means of memory, but only of reminiscence. Thou givest to thy disciples the means of appearing wise without really being so; for they will read without the instruction of masters, and think themselves wise upon many things, when, in fact, they will be ignorant, and their intercourse will be insupportable."

To the same Egyptian divinity, Plato, in another place, attributes a subsequent improvement in the art of writing, which is, in fact, nearly its fullest development. "Theuth," the god, or, as he says, some "divine man," perceiving that the inflections of the human voice were capable of emitting a great variety of distinct sounds, separated them into a class called *vowels*, and into another class of mixed character, and a third class, called *mutes;* he then separated the vowels, and distinguished them individually, doing the same by the mutes, as well as the medium sounds, giving to each an elementary name, as a fixed part of lingual sound; and finding that none could appreciate the value of one of these sounds separately, he imagined the whole knowledge of the subject to constitute but one single and complete science, which he called "grammar."

Diodorus Siculus gives a similar account of the invention of writing, and has preserved the special tradition current in his time on the banks of the Nile, that "Hermes (Thoth) was the first who fixed the precise articulation

of the common language, and who gave names to great numbers of objects which previously had no fixed appellation, and who discovered the art of *tracing letters.*"

One of the first notices of the origin of writing which occurs in Roman literature is the often-quoted passage of Lucan:

> "Phœnices primi, famæ si creditur, ausi
> Mensuram rudibus vocem signare figuris."

That is to say, that, if we may trust report or fame, the Phœnicians were the first who aspired to fix and describe the vague sounds of language by means of rude signs. But, as M. Champollion has remarked, this is not all that Lucan says, or it might be deemed crude and unsatisfactory; but he continues, "at that time Memphis knew not as yet the art of weaving the sedges of her river;* and images of animals, quadrupeds, or birds, alone served to engrave on stone the mysteries of her language."

Thus Lucan evidently attributes to the Egyptians the immemorial use of writing in its primitive and anti-phonetic form, while he attributes the first formation of a positive alphabet to the Phœnicians.

But he is incorrect in supposing that the invention of papyrus was so recent as he seems to state, for specimens exist, with writing, as early as the eighteenth century B.C.; and delineations of such scrolls, tied with riband, occur in the hieroglyphic sculpture more than three thousand years prior to that epoch, when it is most probable that Phœnician civilisation had not entered its earliest phases.

Tacitus tells us, in noticing the reforms which the Emperor Claudius wished to make in the Roman alphabet, that "the Egyptians were the first to express ideas by means of the figures of animals; and those inscriptions, which are the most ancient monuments of human intelligence, are engraved on stone. They pretend also to be the inventors of *letters.* It is from them, they say, that the Phœnicians, who excelled them in navigation, carried them to the Greeks, and thus acquired for themselves the glory of an invention which they had received from Egypt."

Pliny states that his opinion relative to the invention of writing is, that it was invented in Assyria; and he doubtless founds his theory upon the cuneiform inscriptions, so recently invested with a truly popular interest by the discoveries of Layard and the ingenious deciphering of Rawlinson. Pliny also cites the opinions of other writers, stating that "Aulus Gellius assigns the invention of letters to Thoth; others stating that they were invented in Syria; and that Cadmus brought letters from Phœnicia to Greece." According to Anticlides, letters were invented in Egypt by Menos (Menes) fifteen years before Phoroneas, the first king of Greece."

On the other hand, Epigines, an author of great merit, states that "he

* That is, to form papyrus.

discovered among the Babylonians astronomical observations, extending to 720,000 years, engraved on baked bricks." "Others," he (Epigines) says, "estimate their calculations to extend 490,000 years only;" and he goes on to state that the Pelasgians brought letters with them into Latium.

Some Chinese writers affirm, like the Egyptians, that letters were of divine origin; and others state, that "when letters were invented, the heavens, earth, and the gods, were all agitated; the inhabitants of Hades wept at night; and the heavens, in joy, rained down ripe grain." "From the invention of letters," says another Chinese writer, "the machinations of the human heart began to operate; falsity and error daily increased; litigation and prisons had their beginning, as also specious and artful language, which causes so much confusion in the world. It was on these accounts that the shades of the departed wept at night. But, on the other hand, from the invention of letters all polite intercourse, and music, proceeded, and reason and justice were made manifest; the relations of life were defined, and laws were fixed; governors had a lasting rule to refer to; scholars had authorities to venerate; the historian, the mathematician, the astronomer, can do nothing without letters. Were there not letters to give proof of passing events, the shades might weep at noon-day as well as night, and the heavens rain down blood, for tradition might affirm what she pleased: so that letters have done much more good than evil; and as a token of the good, heaven rained down ripe grain the day that they were first invented."

Having now briefly recapitulated some of the principal testimonies of ancient writers, both for and against the claims of priority of different countries, it would appear *possible*, from their consideration, that although the art of writing *may* have been invented in India at a period so remote that no traces of its primary state remain, yet that existing evidences are in favour of an Egyptian origin, at least for all the alphabets of Europe and Western Asia. As to the claims of China, whose writing still remains nearly in the primeval phase of the art, we shall find that no tradition points to an earlier use of written signs in that country than about 3000 B.C.; while in Egypt, whose writings and records are being revealed through the agency of the great discoveries of Young and Champollion, the art was in common use, in the most perfect state it ever attained there, nearly two thousand years before the earliest Chinese record.

After these conclusions, and before entering upon the subject of the origin and progress of writing in detail, let us consider the manner in which the art may have originated in many different countries independently, at a certain period of their developing civilisation.

That the art of writing may, and most likely did develop itself, as it was required, in countries totally distinct from each other, and without any intercommunication, is beyond doubt. Thus, both in China and in Egypt we have pretty decisive evidence that the art was independently invented, though

some have attempted to assert that the Chinese received the art from the Egyptians; and others, that the Egyptians received it from the Chinese, merely upon the ground of the similarity of the earliest iconographic characters of those nations. But there can be nothing extraordinary in the fact, that the figures of a horse or a goose, drawn by a primitive artist in Britain, in India, in China, or Egypt, should resemble each other; and no intimate connexion of the countries could be proved from that fact.

Writing is always found to be, in the first instance, a composition of iconographic signs; and does not interpret language, but paints objects and events. The first steps of the art of writing, therefore, when in the purely iconographic phase, might be intelligible to distinct nations, having respectively arrived at a similar stage of the art, even when their *spoken* language was quite different; for objects and events, as expressed by signs and not by sounds, might appear the same to both.

It now appears pretty evident that the art of painting, that is, the idea of imitating the forms of plants, animals, or other objects, was, in the first instance, attempted for the purpose of expressing ideas, rather than producing mere pictorial representations; at all events, this view is known to form part of the earliest traditions of many different countries; and the Egyptians, for example, had a legend that painting was invented by the gods, and revealed to man for the express purpose of *writing* the history of deities and kings.

The idea of imitating the form of an object was no doubt first suggested to man by means of its sun-shadow; and in one of the Greek traditions of the origin of painting, it is stated that the first picture was the outline of a horse's shadow, traced in the sand by his rider with the point of his spear. The minutest plant, and the most delicately formed animal, stand daily for their portraits to the sun; and their silhouettes appear so distinct on the grass or sand, that any uncultivated savage might take his first drawing-lesson by tracing their forms. So that photography, as it were, formed the basis of the earliest kind of art; as it forms, in our own day, in a more scientific sense, one of the most striking curiosities of art's latest developments.

The power being once acquired of delineating a plant or animal, the first step of picture-writing was attained, and it became easy to convey the idea of any simple object by its painted figure; but skilfully selected links of association were yet required to express more complex things, and yet to do so in a striking and unmistakeable manner. Thus, the form and colour of a house might be painted—but a city presented a much greater difficulty, which we may suppose overcome in the following manner: Most cities of primeval structure were, as a first precaution, enclosed within a square wall, or ditch, or other protection; we may thus imagine that a □ became in all cases the accepted sign, or rather symbol, of a town. This first step towards expressing the idea of a town by means of a sign, required, eventually, to be improved; for as towns increased in number,

it became necessary to distinguish in writing one town from another: just as the Greeks of Aigina, who at first placed a simple A upon their coins, found it eventually necessary, as the number of states or cities which began with the same letter increased in number, to add other letters to the simple initial; and so on later coins of that state, first AI, and then AIG appear, as necessary additions and distinctions. Just so the first calligraphers, finding the □ signifying *the* town no longer sufficient, adopted a further mode of distinguishing it. Most cities in remote times received their names from some special circumstance relating to their foundation or locality, such as the vicinity of a dangerous animal, perhaps a lion, in which case it would be called by a name equivalent to "*Liontown;*" and as an example of the importance which was attached to circumstances connected with the vicinity of dangerous animals, when their races were more abundant and destructive, I may mention the case of the Greek city of Clazomene in Asia Minor, the neighbourhood of which was infested by a wild boar of unusual size, whose depredations, and whose fleetness and cunning in escaping from all pursuit, gave rise to the fable of his possessing the power of actual flight; and on the early coins of this city a winged boar is the most conspicuous type, some of the coins bearing which, date five or six centuries prior to the Christian era.

In primeval writing, a town named after some analogous circumstance to the one above alluded to—Boartown, Snaketown, or Liontown—would be expressed, we may conceive, by the figure of a boar or snake placed within the conventional square; thus forming a combined sign, which must, with very little tuition, have easily indicated the particular town to the earliest readers of hieroglyphics. This second step in iconographic writing consisted in the conjunction of a symbolic with a merely iconographic sign; which is the extent to which the Mexicans advanced in writing, and not beyond, as the nation was surprised and destroyed by the invading Spaniards at this crisis of its progress in the art.*

In the old world we are enabled to follow the next succeeding stages in the art. From the representation of mere absolute things or acts, to the representation of moral qualities, the chasm was immense; and yet its passage was effected. Such ideas as God—the soul—love—hate—seem incapable of being expressed in writing by an iconographic process; and yet their expression was accomplished by different nations, and, as it would seem, by signs peculiar to each people, according to its conception of such abstract ideas. To explain the mode by which this addition to the powers of *sign-writing* was effected, let us only consider the word *soul*. With nations who considered that the principle of life was seated in the heart, it is easy to conceive that the figure of a heart would well represent the idea of the *soul;* while in other

* The first elements of a phonetic character in Mexican writing will be found noticed in the next chapter.

countries, with other creeds, the character or image would vary both in form and intricacy, according to influencing circumstances. But it may be seen by that single illustration how rapidly the capacity of writing as a medium of expressing thought must have expanded after the invention of the first symbolic signs of that description, which at once enlarged greatly the scope of expression, as they even extended to the notation of such abstract sentiments as justice, truth, &c. &c., to be alluded to hereafter in detail.

Another difficulty next arose, but not immediately, for we must allow long periods for the full development of each phase of this extraordinary art. The new impediment occurred when the increasing intercommunication of nations rendered it necessary to transcribe foreign *names* of persons and countries. The names of persons speaking a different language, and which did not convey any *meaning* to the ears of the people whose progress we are watching, could not be represented by any of the iconographic or ideographic signs in use. Such names were, to the people we are speaking of, mere *sounds*, and could only be expressed *phonetically*, that is, by signs capable of expressing *sound*, which none of the previous iconographs or ideographs pretended to do; but which was eventually effected by selecting such signs as represented things, the names of which, in the spoken language of the native people, resembled the sound of the foreign name. Thus, though an image of a lion might represent, in writing, either a positive lion, or symbolically express *strength*, and though a figure of the sun represented either the sun or general light, yet if the native *names* of those two things happened to resemble the foreign name they sought to express, they would use these iconographs combined, for the purpose of expressing that name, denoting their deviation from their ordinary use by placing the figure of a man behind and before them, to signify their application to a proper name.

This was the first step towards a real alphabet of *phonetic* or *sound-describing* letters; for the use of those two characters were thenceforward confirmed as expressing, when required, particular sounds; and as they were gradually modified in form, to facilitate the act of writing them, they became eventually neither more nor less than actual letters, like our A, B, C. Thus, the growth of an alphabet, simple and complete as ours now appears, was the slow result of successive ages of improvement, and of the succeeding efforts of nation after nation during a long series of generations.

H. N. Humphreys, lith.

Day & Son, Lith.rs to The Queen.

PICTORIAL WRITING OF MEXICO.

CHAPTER III.

PICTURE-WRITING OF THE MEXICANS.

THE art of writing, as practised by the Mexicans at the time of the Spanish invasion of Cortez and his followers, had not developed itself much beyond the first, or purely pictorial stage: for the empire of the Aztecs had not existed above two centuries; and there are no monuments tending to prove that their more polished predecessors, the Toltecs, had advanced further in the art. Nevertheless, the first elements of a progress in the art beyond mere pictography had begun to shew themselves in the occasional use of characters in a *phonetic* capacity, to express *foreign names*, in a manner analogous to that of the Egyptians. For instance, the pictures of such natural objects as might begin with sounds like qui, tsi, acs, &c., were combined to express a name composed of such sounds. These characters, with those of a symbolic kind, such as that of a tongue, when used to express the act of speaking, and the simple pictographs, or positive pictures of the objects signified, form the whole *matériel* of Mexican writing, which thus serves admirably to illustrate the first stages of the art; especially as no kind of abbreviation or simplification in the pictorial forms had taken place, which is the first step towards reducing a series of depicted objects to a system of *writing*, as we now understand the term. Such was the state of the Mexican system of writing at the time of the Spanish invasion, the further progress of which was permanently checked by the introduction of the European alphabet.

A system of writing similar to that of the Mexicans was practised, at the same time or previously, by the North American Indians; which has been described by Charleroix, and of which recently-discovered remains have afforded interesting evidence. A similar kind of characters was found also, by Strahlenberg, on the rocks of Siberia.*

D'Acosta relates, that on the first arrival of the Spanish squadron on the shores of Mexico, expresses were sent to Montezuma bearing scrolls of cloth, on which were painted accurate representations of the Spanish ships, &c. &c. "In this manner," he continues, "they kept their histories, representing things

* Botturini says the Peruvians were acquainted with a mode of recording events by means of knotted strings of different colours, of which Sylvestre has engraved a specimen in his *Paleographie;* but it is possible they had also a mode of recording events similar to the system of the Mexicans.

that had bodily shapes in their proper figures, and those that had none in arbitrary, significant characters."

The Aztecs were a semi-civilised race when they were surprised by the Spaniards in possession of the fertile plains of Mexico. They had made great progress in the arts of domestic life, and in legislation; and were in possession of a system of arithmetic, as well as of the mode of writing about to be described, which they had no doubt derived from the more polished Toltecs, and other neighbouring nations whom they had subdued. For it is scarcely probable that during the period of their brief supremacy, not exceeding two hundred years, they should have originated and carried out a system of writing even as perfect as that which they possessed at the epoch of their subjection by the Spaniards. We have, indeed, as I have stated, evidence that similar signs were formerly in use among the North American Indians, the source from which the Aztecs of Mexico, or even their predecessors the Toltecs, may have derived the roots of this knowledge, if, indeed, they be not traces left by those nations in their early passage southward.

Some of the most illiterate and remote tribes of the northern races of American Indians still make use of certain symbols, which are, in fact, the first steps towards picture-writing. Thus the red-skinned warrior carves an arrow upon a tree to denote the direction of his course to his followers; the changing position of the carved symbol pointing out every sinuosity of his devious course through the forests.

In the improved and established system of Mexican writing, we find symbolic characters of similar import: thus the figure of a tongue denotes, as I have stated, the act of speaking; a foot-print, travelling; a man sitting on the ground, an earthquake. The manner in which the Mexicans began to use a limited number of phonetic, or sound-expressing characters, may be illustrated by the mode in which the name of the town of Cimatlan was expressed. The sound of this name was *written* by means of a painted figure of a certain root termed *cimatte,* and another object, the spoken sound of which was similar to *tlan,* near; the name of the town having no doubt originated from the circumstance of the country round abounding in the cimatte root.

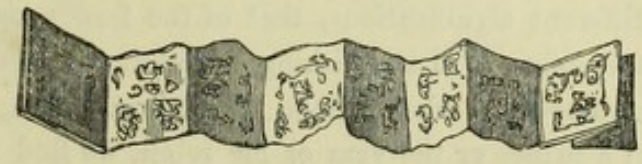
A proper name was occasionally expressed by a picture of the object giving rise to it, without regard to its phonetic character or sound, as in the case of prince Nezahualcoyotl, alluded to by Mr. Prescott in his invaluable history of Mexico. Nezahualcoyotl signifies hungry fox, and was given to a Mexican prince in consequence of the sagacity he displayed during the vicissitudes of his youth: this name was represented by the figure of a fox, which was also used as a symbol embroidered on his war banners; and when thus used, or borne upon the wooden shield, it became a personal blazon, very similar in character and acceptation to the armorial bearings of the age of chivalry.

In writings of the pictorial kind, deriving but slight assistance from phonetic characters, it is easy to conceive that records must be brief, and that registers

kept by such means must necessarily be of a fragmentary character. This is, in fact, the case; yet, in this respect, hieroglyphic records did not materially differ from the monkish chronicles of the dark ages, which frequently dispose of the events of an entire year in a few brief sentences; which were nevertheless quite long enough, as Mr. Prescott remarks, for the annals of barbarians. However this may be, the writing of the Mexicans was apparently a much more available system, for its special purposes, than might at a first glance be deemed possible of one composed of merely pictorial characters, in their first absolute stage of direct imitation of the objects represented; for, in the college of the priests, it appears that the Mexican youth were instructed in various branches of knowledge, and taught to record their progress by means of the national hieroglyphic system, which was used as a sort of stenography, for forming a collection of notes, which suggested to the initiated much more than could be conveyed by a mere literal interpretation.

The Mexicans were acquainted with modes of fabricating several sorts of material for writing upon, quite as excellent as the papyrus of the Egyptians; among which were a fine kind of cotton cloth, prepared skins, and a fabric made from the leaves of the agave, or American aloe; which is said, when of the best quality, to have been more beautiful than the finest vellum.

Sometimes the Mexican manuscripts were done up in rolls, but frequently like a folding screen, with a more solid board at each end; so that, when folded up, they presented the appearance of a modern European book. This form is much more convenient than that of the rolls of Greek, Egyptian, and Roman Mss., as it enables the reader to look at one page at a time, thus presenting nearly the same advantages as the leaves of a modern volume. The first Spanish archbishop of the newly-acquired territory considered the ancient archives of Mexico, preserved in these interesting folded Mss., as nothing better than idolatrous books of magic; and therefore caused them to be collected in vast numbers, especially from the great seat of Mexican learning, Anahuac, and burnt them in "a mountain heap," as the chroniclers of the time have termed it. Another Spaniard, the well-known Ximenes, though remarkable for many high qualities, had shortly before, and even in Europe, committed a similar act to that of the fanatical archbishop of Mexico; for, on the taking of Grenada, he annihilated by a rival bonfire the vast hoard of Moorish literature there collected. It is, indeed, a curious fact, that among the few Mexican Mss. which have escaped destruction and been brought to Europe, where they are now among the most highly-prized rarities of national museums, not *one* has found its way to the national libraries of Spain, where it might be presumed that a splendid collection would have existed.*



* Sperete appears to think that the original of the Codex Mendoza is in the Escurial.

In the Mexican system of notation of figures, the numerals, up to twenty, are composed of groups of dots; twenty has a separate sign—a flag—perhaps because a standard was borne before each officer commanding twenty men; any number of twenties being expressed by so many flags. The square of twenty, four hundred, had also a separate sign—a plume—as had the cube of twenty, or eight thousand, which was a purse, or sack. Half or a quarter of these numbers were represented by half or a quarter of the sign.

As an illustration (Plate I.) of the precise mode in which the Mexican hieroglyphics were designed, I have selected a portion of a page of the book or folded Ms. termed the Mendoza Codex, from having formed part of the Mendoza collection. It is supposed to relate to the history of Mexico from its first foundation. The second page has furnished my illustration, and, as interpreted, relates to the reign and conquests of Acamapich. The blue border at the side, which in the original is drawn in strong outline, and then washed over with an even tone of pale blue, represents a series of years, distinguished by means of the dots, counting from the first point as far as thirteen points: the compartment with five dots representing the fifth year of the reign, that with ten the tenth, and so on; the pictures of the acts of the prince being connected with each special year by means of a connecting line, or some other obvious device. The additional symbols have different significations, that of the flower signifying a calamitous year, &c.; a system of distinguishing different years which is analogous to that still employed on the coinage of modern China, on which, instead of the name of a prince or the year of his reign, we find such inscriptions as "the happy year," "the flourishing year," &c. &c.

Fig. 1 (Plate I.) is Acamapich; fig. 2, warlike instruments, signifying his preparation for war; fig. 3 is again Acamapich in a subsequent year; figs. 4, 5, 6, and 7, are the cities Quahnahuac, Mezquic, Cuitlhuac, and Xochimilco, represented by descriptive symbols in a similar manner to that in which the name of the city of Cimatlan is expressed, as previously described.

The four heads are those of the respective chiefs, or kings, of these cities, beheaded by order of Acamapich, each distinguished by the iconographic symbol by which his name was expressed in this system of writing. The figures have been compressed somewhat closer together in my plate, to economise space, as in the original they are much more straggling, the four heads being all in front of the lower figure of Acamapich, instead of above and below, as I have shewn them.

This plate is taken from Lord Kingsborough's great work, in which he has published fac-similes of all the most remarkable Mexican Mss. in existence; a collection upon which the future labours of the student in Mexican paleography will necessarily be based, as it would be impossible for him to visit all the museums and private collections in which the originals are preserved: the specimens in the British Museum and the Bodleian Library at Oxford

are the only accessible examples of original Mexican writing within reach of the English student.

However barbarous these Mss. may appear, both in crudeness of execution and in the system of their pictorial writing, there are modern English examples of equal barbarism, and even of a similar character; for, among the vast numbers of our countrymen still uneducated in the first elements of the art of writing, many have been found, in remote districts, inventing an iconographic system of their own: a fact aptly illustrated by the well-worn story of the rustic merchant who kept his accounts in this pictorial manner, and charged his customer, the miller, with a cheese instead of a mill-stone, in consequence of having forgotten to mark the hole in the middle.

The art of writing, in its most primitive stage, having now been examined through the medium of Mexican remains, the next stage of its development must be sought among the Chinese, whose system will form the subject of the next chapter.

See also in the fifth Volume of Purchas his Pilgrimes for the writing &c.

CHAPTER IV.

SYSTEM OF WRITING OF THE CHINESE.

IN discussing, in the preceding chapter, the art of writing as practised by the Mexicans, I have placed it, in chronological order, before the systems of the old world. But this inversion of the order of succession was merely resorted to in order first to discuss a system of writing which had never advanced beyond the earliest stage. Having disposed of this view of the subject, we must at once turn to a review of the art among the Egyptians and Chinese, who, in the present state of our paleographical knowledge, stand out from the other nations of the world in the honourable position of the earliest inventors of the glorious art of writing. They appear both to have perfectly independent claims to its invention; for there existed the whole breadth of Asia between them to prevent the probability of communication, and in those days there were no railways or electric telegraphs. The Chinese invention of writing appears to date from the time of Fou-Hi, 2950 years anterior to the Christian era, or near 5000 years before our time. Such dates make writing appear, indeed, an invention of hoar antiquity—of the "dark, dim time of eld;" but in the land of Egypt, the pyramids of Memphis were constructed 2000 years prior to the time of Fou-Hi, and their still-existing hieroglyphs prove that a system of writing had even then been perfected by the Egyptians. The distinction to be drawn, in considering the relative merits of the Chinese and the Egyptian systems, is, that the Egyptians reduced their pictorial writing, first, to signs easily traced by the most unskilful hand, and yet at once recognisable by their characteristic outline, and then to characters still further abridged, introducing phonetics, which absolutely laid the foundation of the modern phonetic alphabets of Europe; while the Chinese remained in their first stage of strictly pictorial writing, merely reduced in complication of lines, in order to abridge the time necessary for writing it; with the exception of certain rude approaches to the phonetic principle in a *syllabic* instead of a *literal* form.

This difference is highly characteristic of the two nations. The races of western Asia filled northern Africa and the whole of Europe with the seeds of a vital intelligence, and eternal progress has sprung from the germination of the seeds thus sown; while the yellow races of the deep

far east remain ever in the dawn; the sun of civilisation has never half risen upon them; they invent, but their inventions are not endowed with life; they have no motive power, no progressive spirit animating them, and they remain for ever in their original crudity—great, but, like an over-developed infant, cumbrous and inactive.

From this and other causes it is, that we are still enabled to witness among a people whose knowledge of the arts of life dates back 5000 years, the interesting spectacle of the art of writing still being practised in the primitive form of pictorial characters, the scriptorial signs of the Chinese being still but a series or combination of pictures; so that when we say that the Chinese language consists of so many thousand *letters*, we speak incorrectly; for they are not *letters*, as we now understand the term. They do not convey the idea of a sound, but only of an image; and a knowledge of a very moderate number of these signs would enable an individual to communicate any ordinary ideas belonging to the common business of life. Just, for instance, as we may say that the Italian or Spanish languages contain so many thousand words, while a knowledge of 500 or 600 of them would enable a stranger to hold a conversation upon any ordinary topic.

According to the ancient records of the Chinese themselves, they did not invent, but received from some other nation the art of writing in its primitive pictorial form. The only foreign source which suggests itself is India; but M. Champollion Figeac is of opinion that no other eastern nation was civilised at a sufficiently early period to have communicated the art to the Chinese at the epoch at which they claim to have been in possession of it.

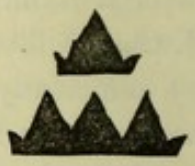
The nations of India have, as previously stated, no traces of any system of writing prior to that founded on a nearly perfect phonetic alphabet; and, unless the ordinarily received dates of history are erroneously computed, there was not time for India at that remote epoch to have gone through the phases of the art which invariably precede a phonetic alphabet. It is, therefore, to be inferred that India itself received its system of writing from a foreign source, where it was already in its phonetic state, and could not have given the art, in its first stages, to the Chinese. Nevertheless, as the growing theory of the origination of all the arts of civilisation in central Asia gains ground, it tends to strengthen the view that the generally-received chronology of the world's history embraces too limited a period, and that India may, after all, at a period beyond human record, have originated the first pictorial system of writing, and, as suggested by the Chinese records, in attributing a foreign origin to their system of writing, have communicated it to the neighbouring Chinese, during its early stages.

But to return to the writing of the Chinese. Their own authors on the subject of the invention of the art state vaguely that first of all it originated in the knotting of strings in a peculiar manner, in notched sticks, in the imitation of the traces left by birds on damp soil, &c. &c.; but these theories look

rather like apocryphal guesses than authentic records; and are founded perhaps, as a recent author observes, on the remote resemblance of such signs as the *shin* of the Hebrew alphabet, ש, or a similar character in the cuneiform writing of Assyria, to the foot of a bird. But the Chinese writers, if taking an analogous view of the subject, referred, of course, to the forms of certain Chinese characters themselves, which in their abridged forms are not unlike knots of string, or footprints of birds.

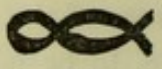
The earliest traces of Chinese writing belong to the period when the positive figure of each object was used to communicate the idea of it in a written form; and this method is the same as we find marking the origin of the Mexican, and all other primitive modes of writing of which the original monuments have been preserved to our time. The first Chinese signs were much more direct portraitures of the objects of which the idea had to be communicated than the later, and were very commonly filled up with black, forming what the French term a *silhouette* or shadow, representing the bulk and exterior form of an object by means of a mass of unvarying colour, in which the external forms only could be expressed, the internal lines being concealed, or rather absorbed, in the mass. The following signs or characters of this description are from a Chinese Ms. preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris.

One of the simplest and most obvious is that which expresses a mountain, or mountains, in the following manner:



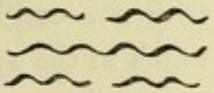
A hand holding a branch of corn is another of the signs used at the earliest period, and represented in the following manner:

A skein of raw silk is represented by the annexed figure, in this primitive iconographic system:

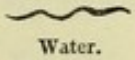


Such an object as this last, when found among the most primitive characters of Chinese iconography (and it is also found among the earliest Egyptian characters), indicates that the nation must have arrived at a very considerable degree of civilisation before the want of communicative ideas by a species of writing is felt; which accounts for a certain degree of judgment generally displayed in the delineation, selection, and arrangement of the necessary signs, which, besides actual portraiture, were made to express certain relations of objects one to another, as in the mode of expressing the idea of a *son*, which the mere figure of a man would not convey. This relationship is expressed by placing the figure in a conventional position of subjection—that of kneeling, which is always, in ancient Chinese writing, understood to express the idea of a man in the relation of the son to the father.

Father, on the other hand, is expressed by a figure leaning over, as in the act of protection. The representation of these figures became, eventually, simplified, their delineation being reduced to outlines only, and not filled up with black, while the expression of the forms themselves became, as it were, abridged. Thus we find the idea of water, in the earlier stages of the *linear* system, expressed by a *group* of undulating lines, but afterwards by a single line of the same sort.

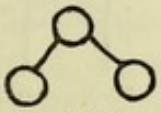


Water.



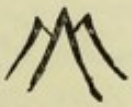
Water.

A constellation was expressed, at this time, by three or more circles representing stars joined together by means of connecting lines to denote their proximity.



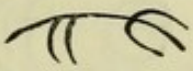
Constellation.

The character expressing mountains, which in the former stage was a solid mass in the requisite form, now becomes a mere outline; as,



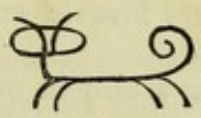
Mountains.

Animals, in the abridged form, are sometimes very ingeniously expressed by a few hasty lines; an ox being delineated as in the example, in which the fore legs are left out, but the line which would have served to express them is made to mark the more distinctive feature, the horns.



An Ox.

A lion is distinguished in a different, yet still characteristic manner, recalling the heraldic lions of the medieval artists of Western Europe. Indeed, the annexed character might almost pass for a lion *passant gardant*, in heraldic phrase.



A Lion.

A nose is, in this phase of Chinese iconography, expressed by a significant sign which delineates in a very simple but effective manner the projection of this feature, with the curves of the nostrils; as,

A Nose.

Composite ideas, such as a man of a special calling, &c., are expressed by means of a combination of the chief article of his trade and the figure of a man, as in the annexed character, which represents an agricultural labourer by means of a field and a plough: the former shewn by a figure of the earth divided into portions, expressing enclosures or fields; and the latter being a rude abridgment of the form of the Chinese plough.

A Field-labourer.

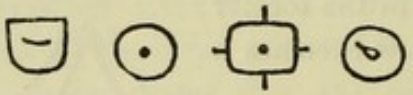
Though the Chinese never advanced one step beyond the strictly iconographic period, with the exception of the syllabic features to be afterwards described, yet they continued to a certain extent to abbreviate the manner of tracing these *letter-portraits*, till they may be said to have become *scriptographic*, or *written* rather than drawn figures. A house, for example, which in the early stage was a rather complicated and positive portrait, was at a later period represented by a much more simple character; which was of


A House.

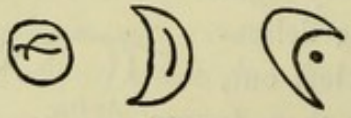
course then received rather as a conventional sign than as a positive portrait, though still expressing the object by means of an imitative sign, as distinct from a notation of lingual sound. It is evident that such a character could be made with one continuous stroke of the pen, merely with the addition of a single touch at the apex, to convey the idea of the sharpness of the gable.

Folding-doors were expressed by the following signs, which I have selected as examples because they are often used, in connexion with other characters, to express compound ideas, or ideas requiring compound signs of this description to give them full expression.

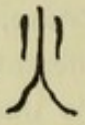

Folding-doors.

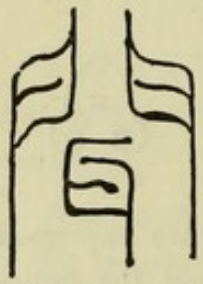

Suns.

As examples of the different modes of expressing one and the same object, I have selected the preceding figures of the sun.


Moons.

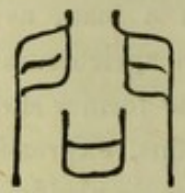
The representations of the moon also differ, and run in a similar manner into various handwritings, as it were.

Fire is represented either as  or quite as frequently as  and also in other modes; either being an exceedingly clever abbreviation of a pictorial representation of flame.

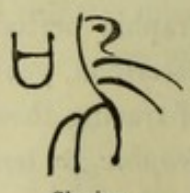

The act of listening.

The complications, or multiform characters, begin with such simple contrivances as the combination of a door and an ear; which, together, express the act of listening, as shewn in the annexed example; the ear being, even in its abbreviated form of delineation, at once intelligible to any one who has ever attempted to draw that important appendage of the human head.

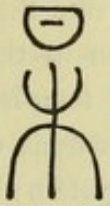
The act of interrogation, or asking a question, is expressed with equal ingenuity by means of a mouth, similarly placed at the opening of folding-doors, as in the annexed example:


Interrogation.

A few more specimens of this class of combination will suffice. The first shall be the ingenious method, truly Chinese in its nicety of application, by which the act of singing is expressed. This is done by means of a mouth placed beside a bird, the warbling of birds having seemed to the Chinese calligraphers the architype of all ideas of music, especially the musical cultivation of the human voice.


Singing.

Sunshine is represented by a sun placed above a tree, as in the annexed example: while obscurity or depth, on the other hand, is expressed by the sun being placed beneath the tree, as in the opposite specimen:



Sunshine or brightness.

Obscurity.

A tree is represented by its relative portion of the preceding figures; while two or more such characters represent a forest.

The combined signs of the Chinese repertory are, as it may be supposed, extremely numerous; and it would be impossible and out of place, except in a special treatise on the Chinese language, to multiply examples beyond a number sufficient to exhibit their principles of combination. I will therefore, in addition to the examples given, only allude to a few of the most remarkable. An axe next to a tree expresses the act of cutting wood; a man with a whip, the act of driving, or leading. To express the idea of a married woman, that important symbol of household authority the broom, accompanied by a hand, indicating the sole right of sweeping, is placed beside the figure of a female; and her exalted position of cleaner of the house, like the *νεωκορος* of the Greek temples, was thus fully expressed. This may appear unintelligible to ladies who have deputed the high functions of their office to a housekeeper in black satin, who again works by deputy in the form of the really important personage the housemaid; but they must recollect that they are only "*ladies*," and do not comprehend the higher position of "women," who preside over the highest household virtue but one; for "cleanliness is next to godliness," as the venerable proverb says.

The general and perfected system of Chinese writing may be divided into several distinct classes of character, similar to the *figurative*, the *symbolic*, and *symbolic-figurative* signs of the Egyptian system; but I have not space to enter upon such a classification; suffice it therefore to state, that the Chinese have classes of signs corresponding to these, and that they have also supplemental signs, equally found in the Egyptian system, which may be termed *inverse*, or *backward* signs, as they convey the sense of retrogression to the objects to which they are applied. They have also *indicative* signs, relating to number, quantity, quality, &c.

Of the inverse signs, an example may be given by the sign used for expressing the idea of returning, or coming back, which is well represented by a man walking in the opposite direction to that of the general writing, in which, in an ordinary sense, he would stand in the same direction as the other figures. Such, and a number of other similar contrivances and combinations, constituted the most perfect system of pure iconography of which we have any monument; for the Egyptian hieroglyphic system cannot be called pure

iconography like the Chinese, on account of its large admission of phonetic elements even in the very earliest periods of which examples exist in the most ancient temples of Thebes, inscribed a thousand years anterior to the earliest pretensions of the Chinese to the possession of the art. But beyond the Chinese system above described, or even the far superior Egyptian, another step in advance is required before books can be written and read, as we understand reading and writing in modern Europe. Before this immense and important consummation can be achieved, it becomes necessary to conceive and realise a great addition to the purely graphic system, if not to supersede it, by a system of *phonetic* characters; that is to say, characters conveying the idea of certain fixed *sound*, and not pictures conveying mere ideas of certain objects, which, however ingeniously combined, leave much to be effected ere our modern conception of a book, or even a letter, can be realised.

This, to a certain extent, the Egyptians had already achieved at a period to which the earliest existing specimens of their writing belong. To effect which, they had set aside certain characters for the expression of certain simple and fixed sounds; which figures, when used in combination, expressed the sounds of the most complicated words. In fact, the Egyptians had, in addition to their iconographic and symbolic characters, a subsidiary alphabet used in connexion with it, which served to express such foreign names, or other things, as it was found difficult to describe by mere figures and symbols.

To this point the Chinese never advanced, though they yet made some progress in a somewhat similar mode of expressing the sounds of language, as well as the form and qualities of objects. The Chinese language, like that of the Egyptians, and like almost all primitive languages, was monosyllabic; and, as M. Champollion observes, the Egyptians might, by this similarity of character in the language, have been led to the same imperfect expedient as the Chinese, writing the word RO-MI (a man) with the characters, "a *mouth*," which in the spoken language is *ro*, and with a lioness, which in the spoken language is *mie*. This is a method which would be subject to the inconvenience, that the *same* characters must be employed with a totally different signification in other places—a difficulty which the Egyptians avoided by a better-conceived system; while the Chinese followed a plan which involved the very defect just urged, and never advanced beyond it.

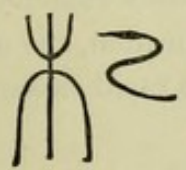
In the Chinese language there exists only a very limited number of syllabic sounds; and consequently the same sound, with almost inappreciable distinctions of accent, is frequently made to express the same thing; in other words, *homophonous* words express many distinct things. In writing, this difficulty was to some extent overcome by the following process:—the phonetic characters of the Chinese were first obtained in the following manner:

for instance, the sounds *ting* and *kea* were represented by characters which were originally portraits of things expressed by those sounds; and if they were required to be combined phonetically, the syllable *ta*, as the initial of *ting* and the final of *kea*, was used; and the same system was observed in the notation of other syllabic sounds. In order to prevent confusion, such a syllable as *li*, for instance, which in different circumstances means many different things, might be secured to its intended meaning by means of what is called a determinative sign; that is to say, a purely *figurative* sign, which would determine the precise meaning of the phonetic one. Thus, as in Egypt, after any phonetic sign expressing the name of a quadruped, the hinder half of the skin of an ox would be placed, shewing at once that the name phonetically expressed referred to an animal. After the name of a bird, the figure of a goose was placed,—after the name of a reptile, a serpent,—after the names of trees, the figure of a tree.

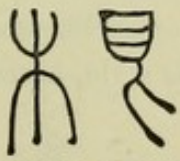
The character assigned to express the syllable *li*, either in its initial or final sound, represents, when followed by the figure of a tree, a pear-tree; the phonetic *ki* and a *tree* expressed a willow; the phonetic *pei* and a *tree* expressed a wooden cup; the phonetic *pa* and *tree* a wooden handle; *ken* and *tree* a root; *ki* followed by the figure of a bird expressed duck; *ya* followed by a bird expressed raven.* The phonetics, it is seen, were formed by figures, the names of which in the spoken language contained the sound required; the determinative signs being mere iconographs, or portraits, signifying simply the kind or class of things depicted.

In the few citations given here the word *ki* occurs twice, which when followed by a *bird* signifies duck, while if followed by a *tree* it signifies willow; thus affording a striking example of the necessity of the determinative signs.

Duck, formed of the sound *ki* and a bird.



Willow, formed of the sound *ki* and a tree.



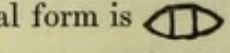
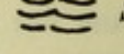
Root, formed of the sound *ken* and a tree.

In these characters it will be perceived that modifications of the formation of the characters occur, and the sound *ki* is more simply written in willow than in duck.

There is some doubt whether the introduction of the phonetic character in Chinese writing was a native improvement; Morrison, in the essay which serves as the introduction to his Lexicon, appearing to think that at this period of its development the Chinese calligraphy was indebted to the Sanscrit for the new feature. But no monuments of Sanscrit character, of a

* These are the examples furnished to M. Champollion by the Chinese scholar Stanislaus Julien.

corresponding age, are in existence. It would be impossible to trace, even if space allowed, all the gradual degradations through which the portrait-letters of the Chinese became eventually arbitrary signs, which, while they lost all traces of their pictorial origin, yet preserved their first characteristic of expressing ideas instead of sound, with the exception of the phonetic element just described. The nature of the transformation may, however, be illustrated by a few examples, in which the degree of departure from the original forms is very unequal.

 *Jih*, "the sun," is now written  , in which a resemblance may be traced to the square manner of writing it in the early periods.  *Yue*, "the moon," is now written  , almost exactly like *sun*, only with the first line slightly curved out, as much, probably, as a mere distinction from sun, as with the intention of still representing, slightly, the crescent.  *Shan*, "a hill," is now written  , three simple lines being substituted for the points.  *Ma*, "a horse," in which the flowing mane and the four legs are so plainly indicated, is now written  ; so changed, in order to form a neat square character, that the original symbol entirely disappears, except in the four touches under the lower line, which still represent the legs of the quadruped. Still more removed from the original form is  the eye; and in  or  *Chay*, "a cart" or "carriage," the indication of the wheels in the first figure has totally disappeared.  *Shwūy*, "water," is now written  ; a still wider departure from the original character than any of the former.

The following are additional examples of two epochs; one shewing the linear or outline stage of delineation, the other its reduction to a more *scriptographic* style, better suited to rapid execution.

Sign for the middle of any thing.

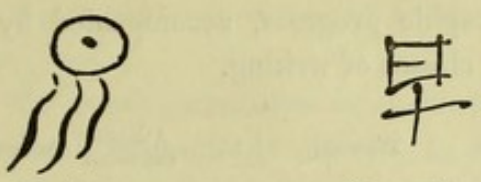
A later or written form of the same sign.

Partridges or pheasants are represented by a bird and an arrow placed near, to indicate that they are slain by the hunter with that weapon.

Pheasant or Partridge.

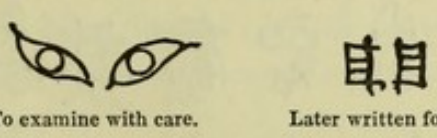
Later style of writing it.

Morning was expressed by the image of the sun shedding dew.



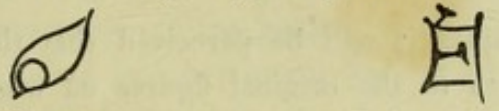
Morning. Later written form.

To examine with care was expressed by means of *two* eyes.



To examine with care. Later written form.

The idea of white, or whiteness, was expressed by a squinting eye, or one looking so much askance as to expose great part of the white.

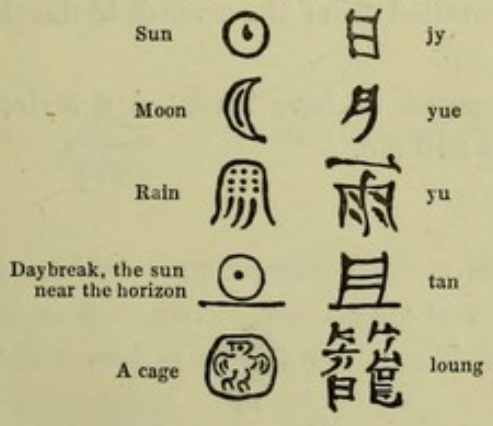


White (the colour). The later written form.

The figure of an eye, when simply indicating that feature, has the pupil in the centre in the early linear form of writing it, and in the later form both lines are placed inside, instead of one outside, as in the figure above.

Compassion is expressed by a human heart, surmounted by two lines, which signify sympathy for the pain of another heart; the two lines thus used signifying 2.

The following are several other examples of the mode of delineating characters in two periods; the first being of what may be termed a pictorial, and the latter of a scriptorial character. The objects are accompanied by their Chinese names.



In the last figure, the idea of a man vowed to solitude and prayer, expressed by images of a mountain and a person prostrated in prayer, is very ingenious.

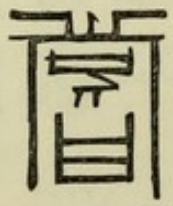
The next selection of signs exhibits the gradual transition from the picture to the written character of the present day, through the most marked periods

of the Chinese calligraphic progress, accompanied by the Chinese denomination of the different classes of writing.

From these examples it will be perceived that the later styles possess but slight resemblance to the original figures on which they are founded. It is indeed curious that any traceable relation should still exist between the modern Chinese writing and the figurative process in which it originated; as the Chinese, when once in firm possession of the art, as far as they ever advanced in it, were continually, in their active idleness and aimless ingenuity, making changes of a perfectly arbitrary nature. The changes so effected, having been the cause of the direct origin of many of the phonetico-figurative groups of which the Chinese written language is now principally composed, being lost. At the same time continual additions of new signs have swelled these groups, or written ideas, to a number exceeding one hundred thousand.

The silhouette-portrait style is supposed to have prevailed, with some modifications, from the earliest period to 800 B.C. The style of linear character, in which *man*, *house*, *tree*, &c. are expressed in examples given some few pages back, is supposed to have prevailed from the seventh to the third century previous to our era.

The celestial minister Li-see is supposed to have invented a style, of which the following is an example, about 210 B.C.



The style invented by Li-see.

The same word in modern characters.

This was a modification in which, in an attempt to produce symmetrical regularity, nearly all the original character was lost.

The next modification, imparting a more cursive manner to the style of Li-see, approaches the modern writing of the country, and is called "Li," or

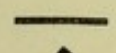
"of the offices," being, in fact, the government hand, and is occasionally used in prefaces to books.

In the next period, the cursive character is so much increased that the number of ligatures render it exceedingly difficult to read; it is the style usually found on sticks of Chinese ink, fans, &c., and is said to have been invented, or rather developed, about the first century of the Christian era.

Many other styles have since been adopted and partially abandoned; and the "Eulogy of the town of Moukden" is cited in Sylvester's great work as an example of many of them, being written in thirty-two different styles of character.

The order of Chinese writing is from right to left, generally in columns; the characters or groups which express a word or a phrase being placed one beneath the other, beginning at the right-hand column at the top, and reading down each in succession to the bottom of the left column. When the Chinese writing is placed in a horizontal line, as in names, &c., over a door, it is read directly from right to left.

The modern Chinese words are arranged in their dictionaries by several methods of classification, one of which is the number of strokes of the pencil required to make the character, beyond the radical: as



Yih, one, a letter of one stroke.

Jin, a man, a letter of two strokes.

Ta, large, a letter of three strokes.

Hwang, yellow, a letter of twelve strokes.

Yo, a wind instrument, a letter of thirteen strokes.

The Chinese distinguish some of their styles, as the "running-hand," that is, the most cursive; one rather less so is termed the "walking-hand;" a third is known as the "grass-hand," &c.; all terms very characteristic of the respective styles.

Though this people never carried the art of writing to its legitimate development in the creation of a perfect phonetic alphabet, they yet preceded all other nations in the discovery of a mode of rapidly multiplying writings by means of printing, an art which was first practised by Fung-taou as early as the tenth century of our era, above four hundred years before its invention

in Europe. The first efforts were made by engraving the letters in intaglio in wood blocks, and then inking all the remaining surface, by which means the letters, when an impression was taken, remained white upon a black ground; but they soon afterwards invented a method of cutting them in relief, producing the letter in black, as in European printing. Fung-taou is still worshipped by the Chinese type-cutters as their patron deity. Beyond the last-named step the Chinese never advanced; and they still print each page of a book from an entire block cut for the occasion, having no idea of our system of movable types.

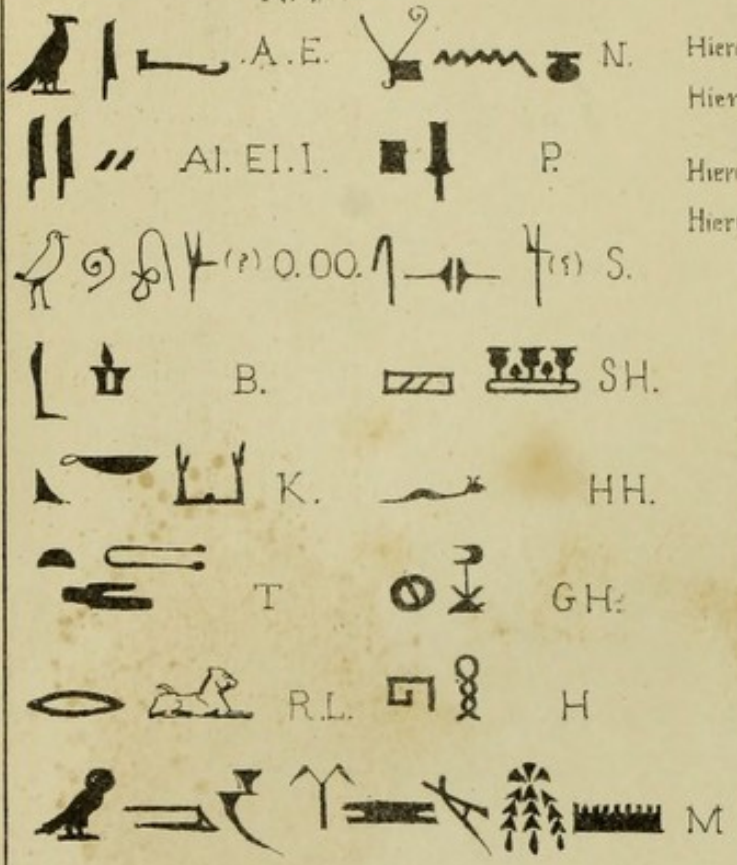
In Europe we also began by wood blocks upon the system just described; and many books printed by that process, now known as "block-books" by collectors, still exist. But our after-steps were of a more progressive character than those of the Chinese; and this first crude effort soon pointed to the glorious invention of movable types.

Before the use of paper, which the Chinese discovered about the end of the first century of our era, they wrote on thin boards, or bamboos pared thin; and their next step was the use of silk or cloth for writing purposes.

EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHICS

interpreted.

N° 1



Phonetic characters

N° 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Hieroglyphic	𓏺	𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺
Hieratic	𓏺	𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺
	7	8	9	10	100	10-000
Hieroglyphic	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓎆	𓍢	𓆐
Hieratic	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺𓏺	𓎆	𓍢	𓆐

Egyptian Numerals

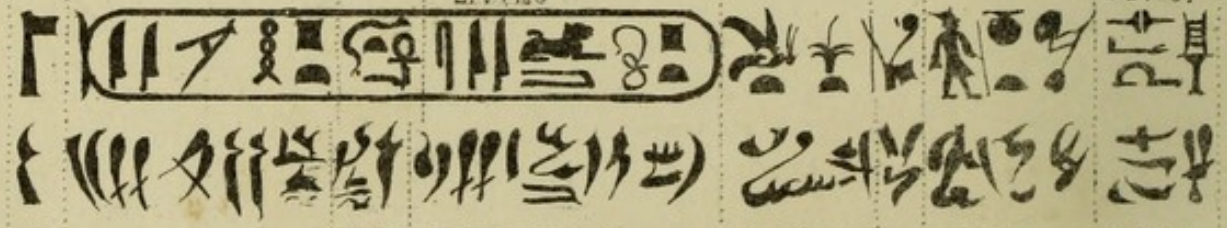
N° 3

Berenice Cleopatra

Regal Names

N° 4

GOD LOVED BY PTHAH EVER LIVING PTOLEMAIOS KING TO STATUE SET UP

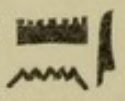


ΘΕΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΩΝΟΒΙΟΥ ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΕΙΚΟΝΑ ΣΤΗΣΑΙ

SPECIMEN FROM THE ROSETTA STONE

with the Greek and an English translation.

N° 5

AMUN 

 ANUBIS

NAMES OF DEITIES

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CHAPTER V.

THE "HIEROGLYPHIC" WRITING OF THE EGYPTIANS.

THE examination of the Mexican system of writing, by means of pictorial signs, has exhibited to us that stage of the art in its rudest and most primitive mode of application. Our review of the Chinese system has enabled us to observe the application of much ingenuity to a similar method, which, in the hands of that industrious race, is developed into a far more complete form; beyond which, however, it did not advance with them.

We are now about to examine the Egyptian system, the practice of which preceded both of those just named, its earliest monuments dating full 1000 years prior to the earliest pretensions of the Chinese. Even at that early epoch the Egyptian system was more advanced than either of those just described, and was indeed bordering on the disclosure of a positive alphabet full 5000 years before the Christian era: but this people never advanced beyond the point thus early achieved; and it was left to other nations to develop the pictorial system into a purely alphabetic one, and realise the greatest and most important of the inventions of man. Nevertheless, they did much; they introduced purely *phonetic*, or *sound-expressing* signs, in addition to iconographic, or *portrait-shewing* ones; and "it is strange," says Prescott, in his History of Mexico, speaking incidentally of the Egyptian system of writing as compared with that of the Mexicans, "that, having thus broken down the thin partition which separated them from an alphabet, their latest monuments should exhibit no nearer approach to it than their earliest."

They were, nevertheless, indisputably the first people, as far as monuments shew, who realised a regular and intelligible system of recording thoughts and events; and before they arrived at the degree of perfection in the art in which we find it in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the most ancient of their existing temples, generation upon generation must have passed away, in its gradual and arduous accomplishment. We must, therefore, ever feel the deepest gratitude to those remote patriarchs of art,—to those priests of Egypt, from whom we derive the benefits we daily enjoy through the agency of this wonderful art—the means afforded by it for gratifying our thirst for knowledge—and the magical power it confers upon us, to summon the wise of all ages to commune with us in our libraries.

The successive perseverance of centuries brought the system, as Mr.

Prescott has observed, to the very verge of a positive alphabet, leaving us monuments of innumerable elaborately engraved records, now in course of deciphering, which may unfold to us, even in minute detail, the history of the Pharaohs many centuries before the visit of Abraham, or the Egyptian servitude of his grandson Joseph and his descendants. These inscriptions may reveal to us codes of ancient virtue and antique law long sunk into oblivion; "for," says Denon, "an Egyptian temple is an open volume, in which the teachings of science, morality, the arts, and history are recorded." How many myriads of such venerable human records have perished undeciphered,—not only in the temples and lesser tombs, which have been destroyed, but also from the vast surfaces of the pyramids, which were originally, as we are informed by Herodotus, entirely covered with hieroglyphics,—it is impossible to calculate.

As the earliest monuments of the Egyptians exhibit their system of writing in its highest state of perfection, we cannot ascertain the manner of its early stages among this great people; and whether it ever had an infancy or youth among them, is one of the mysteries of the past. The most modern hypothesis is, that it was received by them along with the first germs of civilisation from Ethiopia, the traditions of which country place the first dawn of human arts in that part of Africa, and in the most remote antiquity. The peculiar features of the Egyptian people would seem also to point to an Æthiopian origin; and the meeting of the Æthiopian and Arab races at the mouth of the Nile would seem also to account for the singular mixture of the truly African with Asiatic character in the race and in the works of Egypt. Certain it is, that a great part of Æthiopia is covered with monuments of precisely the same character as those of Egypt, which have been attributed, however, to the period of the Egyptian conquest, when those monuments may have been erected by the Egyptians themselves; but, on the other hand, when the Æthiopians, in their turn, subdued Egypt, they only erected monuments in the Egyptian style, and left inscriptions of the same character; from which it is fair to infer that the language, manners, and system of writing of the two countries were the same.

The Egyptians were undoubtedly a mixed race; but there is reason to believe that one branch of the stock came from Asia; for from their paintings we learn that their skin was yellow, like that of the Mongol Tartars. Physiologists have divided them into three classes:—First, the Copts proper, who resemble the statues of Thebes, and are the nearest in general conformation to the Æthiop races. The language of this class is undoubtedly the parent of the modern Coptic, which was no doubt that of ancient Egypt, and is that through which hieroglyphic inscriptions are alone to be deciphered. Secondly, a race of men similar to the Hindoos or Indians, who *may* have originally brought the art of writing, in its primitive stage, from India. Thirdly, a decidedly mixed race, approaching in appearance to the Berber

tribes of Nubia. But the Egyptians were anciently considered rather an Asiatic than an African nation; for ancient geographers made the Nile, and not the Red Sea, the boundary between Africa and Asia, so that all Egypt to the east of the Nile was considered part of Asia. The Egyptians, however, had no tradition among themselves of being of Indian, or any Asiatic origin; they, on the contrary, believed themselves to be strictly autochthones —literally, natives of the soil. But the *castes* of India and Egypt are so similar in character, that the theory of a portion of the race being of eastern origin appears tenable; and such seems to be the opinion of the great Egyptian scholar, S. Sharpe, Esq.

The hieroglyphic writing, whether brought from India by the Hindoo section of this people, or invented in Egypt, or received from Æthiopia, belongs to so remote a period—even in what must be a secondary stage, from its already possessing positive phonetic, or sound-expressing characters—that its earliest developments cannot now be traced. As an example of monuments attesting this high antiquity, it will be sufficient to cite the obelisk of Osirtersen I., still existing at Heliopolis in the Delta, on the four sides of which his names and titles are engraved in the hieroglyphic character, in its most perfect form. This monument existed in the time of Abraham, and was perhaps actually seen and examined by the Jewish patriarch, when, "on account of the famine in his own country, he went down into the land of Egypt, to sojourn there."

The term "hieroglyphic," which may be literally described as *sacred carving*, was invented by the Greeks, and was only used to express the style used for engraving writing on stone or granite, to distinguish it from the more convenient forms, called the hieratic or running-hand of the priests, and the *demotic* or popular manner of writing; which were both merely more concise forms of writing the true hieroglyphic character. Many consider that both these progressive advances had already taken place long previous to the time of Osirtersen I.,* and were necessarily the gradual result of successive steps during several centuries; so that the earlier stage of the art—the primitive style of direct and simple *iconography*—must, as before asserted, if originally invented in Egypt, belong to a most remote antiquity.

The steps from a pure iconographic system to one in which sounds as well as forms were expressed, must have taken place in the following order: the first real advance towards an alphabet was the using of figures to represent the *name* of the object, and not the object itself; which was, in fact, the first advance towards allying written characters to *language*, rather than to *forms*, or ideas. The power of representing a sound or syllable was then achieved. Thus, characters representing objects known in language by monosyllabic sounds were gradually taken to represent thoughts, or feelings, or actions, long expressed by language, but which evidently could not be

* By Wilkinson's computation, 1740 B.C.

expressed in writing so long as the art remained in its primitive pictorial stage. This difficulty had been, however, to a certain extent overcome through the medium of conventional figures, which have been termed the *symbolic* signs of the Egyptian system; as, for instance, when the *heart*—then thought the seat of the vital principle—was used to represent the idea of the *soul*. But this method was in part superseded by the use of characters expressing the sounds of the *words* themselves, which, when once discovered, gradually came more and more into use.

It was soon found that some twenty or thirty of these were called for much more frequently than others; these were vowel-sounds, and vowels joined to single consonants, which became eventually, and undesignedly, the basis of a phonetic system very closely allied to an alphabet, as we now understand that term. But the slow progress by which such advances were made may be easily conceived; and many efforts and failures at extending the power of such syllabic signs must have been attempted before they wrote Osiris with two characters for the syllables *Os* and *Iri;* or, in the next step forward, Amun with a positive vowel-sign and two consonants. But though the progress of their system of writing may, and must have been slow, yet its advantages were keenly felt by the Egyptians; as we have seen that, at periods far more ancient than our earliest historic data, they covered their edifices with laboriously written records; and even the workman's tools, in every art, bore his *written* name, when they were buried with him, as sacred emblems of his peculiar mission on earth. By means of their system of writing, cattle also and domestic implements were marked with the name of the owner, and even garments have been discovered in mummy-cases having one or more hieroglyphic characters worked with a needle upon them, after the manner of modern housewives. The historic records were not confined to the sculptured writing on temples and palaces, but manuscripts on papyrus are found of the earliest Theban eras. At the same time, it is probable that all kinds of writing, even the noting down of weight at the "*public scales,*" was executed by professional scribes; and that, beyond embroidering or carving the hieroglyphics for a name or number, writing was not practised by the people at large in the remote epochs I have been speaking of, when a knowledge of the art was most probably confined to the priesthood and certain officials of the priestly caste; for we never find, in the numerous hieroglyphic paintings still existing, any representations of persons reading or writing, except in a public capacity; nor any pictures of books or scrolls represented as belonging to private dwellings. This view is corroborated by Clemens of Alexandria, who, enumerating Egyptian literary works, only speaks of the existence of such sacred or scientific books as would be in the custody of the priests; and even among the priests there is every reason to believe that a knowledge of writing was confined to the class called *hierogrammaters.*

This state of things finds a close analogy in that of modern Europe at the period when all kinds of literature were only to be obtained through the medium of the Latin language, which few of the people understood, and which was therefore doled out to them in infinitesimal and disfigured atoms by the priests.

The account of hieroglyphic writing given by Diodorus is perhaps more complete than that of any other classical author. After stating that the priests only taught the sacred or hieroglyphic writing to their own children, he, in another place, informs us more particularly of the character of the hieroglyphic system; in which, however, he fails to perceive the phonetic character which modern discoveries have shewn to form one of its principal component parts. He tells us that all kinds of animals are used to express ideas, as also instruments, especially those of the joiner or carpenter; and he states that the writing is not by means of syllables conveying certain sounds by certain signs, as in the alphabetic systems, but by the actual, or metaphorical, signification of the objects. The hawk, for instance, he says, denotes *rapidity;* the crocodile, *badness;* the *right hand*, having the fingers stretched out, the giving of sustenance; *the left*, closed, the guardianship of money. And he thus concludes, "by exercising their minds upon this subject, and by long practice, and memory, they (the priests) readily read every thing that was so written."

His account, however, though true in principle, has been found to be almost always wrong in detail. He probably wrote from memory what he had been told, and gave as examples a few images, according to his own conception of their most salient characteristics. For instance, it is now well known that the crocodile denotes only *darkness*, and not badness of any kind; while the hawk represents royalty and divinity. And thus the passages in Diodorus, and also those in the celebrated work of Horapollo on hieroglyphics, written perhaps about the time of Theodosius, have only tended to mislead modern investigators.

The statement of Clemens of Alexandria, however, without entering into details, which appear so fascinating in the ancient authors just named, gives a correct account, in a few words, both of the epistolographic or demotic, of the hieratic, used for more ordinary purposes by the priestly scribes, and of the sacred or true hieroglyphic; and it appears wonderful, says Mr. Kenric, that his words did not at once serve as a guide to modern philologists, in their attempts to decipher the inscriptions of Egypt.

Apuleius, on the contrary, in describing the sacred books of the Egyptian priests, while he is correct as far as he understood them, entangles the reader in a strange net of mysteries when he advances beyond that which he thoroughly comprehends; as when he states that the Egyptian inscriptions were "written in certain characters which contained the words of the sacred formula compendiously expressed, partly by figures of animals, and partly

by certain marks or notes *intricately knotted, revolving in the manner of a wheel, and crowded together* like the tendrils of a vine, to hide the meaning from the curiosity of the profane." Apuleius had probably seen a Ms. on papyrus written partly in hieroglyphics, and partly in the cursive demotic character, upon which he penned the ridiculous account quoted above, as the best solution he had to offer. Equally absurd must be all hypotheses founded merely on conjecture, when the real facts become known.

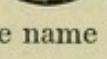
Porphyry says the Egyptians had three sorts of writing: the *epistolic*, the *hieroglyphic*, and *symbolic;* of which the hieroglyphic explained the meaning of the writer by an imitation or picture of the thing to be expressed, the symbolic by allegorical enigmas. Clemens of Alexandria, however, as previously observed, says more clearly, "the first is epistolic, the second sacerdotal, the last hieroglyphical. Of these the first is the *plain and common way of writing by the first elements of words;* the other," he says, "is by symbols." Of the hieroglyphic manner he describes three classes: the first, an imitation of the thing represented; the second, formed of *tropeical* marks; and the third by enigma or allegory.

These remarks appear to convey but little information, when unaided by the modern discoveries effected by the indefatigable labours of such men as Champollion and others; but thus illustrated, they become plain enough, and do, in fact, embody, in a certain terse way, many of the principles involved and developed in the Egyptian system of writing.

The first modern attempt at exploring Egyptian lore through the medium of the sacred inscriptions was that of De Guignes, who seemed fluttering over the true solution, when he stated that he thought he had perceived *alphabetic characters* among the hieroglyphics.*

But this happy guess led to nothing; and the French occupation of Egypt was the immediate means of leading to the long-wished-for discovery. A French engineer, during some excavations near the Rosetta mouth of the Nile, discovered a tablet of basalt, bearing an inscription in hieroglyphic, in demotic, and also in Greek characters; the latter affording the means of at last deciphering the mysterious enigma of hieroglyphic writing. The English victories in that region eventually brought this valuable monument to England, where, in our national Museum, it has been long known as "the Rosetta stone." It fell to the lot of Dr. Young, an Englishman, and to M. Akerblad, to make the first scientific use of this fragment. Dr. Young first attempted to read the *demotic* through the aid of the modern Coptic, the true method; but the small success attending the process, which was made known in 1814, gave but little encouragement. Having decided that the demotic could not be strictly alphabetic, Dr. Young next turned to the hieroglyphic portion of the inscription, and soon arrived at certain conclusions respecting 200 hieroglyphic characters, of which he pub-

* Mém. de l'Acad. des Inscr. 34, 35.

lished an account in 1818. Many of these have been subsequently found to be correct; as the characters for *day*, *month*, *year*,—for *god*, *priest*, *lord*, &c. In the majority, however, he was wrong. But he was, at the same time, the first to demonstrate, that some of the hieroglyphics had the value of *sounds*, and to publish a list, giving to thirteen of them, with an ?, such values as BIR, E, ENE, I, KE, &c. &c., this being the first true glimpse of the great modern discovery of the phonetic use of hieroglyphics. He also settled two other important points in reading Egyptian inscriptions: first, that the characters within an oval always contain proper names—a fact previously suspected by Barthelemy; and secondly, that the names of female personages are discriminated by the addition of the figure of an egg and a semicircle (see Plate III.), as in the name of Cleopatra. That name is to be read, as discovered by Dr. Young, by phonetic signs alone; that is to say, hieroglyphic objects become letters by taking as their phonetic value the initial sound of the name of the thing represented. As an example of this principle the word *tot* may be cited, which in the Egyptian language is the hand, and that figure was eventually taken to represent its initial sound, our T; other characters becoming phonetic in a similar manner. The characters forming the name of Cleopatra are of this kind, though they cannot all be traced to their respective origins; but the eagle, the name of which was *ahom*, represents A, the hand (*tot*) T, the lion (*labo*) L, &c. This name is to be read in the following manner, beginning at the top: thus, the uppermost character, the triangle, is to be read as K, the lion as L, the figure  as O, the  as P, the eagle (*ahom*) as A, the hand (*tot*) as T, the  as R, and the hawk as A; the semicircle and egg merely denoting the name to be that of a female. The E of the Greek mode of spelling the name is omitted, as many vowels frequently are, not only in the Egyptian, but even in more recent oriental systems.

The mode in which Dr. Young arrived at the deciphering of these names was partly, after all, but a happy guess; and it was not till Champollion had shewn the entirely alphabetic character of the signs used in all proper names, that the present result was securely arrived at, enabling us with certainty to read Egyptian names of the most remote dynasties by the same process.

The term 'hieroglyphic' was first applied by the Greeks to the Egyptian mode of writing. When Egypt became a Grecian province among the conquests of Alexander the Great, and was, on the death of Alexander, formed into a Greco-Egyptian kingdom by Ptolemy Lagus, the Greeks found the Egyptians still practising their antique mode of writing, though the Phœnicians and Greeks had then been in possession of a perfect alphabet for many centuries.

The ancient characters used in the mode of writing which they found

still prevailing in Egypt, were termed, by Greek authors of the time, *γραμματα ἱερα* (*grammata iera*), or sacred characters; while to the sculptured inscriptions of the temples they gave the distinctive term *ἱερογλυφικα* (*ieroglyphica*), or sacred sculptures; and the carvers of such sculptured writings or inscriptions were termed by them *ἱερογλυπτης* (*ieroglyptes*), or *ἱερογλυφος* (*ieŕoglyphos*), whence the modern term hieroglyphic is derived.

The monuments of hieroglyphic writing previous to the barbaric invasion, dating full 2000 years B.C., exhibit the system in the same full development as the later monuments, though not so carefully executed, in point of finish, as those of about 1700 B.C. (see Pl. II.) which epoch may be considered to mark the zenith of the art. A decline in the beauty and purity of Egyptian writing commenced perhaps a century later, after which no material difference occurred till the second or third century of the Christian era, though the style of statuesque sculpture had already greatly declined under the Greek domination, and still more under the Roman, losing all the noble severity of its early character.

It is now time to give a short *resumé* of the general result of modern investigation, and the advances made towards an accurate interpretation of hieroglyphic writing. The Egyptian system of writing is, by modern philologists, divided into several classes of characters: first, the purely pictorial, or iconographic; secondly, the metaphorical, or ideographic; and thirdly, such as expresses sound, and may be termed phonographic. To these are added determinative and other characters, to be hereafter described.

The purely iconographic, or *portrait* characters, are such as delineate the positive forms of objects, and represent the idea of those objects themselves, and nothing further, like the annexed examples:—

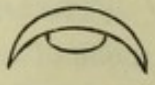

Altar.

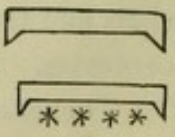

Star.


Propylon, or great door.


Moon.

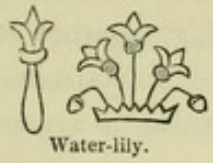
The Greeks termed this class of hieroglyphics, *κυριολογικη κατα* ***ΜΙΜΗΣΙΝ***, or method of expressing itself by pure imitation.

Such positive signs became, under certain circumstances, symbolical. By a mode of symbolism which Champollion terms *metonymic*, that is, the cause was painted for the effect, the effect for the cause, or the instrument represented the work done by it; thus, a month was represented by the moon with the crescent downwards, as it appears towards the end  of the month, the Egyptian month being originally lunar. In a more metaphorical manner the palm-tree denotes a year, because it is said that this tree puts forth one branch every month.

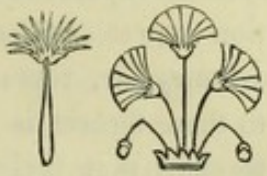
Night is represented in this class of characters by the conventional sign expressing the heavens, a kind of canopy, with the addition of one or more stars, as 

Another class of characters was rendered symbolic by a different method, termed by Champollion *synecdoche*, in which only a part of the whole figure being taken, the action was understood, instead of the actual figure: thus two arms, one with a shield, and the other with a pike, represented a combat, as indicating both attack and defence.

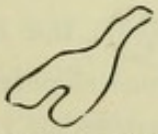
Another and more purely symbolic class of characters was one in which the quality or locality of an object was signified, instead of itself; for instance, a hierographer, or sacred writer, was expressed by the image of a jackal, either alone or placed over the door of a temple; because it was the duty of the sacerdotal functionary to be always watchful over sacred things, like a faithful dog. A kind of water-lily, generally considered the lotus, delineated thus, signified Upper Egypt; while the papyrus, with its tuft of threadlike inflorescence, signified Lower Egypt. Which grand divisions of the country were also expressed by the different crowns worn by the sovereigns in the respective regions; as, the white crown for Upper Egypt, and the red crown for Lower Egypt.



Water-lily.



Papyrus.



The White Crown.

The Red Crown.

The class of figures generally termed metaphorical are such, for example, as the figure for sublimity, the falcon, selected on account of its elevated flight; or pre-eminence, by the fore part of a lion; the regal power by the queen bee; while the vulpanser, or goose of the Nile,

The Lion.

The Queen Bee.

The Goose of the Nile.

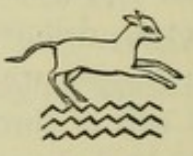
represented a son, because this bird is celebrated for its filial affection. The bee, in a similar manner, representing a people faithful to their king; the vulture, maternity; the bull, strength, or husband; a stretched-out hand, the action of giving; a hand holding a club, force; an ostrich-feather, truth or justice, from the equality of all the filaments—an unusual peculiarity. A square hieroglyphic, no doubt an abbreviated form of the primeval figure representing a temple, is distinguished from that representing a palace by the addition of a hatchet—a symbol of deity—while the former is always accompanied by a pylon.

Ostrich-feather.

Other means than the bilingual inscription of the Rosetta stone have been resorted to by Egyptian scholars to determine the sense of symbolic signs, so difficult to arrive at with certainty. Thus, the Amenophis Memnon at

Luxor appears leading in his hand four steers, as an offering to Amun, the colours of which are respectively pied, red, white, and black; before each is a single sign; and, as the animals differ in nothing but colour, it is a reasonable presumption that the signs in question denote the colours. That before the white victim is an onion, which is found in other places in conjunction with a crucible, expressing *silver*, to distinguish it from gold, for silver was known as white gold; the character under the black cow is a crocodile, which, according to Horapollo, signified darkness.

Another class may be described as purely ideographs, by means of which different abstract ideas, such as could not be represented by positive pictures, or even symbols, were expressed, and of which the annexed are very characteristic examples. The first is a calf running, and placed above the symbol representing water, which combination expresses *thirst*. The second is a bee and a honey-jar, representing together *sweetness;* to these figures is added a determinative sign, to shew that their meaning is symbolical and not positive.



Thirst.

Sweetness.

The *determinative* signs of this class most commonly used for this purpose are  and  , the former being more generally applied to ordinary symbols and names of persons; the latter denoting the name of a country.

The sign expressing *ran*, a name, is a shield, which is doubtless the origin of the shield, or *cartouche*, as it has been termed, within which the names of sovereigns are written. The names of females are distinguished, as described, by the addition of a peculiarly characteristic sign  , an egg, which is invariably found accompanying such names as Cleopatra, Berenice, and other females of the Greco-Egyptian dynasty, as well as those of the earlier native races, and female deities. Other determinative signs will be described in speaking of the *phonetic* character of the Egyptian system.

It was by perceiving such determinative signs on an Egyptian monument of the Roman period, accompanying the names of Roman emperors expressed by means of Egyptian hieroglyphics, that Champollion was led to his mode of deciphering the whole hieroglyphic system of Egyptian writing.

The last and most important class of Egyptian characters are the phonetic ones. The words of the primitive Egyptian language were generally composed of a single syllable; thus, for instance, the sun being called RE, and expressed hieroglyphically by a circle with a dot in the centre, the primitive scribes were led to associate the sound *Re* with their sign for the disk of the sun. This was the first step towards the creation of a *character* representing a *sound*, and was the foundation of the true art of writing. The initial sounds of other words became in their turn associated in the minds of the scribes with the characters by which the objects were represented; and it was found that, by using several such characters in that feeling, accompanied by a determinative

sign, to denote their novel application, the sounds of proper names might be expressed. The new method was, indeed, at first only applied to foreign names; but eventually its value was felt beyond that narrow sphere, and it became part of the principle of the general system of hieroglyphic writing.

The Chinese, also, advanced so far in the phonetic principle, as regarded the use of such phonographs for foreign names, denoting that the full *ideal* or iconographic power of the characters was suspended, by means of a simple dash, which, in such cases, intimated to the reader their phonographic nature. Some determinative characters of the Egyptians were, on the contrary, so completely iconographic in character, as to render the phonetically-written word almost unnecessary; as in the word *erp*, wine, which, when written with phonographs, was accompanied by two jars. In like manner, the figure of a man dancing is appended to all forms of the verb *to dance*, but abbreviated, only half the figure being represented.

The phonographs of the hieroglyphic system of Egypt, until their principle was understood, were found more puzzling than any of the characters to modern investigators, their meaning being neither symbolic, nor suggested by resemblance to the objects represented, nor by association; for these characters, no doubt the last added to the Egyptian system, unexpectedly expressed *sounds*, instead of things. This class of hieroglyphics, though the latest, is found to be by far the most numerous, while that of the symbolic character is the least so; indeed, as regards the latter, whole pages of Champollion's dictionary might be turned over without meeting with one.

The phonetic signs, which are in fact positive letters, still retain, however, in their new capacity, the complete forms of the objects they originally represented; and this remark applies also, no doubt, to those whose origin cannot be traced, such as the characters representing S, P, M, &c.

In most cases, as I have stated, the phonetic characters in hieroglyphic writing derive their value from the *first element* in the native names of the object, as crudely stated by Clemens of Alexandria. Thus, the Coptic, or Egyptian name of eagle is *ahom*, and the figure of that bird represents the sound A; while the aquatic plant called *achi* also stands for A; in the same way an owl is *moulad*, and stands for M; and a knotted cord, *hake*, is used for H; just as we might use the figure of a bull to express B, the initial sound of the name. The origin of the Egyptian phonetic characters cannot in all cases be traced; but this is no reason for abandoning the principles laid down, especially as they are clearly alluded to by Clemens, and that the same method of transition from pictorial to phonetic sounds is found also in the Chinese. The *hand*, when made to represent the sound of T, is distinguished, not only by being always open, but is also accompanied by a determinative sign, as are all other iconographic signs when used phonetically. The first transition from pictorial to phonetic signs may have been aided by the fact, that, in the Egyptian language, many words seem descriptive, as expressing by their *sound* the nature of the things designated; which thus appeal to

the ear, exactly as their pictorial imitations address themselves to the eye. As examples, the instances following may be quoted. The Egyptian name for the ass (preserved in the Coptic) was *io*, evidently suggested by the braying of that animal; one of the names by which the lion was designated was *mioa*, evidently founded on the sound of his roar; the frog was *crour*, suggestive of the croaking of that reptile; the cat, *chaou*, resembling the sound of its nocturnal miawlings; while *sensen*, to sing, and *thopteph*, to spit, seem equally descriptive words.

One of the great difficulties of reading hieroglyphics arises from the derivation of the *same* phonetic values from the names of *different* objects; in consequence of which, several different characters are used to express the same sound whenever the names of the figures used commence with the same element of intonation. Characters of this kind, all expressing the same sound, are termed, by M. Champollion, *homophones*. The difficulty thus caused is, however, much decreased by the discovery of Lepsius, that a sign which stands in pure hieroglyphic for a whole word, by representing the object itself, is always used, when that word is phonetically written, for its *first* letter, but in no other way; as, for example, an *axe* symbolically represented a god, in Coptic, *nouter*, and when this word is phonetically written, the axe stands for the first letter, N; so life was represented by what is termed the *crux ansata;* and in writing the word *orch*, the Coptic for life, this character stands for the first letter, O, but not for the *first* letter in any other word.

Many of the homophones were, in another manner, confined to particular words; as, for instance, A, M, N, have each several homophones; but, in the name of the god AMuN, only one form of the letters is ever found (see Plate III. No. 5), in which, beginning at the right, the feather stands for A; the next character to the left of it, like a comb or a battlemented wall, for M; and the figure below, for N, the vowel being understood, as in Phœnician and Hebrew writing. Vowels were, however, separately expressed when at the beginning or end of words. Many cases analogous to the invariable mode of writing such names of deities, as Amun, Anubis, &c., might be cited; whilst in others the choice of the homophones was unshackled, and frequently made on merely symmetrical grounds, that character being selected which grouped best with the other signs. It having thus been shewn that many kinds of figures were used for the same phonetic value, it may be stated that in narrow lines, upright forms were avoided, while in vertical writing they were preferred. Occasionally variations were made, as a mere luxury of calligraphic treatment; and, in the later times of the Greek domination, and that of the Romans, it was a kind of fashion to vary, *ad infinitum*, this kind of orthography; for instance, ten variations in the manner of writing the name of one town (Latopolis in the Thebaid) occur in the single inscription on the pronaos of the great temple of that place, each variation being, as in other cases of proper names, accompanied by the signs  and  , the

 intimating that the figures have a phonetic, and not a pictorial or iconographic signification, and the  denoting that a proper name of a country is expressed by them. The original list of 132 homophones in general use has been reduced by Lepsius to about thirty-four commonly employed, and a few others found occasionally.

In the inscription of the Rosetta stone, the purely iconic characters are few; thus, in the last line, there are but four purely pictorial, and nineteen symbolic signs, to thirty-seven phonetic ones.

The great superiority of the Egyptian system over the Chinese is shewn by the fact, that the Egyptian signs, according to Champollion's dictionary, do not exceed 749 in number, while those of the Chinese exceed 80,000, and this number must increase with every fresh idea. Such is the inferiority of a system, the phonetic portion of which is founded on syllabic instead of literal sounds, like the Chinese, to one founded on the simple alphabetic sounds, like the phonetic portion of that of the Egyptians.

In hieroglyphic inscriptions the characters are found either in horizontal lines, or in columns, like those of the coloured plate (Plate II.) forming the frontispiece to this work. In the former case they are generally to be read from right to left, but occasionally from left to right; the correct manner being easily determined by observing the direction of the characters formed of men and animals, as the writing always proceeds towards the faces of the figures. But care must be taken not to be led astray by the position of an isolated character; as when a figure is used in a determinative sense only, and attached to a group of signs expressing a proper name, it is placed looking the contrary way to the general writing, in order to denote its peculiar function. Sometimes, also, human figures are so placed symbolically, to denote *retreat;* but the general direction of the majority of the signs is easily ascertained. When the writing is in vertical columns, the column to the right is to be read first, and always from top to bottom, taking each group from right to left. This is a general rule, though Rossellini cites an exception in favour of an inscription in honour of Rameses IV., in which the columns succeed each other from left to right; though the figures are turned to the right, and consequently the individual columns must be read from right to left as usual.

The phonetic values of the Egyptian hieroglyphic signs have been finally established by the careful comparison of such bilingual inscriptions as the obelisk of Philœ, by the Rosetta stone, the Greek translation of which has served as a definitive *point d'appui,* by means of the comparison of a number of both Greek and Latin proper names, which are invariably written in phonetic hieroglyphs, and by the bilingual papyrus of Leyden, which has also afforded many valuable means of comparison, being written, though at a late period, in hieratic, demotic, and Greek. But the lateness of its date is no impeachment of its authority, as it is now well ascertained that the Egyptian system never changed, from the earliest monuments of the most remote antiquity,

to those of the later epochs under Greek and Roman rule; as the name of the earliest Pharaoh is read off upon the same system as that of the Greek Ptolemy or the Roman Trajanus.

For instance, the colossal statue of the plain of Thebes, popularly called the vocal Memnon, was in reality, we are told by Manetho, that of the king Amenophis. The statue, as is well known, is covered with the inscriptions of travellers, from our own day back to Roman times. And among records of the latter period, the name of the Empress Sabeina, the wife of Hadrian, occurs; and that of another Roman person, the writer of which states that "he has heard the voice of the Memnon, or *Phamenoph*." A collateral proof of the correctness of Manetho, which Champollion farther confirmed, at the same time that he proved the accuracy of the accepted values of Egyptian phonetics, by reading on the pedestal of the statue, in the usual oval ring, or cartouche, which encloses royal names, that of *Amenothoph*.

Notwithstanding the progress made, doubts still remain as to Egyptian characters which do not occur in names the pronunciation of which is known by their Greek or Latin equivalents. Thus the name which Champollion and others have read *Osortasen*, is read by Lepsius and Bunsen Sesortasen, and no decisive test can as yet be applied to set the matter at rest. Other difficulties occur in consequence of a character being occasionally used to express a whole word. Thus, for instance, the ibis, called Thouth, or Thoth, was sacred to the god Thoth, and was used, both phonetically and iconographically, to express the idea of that divinity; while the name of the king Touthmosis is also spelt by an ibis, and the usual signs of M and S, the vowels in the two last syllables being understood.

So much had been done in deciphering the writing of Egypt, that at one time great hopes were entertained of reading all the historic records with which its monuments are covered; but it is now plain that the Coptic language, through the medium of which so much has been learnt, does not exactly correspond with the language in the inscriptions, which was probably an older form of the national dialect, reserved for the sacred records only.

M. Klaproth,* though his dissent is thought unimportant, appears anxious to throw discredit on the discoveries of Champollion; especially as to the *phonetic* values of either the hieroglyphic or demotic character, even in proper names, and more especially those of the Lagidæ, the Greek sounds and meanings of which could not be rendered accurately by pure hieroglyphics. He also appears to consider that in such names, even when written, as he allows, with hieroglyphs rendered phonetic for the purpose, certain especial hieroglyphics were used, which were also intended to be descriptive either of the greatness of the king, or the import of his name; a principle not at variance, in certain cases, with that established by Champollion, and also by Lepsius.

* Aperçu de l'Origin des diverses Ecritures de l'ancien Monde.

The greatest difficulty, no doubt, lies in the language; for though the Coptic most probably contains many elements of the ancient Egyptian, yet as a spoken, and as a written language, it has doubtless undergone considerable modification, even since Roman times; and M. Klaproth, through the medium of an essay by M. Dujardin, then engaged upon an altogether independent interpretation of the Rosetta stone, through the medium of purely figurative interpretation of the characters, both hieroglyphic and demotic, accuses M. Champollion of coining words to suit his purpose, when the existing Coptic would not serve.

But the whole of the Egyptian article of M. Klaproth appears written upon the old scholarly and conservative principle of taking certain passages of ancient authors as the only bases of investigation, and making the results of his examination of monuments agree with them if possible; a method much more likely to lead astray than that in which he accuses M. Champollion of straining the Coptic language to suit his purpose. But, in point of fact, the system of Champollion is not at variance with existing authorities, and especially coincides with the statement of Clemens of Alexandria, the most trustworthy of ancient writers; not overlooking the clear, though brief statements of Diodorus, and the remarks of Marcellinus and others.

The strong points of MM. Klaproth and Dujardin's objective arguments consist in this, that no common word in the Rosetta stone, as they assert, such as king, father, son, &c., "can be read through the medium of the accepted powers of the so-called *phonetic* characters." Thus, say they, we would accept the word *ouro* as the Coptic, and possibly the ancient Egyptian for king, but not the word *sout*, "proposed by M. Champollion to suit the powers he has given to his phonetic characters," which is not Coptic. They will not, on similar grounds, accept the word *toui* for father, but demand instead the Coptic *iot*, which M. Champollion cannot give them; and instead of the word *si*, which is proposed by Champollion, as meaning son, they demand the Coptic *seri*.

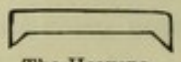
This is, possibly, fair antagonism; but it is very possible that the words proposed by M. Champollion *may* be the *ancient* form of Coptic, from which the modern Coptic words demanded of him are actually derived, and in some cases he has demonstrated the great probability of their being so. It is scarcely possible to conceive, that having once discovered the true use of phonetics, the Egyptians should have confined themselves to their use for proper names alone, especially as in that form of application they are found used upon the most ancient monuments, for writing the names of gods and kings, as well as the more recent names of the Ptolemaic and Roman period. On the whole, no serious objection is made good against the system of M. Champollion.

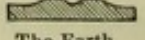
Having discussed the general principles of the hieroglyphic writing of the Egyptians, as well as the objections made to M. Champollion's mode of

interpreting it, we may perceive that, though it is formed on three different bases—that of iconography, ideography, and phonography—yet that the mixture was well systematised, and must have been, at all events, as easy to read to the initiated, as the algebraic signs are to the mathematical student of the present day, or as the signs of any of the systems of stenography, or "short hand," as it is termed, which are now in use.

Before proceeding to consider the hieroglyphic system in the modified forms termed *hieratic* and *demotic*, it will be well to examine carefully a specimen of pure hieroglyphic. For this purpose let us first take a name written entirely in phonetic hieroglyphics; that, for instance, of Berenice (*Βερενικη*), and with the assistance of the alphabet on the same plate (Plate III.), it will be easy to see that the character expressing the sound of B, beginning the name, stands at the top; then follows the usual sign for R; the vowels E being, as it were, suggested and supplied by the two consonants (as in the Hebrew, &c.), but not written; then follow the most usual signs for N and I, or EI; and, finally, a sign expressing the sound of the Greek *Kappa*, or K; the final *eta*, or long E, being omitted. The two characters below are determinative; the  indicating a proper name, and the sign  (an egg) denoting it to be that of a female. A portion of two lines from the celebrated Rosetta stone are also engraved in Plate III., with the original Greek translation,* accompanied also by an English one. The upper line exhibits three classes of hieroglyphics, the statue being what may be termed a simple iconograph; the word God is represented by an ideograph, the axe; and the name of Ptolemaius, and other words, by phonographs. The line below shews the modification of the hieroglyphic characters, in the cursive or demotic method.

The examples just described are simply engraved in basalt; but in the finest examples of hieroglyphics they are all coloured, at first, doubtless, in imitation of nature, and varied according to the individual interpretation of nature by the artist, as in the rude picture-writing of the Mexicans; but we have no monuments of the Egyptian system in that early stage, and we find their earliest coloured hieroglyphics receiving their different tones according to a conventional and somewhat arbitrary system, which seldom varies, and of which the following are a few of the principal features.


The Heavens.


The Earth.

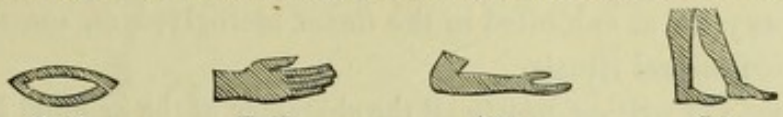

The Sun.


Water.

The character in the form of a canopy, which represented the heavens, was coloured blue; the character with the upper side undulated, which represented the earth, was coloured red. The sun is always red, with a yellow border. The character which represents water is coloured blue, or bluish green. The flesh of men is generally coloured red, and that of women yellow. Portions of the human form, the mouth,

* On the stone the translation is not interlinear, the three versions of the inscriptions being each separate and complete in itself.

the hand, the arm, the leg, are invariably red; flowers, fish, animals, and insects, are of simple tones, and suggested by their natural colouring without



Mouth. Hand. Arm. Leg.

shading; but in inferior works sometimes they are only green and blue. Wooden objects are nearly always coloured with a pale orange, or buff; bronze utensils, green; and blue, with few exceptions, is generally reserved for geometric forms, plans of edifices, &c. The specimen (Plate II.) forming the frontispiece to this volume, is an example of the highest style of coloured hieroglyphic writing, as it appears on the sides of the most splendid temples. Such inscriptions may represent to us "handwriting on the wall," such as interpreted by the Prophet Daniel.

When we speak of illuminated manuscripts and emblazoned chronicles, our thoughts do not generally travel further back than the fourteenth or fifteenth century of our era, and dwell upon rich Mss. of the monk of St. Denis, or of the worthy Froissart; but the illuminated chronicles of Egypt—for the richly painted mural writings are really such—date sixteen centuries and more before the Christian era. Of such a date is the wonderful record reproduced in our Plate II. It describes the triumphs of Sesostris, and the names and portrait of the great king accompany the sculptured and painted record. The phonetic alphabet in Plate III., with the general idea of the other signs, which I have attempted to convey, will enable the student to decipher the names, and much of the record itself; in which the following brief description will assist. The great painting from which this small portion is taken exists in the gallery of the *Speos*, or excavated temple, at Ibsamboul, in Nubia. It extends at least fifty feet in length, and represents Scytho-Bactrian ambassadors introduced to the great Sesostris (Rhamses III.); the arm of the officer presenting the ambassadors traverses a portion of the hieroglyphic record, which describes the events connected with the picture. The first cartouche above the seated figure of Sesostris contains the prænomen of the king, which is written in partly figurative and partly phonetic signs, and has been deciphered, "The king of the obedient people, the guardian sun of justice and truth, approved by the sun." The next oval contains his positive name. It is surmounted by a figurative sign of the disc of the sun, and of a duck, which make, phonetically, the syllables RE-SI, son of the sun. The two figures within the oval are Ammon and Ra, or Phre, the sun; the rectangular sign beneath them is a phonetic M, the abridgment of *mai*, loved of, and the other figures signify R.M.S.S; the whole being read (the vowels as usual omitted), is, "The son of the sun, loved of Ammon, Rhamses." The initial letter of Ra, and the phonetics which follow, giving R(ha)M S(e)S. The exterior signs beyond signify "living for ever." Our plate of this subject is from the great work of Champollion Figeac.

The elaborate character of the hieroglyphic writing, as exhibited on the coloured sculptures, was simplified for particular purposes; especially when written on papyrus, as exhibited in the *linear* hieroglyphics, sometimes found on the earlier funereal rituals.

In this mode of writing, nearly all the character of the original hieroglyphic is preserved, though in a kind of concise outline abridgment. The example (No. 2, Pl. IV.) is a fragment of what is termed a funereal ritual, such as was generally enclosed in the coffin with the mummy. The Egyptians called this book, or rather scroll, "the book of the manifestations of light." Along the top of the scroll from which our fragment is taken is a continuous picture, of which our specimen shews only the commencement. It represents the performance of funereal rites, &c. &c. Such illustrations are depicted sometimes in half-shaded outline, and sometimes in colour; the original of the present specimen being coloured. The writing below is in columns, and is in the *linear hieroglyphic* above described. The scroll from which the specimen is taken is forty feet long, and nearly a foot in breadth, and belongs, according to M. Champollion, who has engraved it in his work, to the seventeenth century B.C., though by some considered only of the fifteenth.

The next step in Egyptian writing, as in the Chinese, was to reduce the positive portraits of objects to signs, which, in a few expressive lines, represented their most striking features. This style became a perfect tachygraphy, or system of short-hand portraiture. It is termed the hieratic manner, from the term given to it by the Greeks, *ἱερατικη*, or writing of the sacerdotal class; a term, perhaps, too restricted, as it was probably, in their time, used by all the superior classes for purposes where greater expedition was required than could be obtained in the elaborately wrought hieroglyphics.

The oldest known specimen of hieratic writing is a fragment of papyrus, pasted into the interior of the wooden sarcophagus of the king Nantef, which does not differ in general style from hieratic writing belonging to the eighteenth dynasty. This mode of writing, which, as I have stated, is a reduction of the hieroglyphic to a more easily written form, was used by the priests (and probably others) for more common affairs than the grand but cumbrous hieroglyphic character. In priestly affairs it was employed for keeping the temple accounts, for funereal rituals, and other matters where hieroglyphic writing would have been too slow and too expensive. As an example of the mode of abridgment resorted to in this style, it may be stated that the hind part only of the lion was traced, instead of the whole figure; and other portraits, or symbols, were treated in a similar manner, after a method no doubt brought to perfection by the priests, from whose order this style took its name. In this period of Egyptian writing the figures, though abridged in form, were used in precisely the same manner, and with the same value and import, as in the more laborious and pictorial hieroglyphic. No. 1, Plate IV., is a specimen of hieratic writing on papyrus, of about the

SPECIMENS OF EGYPTIAN WRITING

OF THREE CLASSES

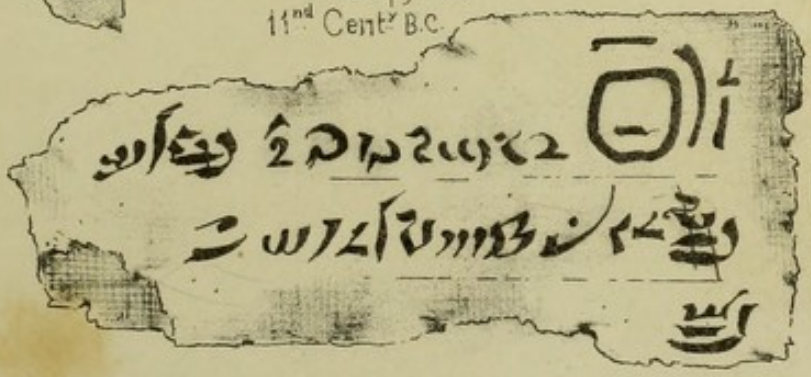
N°2

Linear Hieroglyphic XVIIth Centnry B.C.

N°1

Hieratic XVIIth Cent^{y} B.C.

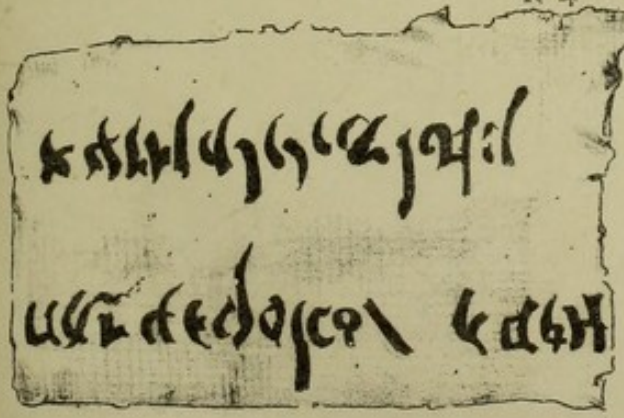
Demotic written on Papyrus 11nd Cent^{y} B.C.



N°3.

Phœnician writing on Papyrus

N°4

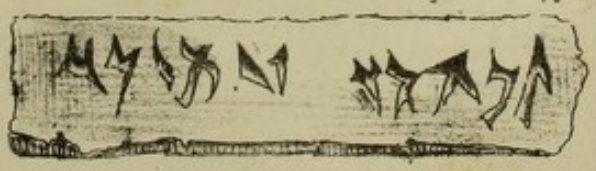


Phœnician writing on Stone in Relief

N°5

Phœnician writing on Stone in Intaglio

N°6



SPECIMENS OF PHŒNICIAN WRITING

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fifteenth century B.C., in which it will be seen that the signs of the linear hieroglyphics just described are very greatly abridged; yet the pictorial character of each sign may still be traced to its source. It is a ritual like the former specimen, and these two rituals are absolutely the same, though in different characters, with the sole exception of the name of the defunct. In the small portion of the pictorial border (which in this instance is uncoloured in the original) the shade of the departed is seen passing the fatal river on one of the three mythical boats, under the protection of a deity. This writing is to be read from right to left. In M. Champollion's engraving of this subject a much larger piece is represented.

The simplification achieved in the hieratic manner was followed by another step in which the forms of the characters were still further abridged, and adapted for expeditious writing; insomuch that they bear the appearance of some rapidly-written oriental character of the present day; but, in fact, their import and systematic value is in no wise changed, for all the cumbrous machinery of the highest hieroglyphic period is still the same in principle in the demotic character, with the exception only that a larger amount of phonetic signs are used. By the time the demotic style was developed (the precise time being unknown), the art of writing had come into much more general use; and this form, the most easy of execution, and the most rapid, became, of course, that in most common use; from which circumstance it was that it received from the Greeks the name of *demotic*, that is to say, the style of the people, or popular style. The specimen (No. 3, Plate IV.) is in the demotic style. Though it is unknown at what precise period this method was first used, it was certainly perfected long before the present specimen was executed, which is only of the second century before Christ, during the period of Greek supremacy in Egypt, and in the reign of Ptolemy Epiphanes, about the year 196 B.C. It is written on papyrus, and is an agreement relating to a legal transaction between private individuals; but, as was usual, the name of the king and the year of his reign are appended, as they are in important deeds of our own time.

It will be found interesting, before studying this specimen, to examine the whole of the passage from the Rosetta stone, in Plate III., and compare the hieroglyphic form with the demotic, which, when as there placed in immediate juxta-position, exhibit their very close affinity in a striking manner; the demotic being quite, or even more nearly allied in form to the hieroglyphic than a common running-hand of the present day is to the Roman capitals on which it is founded; and the student is invited to examine, at the same time, the system of numerals in the same plate, both in their hieroglyphic and demotic form. In the hieroglyphic, single lines express the number of units up to nine, when an arbitrary sign represents 10, another 100, and another 10,000. In the demotic, in making two strokes rapidly, in a horizontal position, to prevent taking up the pen, a figure is formed which is doubtless the

parent of our Arabic numeral 2; and the same may be said of the 3, and the second II in IV, which strongly resembles 4.

To return to our present specimen of demotic writing: it is to be read from right to left; and the first group, with the large figure, which is formed of the disk of the sun and a palm-tree, signifies "in the year." The following group, formed of two characters, is 8, formed, in fact, of two fours. (See Numerals in Plate II.) The name of the month is expressed in the next group, and then comes the same number 8, rather differently written, for the sake of symmetry. The next group is *m-sten*, of the king; and then follows the word Ptolemy; which may be compared with the writing of the same name on the Rosetta stone, as shewn in Plate III. The Egyptian writing, as we find it on the earliest monuments, dating several centuries prior to any other written annals, continued in use throughout the whole periods of the Greek, and then the Roman domination, in Egypt, down to the adoption of Christianity by the Roman empire, when it was found that the hieroglyphic, or sacred writing of the Egyptians, was such a stronghold of the ancient idolatrous priesthood of the land, that its use was forbidden. But obstinate followers of Osiris and Isis still continued to use it, notwithstanding the edict, as late as the sixth century of our era. So that, even in the times of our Anglo-Saxon heptarchy, the hieroglyphic writing of the Egyptians was still not only understood, but in use in the land of its origin.

About that period, however, it was finally and entirely abandoned in favour of the Greek alphabet, with the addition of a few of the demotic characters, which the Greek letters were incapable of supplying the place of; and the alphabet so formed is now known as the modern Coptic.

The late use of the symbolic writing of Egypt, after it was extinguished, left yet its traces on some of the rising forms of Christian civilisation and Christian art; for a few "hieroglyphics" crept into the pictorial symbolry of the early ages of Christianity; and thus, "an eye in the clouds" expressed the power of God to see all things; a ship and a pilot denoted God's government of the universe; an eye and a sceptre represented a king; and several other examples might be adduced.

With the fact of the so recent use of the Egyptian mode of writing before us, it is difficult to conceive the complete loss of all knowledge of its principles, which appears, in fact, as wonderful as the discovery of the secret by Young and Champollion.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CUNEIFORM WRITING OF ASSYRIA, BABYLONIA, AND PERSIA.

NO fragments of papyrus, as in the case of Egypt, convey to us remnant specimens of the handwriting of the people forming the great empires of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia, even at the latest period of their existence. The chief monuments of their written character are contained in the long unread carvings upon the lofty rocks of Asia, the very import of the characters of which had become a mystery. These sculptured records of the mountain side, which were engraved by order of victorious monarchs, whose very names had passed into oblivion, to record the subjection of conquered nations now unknown, have, after their long concealment in the depths of the forgotten East, astonished modern travellers by their extent, the beauty of their execution, and their wonderful preservation. These gigantic records, and the inscriptions of the long-buried palaces of Nineveh, so miraculously disentombed in our own day, are the only monuments, by means of which we have been made acquainted with characters which are, doubtless, similar to, if not identical with, those of the "handwriting on the wall," which was interpreted by the prophet Daniel. And this "handwriting" with which the walls of the ruined palaces are covered, forms one of the most striking and graphic illustrations of that and other passages of the Jewish Scriptures.

It was my intention in the present work to arrange the still existing monuments which refer to the history of writing in something like chronological order; but I have already been obliged openly to deviate from that mode of arrangement in two instances, that of Mexico and that of China,—a deviation which I adopted with the view of at all events making the order of *progression* perfect, even at the expense of that of strict *chronological* succession. After having disposed of the progressive development of the art in Egypt, the chronological part of the question arises again as to which class of writing shall take the next place. As regards the Egyptians themselves, it is matter for discussion whether they received the art in a primitive form from some other nation, or whether they originated it themselves. Colonel Rawlinson, however, is of opinion—and I have long held the same—that civilisation originated first on the Nile, and was from thence thrown back upon the East, by a kind of periodical reflux; an action which was still at work in medieval times, and is strikingly so at the present day. Assuming, therefore, that the Egyptians, and not the nations of India,

conferred the art of writing upon the Assyrians, Phœnicians, and other nations, both of central and western Asia, it becomes a question whether the Assyrians or the Phœnicians were the *first* to adopt a system of writing founded on that of the Egyptians, and mould it into a system of notation for their own language. It is possible that this achievement may have been effected during the ancient supremacy in Egypt of the shepherd kings of Phœnicia; but as no Phœnician monuments of this early date exist, and as the earliest known examples of their system of writing exhibit a much more advanced stage of the art than the earliest Assyrian records, it will be more instructive to consider the Assyrian system first, especially as its existing monuments are more ancient than any known of Phœnicia, and form the natural link of progress between the Phœnician system of writing and that of Egypt.

The probable date at present generally agreed on for the earliest specimens of cuneiform inscriptions is between 1000 and 1300 B.C., while the oldest Phœnician inscriptions now in existence cannot claim a higher antiquity than between four and five centuries B.C. The deciphering of the cuneiform character is an event of very recent achievement, and forms an epoch in the annals of the science of paleography almost as remarkable and interesting as that of the interpretation of the Egyptian hieroglyphics by Young and Champollion.

Both the Egyptian and Assyrian discoveries are the result of modern, and, indeed, recent erudition and investigation, and are not among the least striking evidences of the great general progress of the last thirty years. The mode of their discovery was similar; for, as the greatest assistance in the interpretation of the Egyptian hieroglyphics was obtained through the medium of the bilingual and triliteral inscription of the celebrated Rosetta stone, so the first glimpse of the meaning of cuneiform characters was obtained by similar means from the inscriptions at Persepolis and Pasargadæ, which, addressed as they were to a wide-spread population, speaking different dialects, were written in three languages; just as a governor of Baghdad at the present day publishes an edict in Persian, Turkish, and Arabic.

The three languages of these cuneatic inscriptions were the ancient Persian, the Assyrian, and a dialect which has not yet been defined, all three being closely allied to the Zend, or Sanscrit; and the Assyrian bearing the strongest resemblance to the Hebrew and ancient Chaldee. The cuneatic, or wedge-shaped characters of Assyria and Persia are of two forms, the one notched at the obtuse end, the other square.

The wedge form of the letters is supposed by some to have originated from the custom of writing on moist clay with a sharp stick, of which custom the earliest Babylonian bricks are examples; indeed there appears some reason to conclude that thin slabs of clay formed the Babylonian substitute for papyrus or vellum, for keeping their historical chronicles and astronomical observations; as vast piles of flat bricks, or slabs, inscribed with cuneatic

letters, have been found arranged as though in a record chamber. Writing on such a substance was analogous to the mode afterwards used by the Greeks and Romans, who wrote on tablets covered with wax, in which, with a sharp instrument called a stylus, they engraved, or rather scratched, the characters required. It may be conceived, and even tested by experiment, that in using a hard sharp point, to mark characters deeply in soft clay, curves would be difficult of execution; and it would naturally occur to a person to form the characters by means of a combination of straight lines, placed at different angles, which would naturally be blunt at the end, where the wooden stylus was first inserted, and sharp where it was withdrawn; thus of necessity producing the wedge-form in each main line.

Supposing the demotic character of Egypt to have been the model, or parent, of the Assyrian system, we may conceive how its form may have been thus modified by writing it with a sharp tool upon clay, and how the simple wedge-formed characters may have eventually assumed the arrow-head shape, by receiving another touch at the broad end, by way of finish. This modification of form may have been more developed and better defined, when, in monumental inscriptions, the letters had to be cut upon stone; a process performed more deliberately, and with greater care, than in the archives inscribed on clay.

Several ancient authors have alluded to the cuneiform writing of Assyria and Persia, but not in a manner to assist modern investigation. Nevertheless, such passages, wherever they occur, become now of great value, as illustrating modern discovery, though they were too vague to assist it.

Both Herodotus and Diodorus allude to the cuneiform system, under the names of *Syrian* and *Assyrian writing*, and Clemens of Alexandria speaks of it in more detail, but still without distinctness. The "tablets" of Acicarus were most probably in the cuneiform character, which, at the beginning of the fourth century B.C., was evidently still understood; as the Greek philosopher Democritus is said to have translated those inscriptions, and to have incorporated their contents in his works on Babylonian ethics. Glimpses of this brief nature are all the information to be gleaned from the scanty notices of ancient authors on this subject.

The claim of Egyptian parentage for this class of writing appears, at first, shaken by the fact, that the writing of Egypt invariably runs from right to left, while the Assyrian is to be read from left to right. But in considering this difficulty, I have been led to the fact, that the earliest class of cuneiform writing is that found on the cylinders, or seals, of which such numbers have been discovered, containing very probably royal proclamations and edicts, of which copies could be multiplied by impressions in clay, and circulated *ad infinitum*, as easily as by our modern art of printing; in which light the cylinders may be regarded as the royal printing presses of Babylonia and Assyria. In copying the civilisation of the Egyptians, the custom of using regal

seals may have been the first adoption by the Assyrians of any thing connected with the art of writing; and in re-engraving an inscription in the character of that nation, the Assyrian artists may have faithfully copied the direction of the Egyptian writing, without regard to its becoming *reversed* in the impressions; but in these, as a matter of course, the writing would run from right to left; and if the seal was re-copied, the new copy would most probably be in the same direction, and so eventually establish the custom of writing from left to right. For as, in all the impressions from such seals, the writing would necessarily present itself to the reader in the reversed direction, all eventual copies of such impressions made by hand in clay, or stone, would, in all probability, retain the reversed position. Thus, when the impress of the royal seal was received by a local governor, it would be copied, in conspicuous positions in his province, in exact fac-simile of the impression, and not of the original seal. An analogous kind of accidental reversing occurs occasionally in early Saxon coins.

The first popular illustrations of the interesting sculptures and inscriptions of Assyria and Persia were those published in the works of Kerr Porter, who, unfortunately, appealed to the public mind before it was ready to receive the proffered knowledge. His discoveries were followed by those of Rich. Botta was the next successful explorer of these remains, whose great and valuable discoveries at last incited our enterprising countryman, Layard, to attempt other researches in the same region; the success of which is amply attested by the monuments already placed in our national Museum, and the interesting works they have given rise to.

The first names that occur in modern times, in connexion with the interpretation of inscriptions in the wedge-shaped character, are those of the Italian travellers, Pietro della Valle and Figueroa, whose conjectures, that these inscriptions ought to be read from left to right, have proved to be correct.* Subsequently Chardin held the same opinion, though he thought it possible that they might be read perpendicularly, like some of the Egyptian inscriptions. The first to publish exact copies of some of these inscriptions was Niebuhr, which copies were the eventual means of the first real steps towards deciphering the characters.

In 1798, Tychsen of Rostock, and afterwards Münter of Copenhagen, imagined that the proper mode of reading the Assyrian character was from right to left; but they were more correct in asserting them to be composed of real alphabetic signs. Dr. Hagar, in 1801, travelled far from the path of after discovery in imagining the characters to be monograms; and the fancies of Lichtenstein upon the subject were still more wide of the truth.

But long before the brilliant discoveries of Botta and the subsequent success of Layard had to a great extent popularised the subject, a modest and unknown German scholar, Grotefend, had been at work upon the characters

* Bonomi's *Nineveh and its Palaces.*

of Assyrian, or rather, as it afterwards proved, of Persian monuments; which, though of similar form, were found to belong to a period subsequent to the fall of the Assyrian empire.

As early as the year 1800 he had positively deciphered the names of DAR-HEUSCH and KHSCHHERSCHE, Darius and Xerxes, in the inscription of Behistun, as copied by Niebuhr. This inscription, upon which Grotefend had commenced his labours, bore conspicuously the evidence of being written in three languages and three distinct sets of characters; but whether either of the languages preserved in these complicated signs was a known language, he had then no means of ascertaining. Neither was he aided, as the interpreters of Egyptian hieroglyphics had been, by a Plutarch, who had analysed the Egyptian Pantheon, and thus bequeathed to the investigators the names of the chief deities of the country and their attributes; nor by a Manetho, or an Eratosthenes, who had classified the long range of Pharaohnic dynasties, and left copious lists of the names of successive kings. To Grotefend all was darkness; and the first step was to ascertain what were the sounds, if sounds, or the objects, if objects, that were represented by the individual signs. This first step had to be made before inquiring what the combinations of sounds or objects thus represented might signify when their functions were discovered. The method pursued by Grotefend in his discovery may be thus briefly described. His historical inquiries having convinced him that the inscriptions related to events connected with the Achæmenian dynasty of Persia, his first step was to endeavour to trace the name of Cyrus, or any of his immediate successors. But he was at once met by a difficulty apparently insurmountable; for the groups of characters appearing to represent names were all of nearly equal length, yet all beginning with different characters, from which it appeared that, to find both the short name Cyrus and the longer one of Cambyses among the groups was impossible. In this dilemma, finding that the first group contained seven letters, he gave an entirely hypothetical value to them, as follows: D-A-R-H-E-U-SCH; thus forming the name of Darius, as pronounced in the ancient Persian language. By good fortune he had pitched upon the actual name of Darius in this problematic experiment; and his first step was thus a bold and happy guess. But it was worth nothing till tested by comparisons. Following out this plan of operations, he in the same way fixed upon groups which he fancied ought to form the name Xerxes, which he read KH-SCH-H-E-R-SCH-E; and he then deciphered arbitrarily the name of Hystaspes and others by a similar process.

The next step was to test them. Thus, supposing that he took as a means of comparison the names of

D-A-R-H-E-U-SCH and K-H-SCH-H-E-R-SCH-E,
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

it is evident that the first and second letters of the first name could not occur

again either in that name or the second name; but that the third character ought to occur as the sixth in the second name, and the fifth in the first ought to be the same in the second, and so on. By this process of proof it became evident that certain of the names hypothetically formed were right, whilst others were cancelled as mistakes. There was a certain prefix to the names, which to Grotefend appeared to be E-GH-R-E; and finding that in the Zend language this sound expresses great, he adopted that reading, which, as it turned out correct, gave him the value of the letters composing it. From such beginnings, and the laborious prosecution of the hints derived from them, through a series of years, he at length obtained the fragment of an alphabet, the accuracy of which was at once acknowledged by all those most capable of testing its correctness. Thus Grotefend is entitled to the credit, as Rawlinson expressively writes, "of being the first who opened a gallery into this rich treasure-house of antiquity;" for in deciphering the names of Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, and Hystaspes, he obtained the true determination of nearly a third of the whole alphabet of the Persian class of cuneiform writing.

It is right to mention, although their studies led to no definite result beyond the preliminary but necessary classification of characters, that other students were in the field contemporaneously with M. Grotefend; such as Tychsen, Münter, Kopp, De Murr, Wahl, and Hagar; and lastly Millin, who, with the aid of Grotefend's alphabet, described the stone with cuneiform characters in the Bibliothèque Royale.

M. St. Martin resumed the inquiry next after Grotefend, but added little to what had been done by his predecessor. Rask, however, about the same time, discovered the two characters representing M and N, which led, says Rawlinson, to several very important verifications.

M. Bournouf, in 1836, attempted the interpretation of the Hamadan inscriptions, which his perfect knowledge of the Zend enabled him to carry through with unexpected success; in which performance the knowledge of the alphabet was considerably extended.

Lastly, between 1836 and 1844, Professor Lassen brought to the task a thorough knowledge of the Sanscrit and other dialects allied to the ancient Persian; and as the result of his researches, he published three memoirs, in which he developed a complete alphabet, which has left little further to accomplish. Thus one of the cuneiform alphabets—the most recent—has been deciphered; and the language, found to be a dialect of ancient Persian, has been interpreted by means of its close analogy with the modern Zend and the Sanscrit of the Vedas.

But it remained to decipher the Assyrian cuneiform alphabet, which, while the Persian only contains forty letters or characters, appeared to contain at least 600. The interpretation of this more difficult alphabet, or rather system, has been since to a great extent achieved through the aid of the same trilingual inscriptions, one of which is in the Assyrian language

and characters. The Behistun inscription contains from 80 to 100 proper names, which can be easily read in the Persian character; and, by comparing these with the same names in the Assyrian version, it is found possible to construct a good portion of that alphabet. The most-frequently recurring words were soon detected and compared, and it was found that the Assyrian language was nearly allied to the Hebrew and Chaldee. The credit of the interpretation of the Assyrian alphabet belongs chiefly to Colonel Rawlinson, an officer in the East India Company's service attached to the Persian mission, who, during a residence at Teheran, had previously discovered, single-handed, and without communication with Europe, nearly all that Grotefend, Bournouf, and Lassen had effected; but his successful labours cannot, nevertheless, interfere with the prior claims of those scholars, as they were the first to publish to the world the result of their researches, and, in fact, those of Rawlinson did not commence till 1835. Yet many of the remarkable discoveries of Lassen were fairly forestalled by those of Rawlinson, though his success was unknown in Europe at the time of the publication of the researches of the great German scholar. Such discoveries, the result of enormous labour, appear comparatively easy when thus briefly described; but some idea of the labour and perseverance bestowed upon the task by these investigators may be formed by simply mentioning one of the thousand difficulties that lay in their path, namely, that the Behistun inscription, the interpretation of which has led to the greatest results, is engraved on a rock at an elevation of 300 feet, and that its characters are so delicately written that they cannot be read and copied without the aid of a telescope. But in spite of impediments of this material nature, and others more difficult to overcome, Colonel Rawlinson states that the meaning of upwards of 500 words of the Assyrian inscriptions is ascertained; among which are many verbs, substantives, and adjectives, and probably all the prepositions. The materials are therefore in hand for the interpretation of any simple record of events, which is the character of most Assyrian inscriptions.

These great mountain records, the royal dispatches and proclamations of Babylonia and Assyria, are much more brief than those which cover the walls of the palaces and other buildings disinterred at Nimroud and Khorsabad, since discovered, which are, in fact, of another class, containing perhaps the whole history of the Assyrian empire. The detached inscriptions over the heads of single figures, apparently captives, and similar ones over towns, &c., in these sculptures, M. Botta considers to be proper names, which, when deciphered, will give the highest interest to the sculptures they will explain.

Colonel Rawlinson divides the cuneiform character, in general, into three great groups, the Babylonian, the Assyrian, and the Elymæan, or Persian. The Babylonian section he subdivides into two classes, one of which is found only upon the most ancient cylinders; the other forming the third column of the trilingual inscriptions. He considers that in the characters found on those

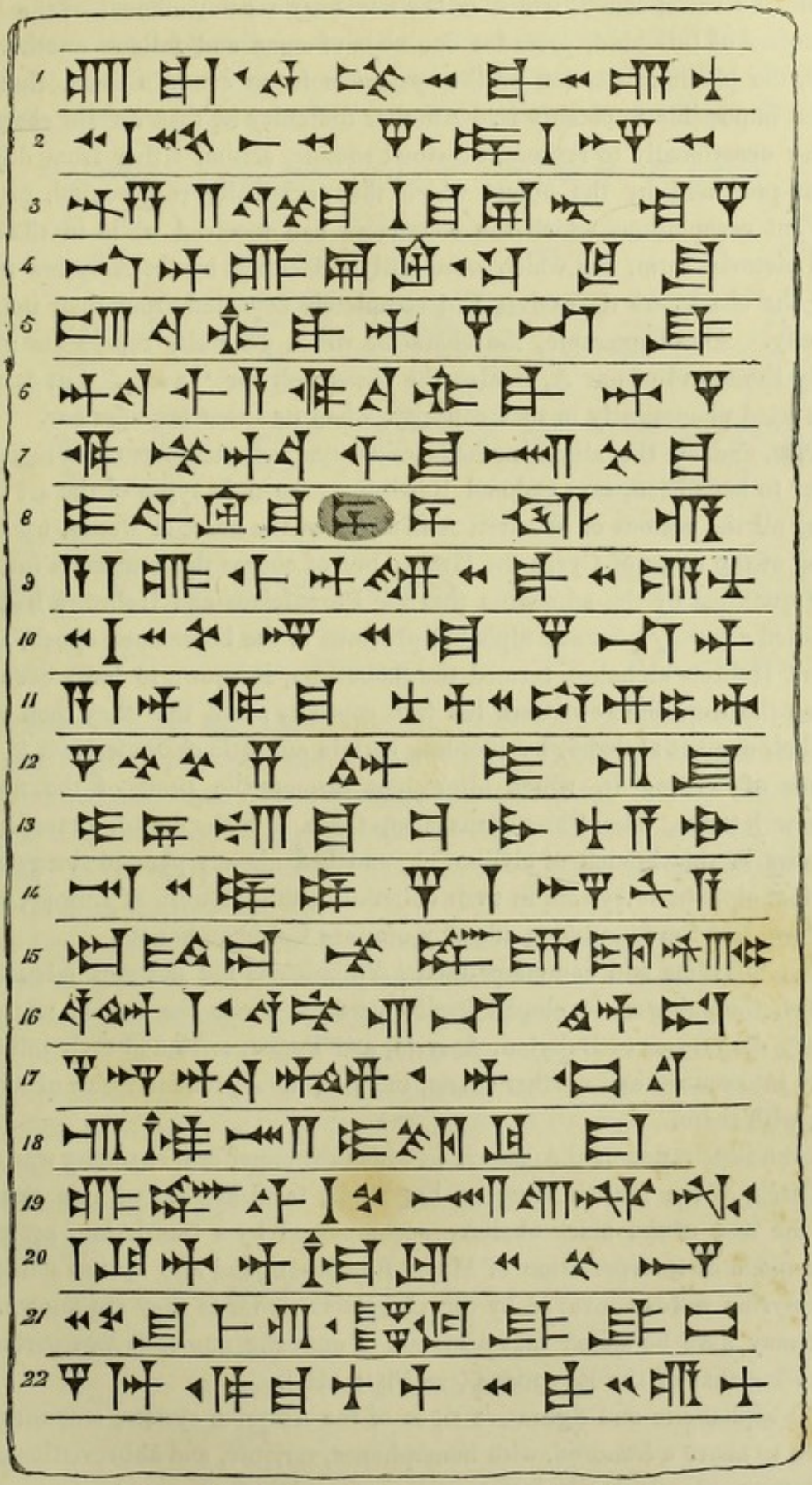
cylinders we have probably the earliest examples of the cuneatic alphabet, which occurs also on the bricks of the primeval cities of Shinar, at Babylon, at Erech, at Calneh, and at Birs-Nimroud, considered the ruins of the tower of Babel. The second subdivision is now termed the Achæmenian-Babylonian, or the form adopted in Persia. The Assyrian, or second great class of cuneatic writing, Colonel Rawlinson divides into Assyrian and Medo-Assyrian, the first being confined to inscriptions in the palaces and other ruins of the plains of Assyria. The Medo-Assyrian is used in the second column of the trilingual inscriptions of Xerxes. But many of the distinctions of these classes are not apparent to the careless observer, the *appearance* of the characters being similar, the wedge-form, or rudimental element, being the same in all. The annexed plate, therefore, from one of the Nimroud slabs in the British Museum, will convey a sufficient idea of the general character of these curious inscriptions.

We may thus infer, from what has just been stated, and the previous chain of argument, first, that the Babylonians originated the cuneiform character, or rather perhaps formed it by means of a modification of the Egyptian hieratic or demotic, most probably the latter, as all trace of the forms of original objects portrayed in primeval letters must have been nearly lost in the class of writing upon which the cuneiform characters were founded; and secondly, that the Assyrian manner was either a direct and distinct adaptation from the Egyptian, or a modification of the Babylonian adaptation.

The Persic, or Achæmenian-Babylonian, as Rawlinson terms it, is a further modification and improvement on both styles, but most resembling the Babylonian. Both the Babylonian and Assyrian styles betray their Egyptian parentage by the retention of many symbolic signs analogous to those of the Egyptian system, while many of the proper names, as M. Grotefend thinks, in his last memoir, are distinguished more by their signification than their sound, as in the native Egyptian names; while the vowels, except initials, are not expressed by a character. The Persian cuneiform character is, on the other hand, reduced to a regular alphabetic system, and nearly all the vowels are supplied by distinct signs.

By the careful examination of above eighty proper names, the value of above one hundred Assyrian characters has been ascertained, to which Major Rawlinson has recently added above fifty more. This large number of signs of course includes many homophones, or characters expressing the same sound, many varieties or different modes of writing a character, and some characters not phonetic, but figurative or symbolic.

The Assyrian and Babylonian signs are sometimes literal, or of the value of a single letter, and at other times syllabic, or of the value of a syllable. In the last-named cases, it is probable that the syllable in question is part of the name of the object (as in the Egyptian system) which the sign in its original state depicted; and when a sign is thus used, it doubtless expresses the



Specimen of Assyrian Cuneatic writing, from a slab in the British Museum.

dominant or initial sound of the object which the sign originally represented. Again, the vowel-sound, which is the necessary accompaniment of the literal characters of this kind, precedes one class of signs and follows another. In short, the phonetic portion of the system is in so crude a form, that it is almost impossible to classify it. Another difficulty is, that certain characters appear occasionally to represent distinct sounds, arising either from different names possessed by the object which they originally represented, or from different acceptations which the characters had received while in their original pictorial form, and which were still understood by the Assyrian writers after the characters themselves had completely departed from their imitative capacity. As an example, the character which generally represents phonetically the sound of our A, is also the ideograph for "a son;" but is sometimes used phonetically in that capacity, when its *sound* becomes *bar*.

This, and all the allied methods of writing adopted from the Egyptian, appear to have been, says Colonel Rawlinson, the only types of the art in use among all the nations of Western Asia as far as the heart of Persia, up to the period of the reign of Cyrus the Great; but of course this remark is intended to be qualified by the admission that the Phœnicians and Hebrews had both perfected a purely phonetic alphabet previous to the last-named epoch, as the ancient Hebrew alphabet, termed the Samaritan, is known to have been perfect at the time the Jews were led into captivity; and that they then modified their ancient alphabet by adopting certain cuneatic characteristics in their manner of writing it, which alterations formed the basis of the modern Hebrew letters. The Phœnicians also, there is little doubt, preceded the Hebrews in this branch of civilisation, and had already planted the germs of a perfect alphabetic system in their colonies in the far west of Europe, which may have laid the foundation of many obscure Celtic alphabets.

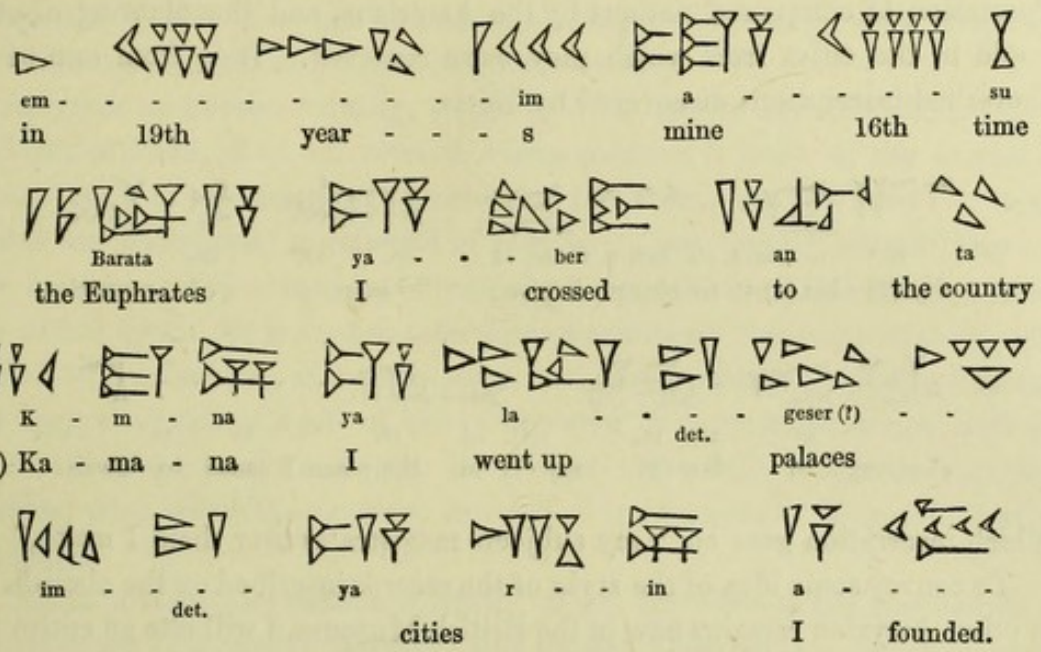
The maritime and commerce-loving Phœnicians did not seek inland possessions, their power developed itself outwards, across the ocean; while the military despotisms of Babylon, Assyria, and Persia, extended their influence deeply into central and northern Asia, carrying their peculiar forms of writing along with them.

As an illustration of the manner in which the cuneiform character was used, Mr. Birch, of the British Museum, has kindly furnished me with an example from the base of the black obelisk—accompanied by a translation, according to the mode of interpretation of Major Rawlinson, and also by the sounds of the Assyrian words conveyed by the characters, as far as they are known.

It may here be stated that a system of cuneatic numerals was perfected, resembling that of the Egyptians (see Plate III.).

The alphabetic and figurative signs of the Assyrian system, amounting as they do to above a hundred, with homophones, variants, and abbreviations, &c. &c. innumerable, render the interpretation of most passages open to many errors; and indeed Dr. Hinks and Major Rawlinson are altogether at variance in many

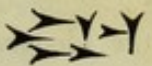
instances as to the interpretation of the Assyrian inscriptions. It is, however, believed, that, in the main, the interpretation of the example given is correct, as it is one which, with slight variation, occurs over and over again in these sculptured chronicles. That the true value has been given to the characters expressing the sounds Baratus, the river Euphrates, there can be no doubt.



To enter into all the disputed points concerning the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian cuneiform alphabets, which Dr. Hinks considers much more closely united than does Major Rawlinson, would carry me far beyond the limits of this work; but I may mention that Dr. Hinks is inclined to think that many of the characters of the Assyrian and Persian differ no more than do old English and modern type.

He has framed the following general kind of scheme for the Assyrian alphabet, in which he considers that there are four vowels à . a . i . u., attached to consonants, sometimes following, as, cà, ca, ci, cu; and in other cases preceding, as, ac, ic, and uc, each combination being represented by distinct cuneiform characters. Of this class of characters he makes fifteen series,—that of C, of G, of E, of J, of L, of T, of D, of N, of P, of B, of Y, of R, of V, of Ç, and of K.

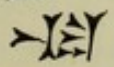
The following examples will serve as illustrations of this supposed series of characters, as—

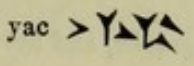
ca 

ca 

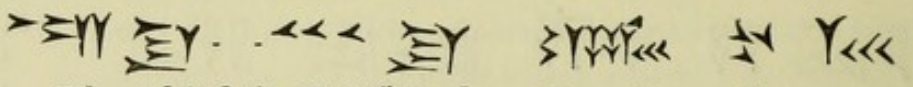
ci wanting, ca or gi being used for it.

cu 

ac 

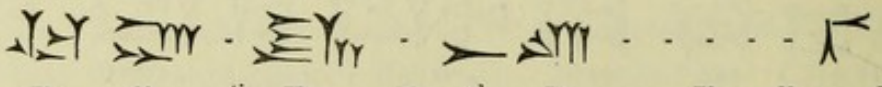
yac 

It would be impossible to give a list here of all the differences of the principal investigators in this field of discovery; but having engraved a portion of an inscription interpreted according to the system of Major Rawlinson, I will here give a similar portion as interpreted by Dr. Hinks, and published by him in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. The passage alludes to the deportation of conquered nations by the Assyrians, and the planting of other people in the cities from which they were removed. It is from one of the Khorsabad inscriptions discovered by Botta.



ID.* *su* ā. tu. ā. n'a san. u. t'i. ac. cā ID. ID. ID.

city (2) his (1) it to charge I give; men of countries



va ac ti ID. ya ad ID. va sa sib;

obedient to law (2) my (1) in the place I cause to dwell.

Which inscription goes on, "my subjects magistrates over them I make," &c.

To convey some idea of the style of the records inscribed on the obelisk, and on other Assyrian remains now in the British Museum, I will cite an entire passage, as deciphered by Major Rawlinson, relating to Temenbar II., a name which M. Grotefend, in his last memoir, printed in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, No. 13, Aug. 26, 1850, considers ought to be read Shalmanassar. The portion of the inscription concerning this prince begins with his ascent of the throne, and an invocation to the Gods, which is very obscure for want of a better acquaintance with the Assyrian Pantheon. After this opening, the events of each year are briefly but separately particularised; those of the fourteenth year of his reign being thus described:—"In the fourteenth year I raised all the country and assembled a great army; with 120,000 warriors I crossed the Euphrates; then it came to pass that Hemithra, king of Atesh, and Arhulena, king of Hamath, and the twelve kings of the tribes of the upper and lower country, collected their forces together, and came before me offering battle. I engaged with them and defeated them; their leaders and captains and men of war I cast into chains," &c. &c.

At the end of this chapter will be found engraved the only perfect alphabet of a cuneiform character yet published, that of Persia, which would appear to have been formed by expelling nearly all the ideographs and symbolic characters of the other systems, reducing the number of homophones, and, in fact, forming it into a nearly perfect alphabetic system. This alphabet may enable students, not only to decipher Persian cuneatic inscriptions for themselves, but lead them, through it, to interpret the older and more difficult and complicated Assyrian.

* Those characters marked ID. are ideographs, and not phonetics.

In addition to the set cuneiform writing, the history and recent interpretation of which I have endeavoured to describe, certain monuments are known which prove the existence of a *cursive* character in use in Assyria synchronously with the cuneiform, as supposed by Colonel Rawlinson. Examples of this style exist on cylinders, and also on bricks; they are reversed for impression, and are allied in form to the Phœnician; being undoubtedly, says Klaproth, the earliest known form of cursive Semitic writing.

Assyrian or Persian writing, probably of a cursive style, is alluded to in the book of Ezra, chap. vi. verse 2, where mention is made of the decrees of Cyrus, found in the house of Records, at Ecbatana; and the *letters* of Artaxerxes are specifically mentioned in holy writ; but these "letters" may not have been in a cursive manner of writing, for by the term letter, when referring to that epoch, we are not to infer that an epistolary communication, rapidly written off by the hand of the composer, is meant—instead of which a "letter" may have consisted of a pile of bricks engraved by a professed scribe, with set cuneiform characters; or it may have been a carefully engraved cornelian cylinder, from which the required number of impressions of the royal "letter" was taken.

The monuments in existence which chiefly corroborate the supposition of the existence of a cursive Assyrian and Persian alphabet, are certain inscriptions, described by Layard and others, as written in characters strongly resembling the Phœnician.

This manner was, no doubt, an offshoot of the set cuneiform, and was nothing more than a rapid mode of writing those characters, which when written in a leaning position, for more rapid execution, and partially joined in consequence of the facility of doing so in less deeply engraved writing, may easily be conceived to resemble the Phœnician or Samaritan characters. At the same time they must not be considered to be any nearer approach to those more perfect alphabets than in mere external appearance, for Assyrian writing of this kind contained all the cumbrous machinery of the more carefully carved upright inscriptions, just as the Egyptian demotic was merely cursive hieroglyphic, or rather a tachygraphy, or short-hand, of the more elaborate style.

Colonel Rawlinson describes the Assyrian "running hand" as extremely minute and confused. The most perfect specimen is the hexagonal cylinder of clay in the possession of Colonel Taylor, which has between seventy and eighty lines of writing on each plane. This writing is so minute, that even with the aid of a magnifier Colonel Rawlinson has not been able to define its precise character.

The following cut represents the Persian cuneatic alphabet, as agreed upon by all the most eminent investigators, and through the medium of which the Behistun and other rock inscriptions have been satisfactorily made out. For a more copious list the reader is referred to Colonel Rawlinson's dissertation, published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, in vol. xiv.

Part I., in which valuable publication will be found a copious list of the Babylonian and Assyrian characters, with their phonetic powers and ideographic values, which, however, is expressly stated to be at present incomplete, and many of the powers attributed to the characters doubtful. This uncertainty, however, only refers to the Assyrian and Babylonian characters, especially the ideographs, and is not intended to invalidate the interpretation of the Persian alphabet engraved below, which has, at present, proved satisfactory in every experiment by which the powers assigned to the characters have been tested.

THE PERSIAN CUNEIFORM ALPHABET, AS LAST REFORMED BY COLONEL RAWLINSON.

Characters.	Values.	Characters.	Values.	Characters.	Values.
	à or a (init.)		tr		w
	i		d		v
	u		dh		s
	k		P		sh
	k'h		F		z
	kh		B		h
	g		m		q ?
	gh		m' (with i)		dah ?
	ch		m' (with u)		
	j		n		
	jh		n (with a)		
	jt		ñ ?		
	t'h		y		bum'i ?
	th		r		
	t' (with i)		r' (with a)		

CHAPTER VII.

WRITING OF THE PHŒNICIANS. FORMATION OF THE FIRST PURE ALPHABET, THE PARENT, THROUGH THE GREEK AND ROMAN, OF OUR OWN.

I HAVE described the Assyrian and Persepolitan systems of writing before the Phœnician, both as forming, in that position, better connecting links in the regular order of the development of the art, and because the Assyrian and Persian monuments hold a higher chronological position than any as yet discovered of Phœnicia. It is nevertheless possible, and probable, that the Phœnicians formed a system of writing based upon that of Egypt, at the time the Phœnician shepherds ruled in the land of the Pharaohs, and even at that early period perfected an alphabetic system of writing.

Tacitus, for instance, tells us that the Phœnicians learned the art of writing from the Egyptians, and carried it to all other nations: and the opinion of such a man as Tacitus, so cautious in all he advances, and so accurate in the manner in which he expresses all that he states, is worthy of the highest respect. The degree of analogy discoverable between the oldest Phœnician inscriptions and the latest writing of the Egyptians, in a degree bears out the assertion; especially if it were proved that in founding a system of writing upon that of the Egyptians, they took the *phonetic* portion of the system *alone*, and entirely remodelled and simplified the characters themselves, reducing them at once to a perfect alphabetic method, both as to their distinct phonetic capacity, and as to their simple and arbitrary forms; which, if it were so, would be one of the greatest intellectual advances ever achieved, as it were, at one bound. At the same time, this sudden advance is possible, for the true phonetic principle already existed in the Egyptian system of which it formed the simplest, and even the largest portion, and may thus have been found, on the transfer of the art to the use of a people speaking another language, the only one easily and completely convertible to its new purpose. It is clear that the phonetic signs alone of the Egyptian system would be amply sufficient to express all the sounds of the language for the notation of which we are supposing them about to be adopted, without the cumbrous appendages of the other classes of signs, with which they were originally combined. That a very small number of purely sound-expressing characters, if well selected, are sufficient to express the whole of the distinct sounds of any language is self-evident; and the fact is strikingly illustrated by the consideration, that only seven *notes* express all the endless combinations of sound and harmony required in the

most elaborate compositions of modern music. But the restricted number of the characters of our own alphabet forms, perhaps, a more apposite illustration; for, according to the mathematician Jacquet, 24 letters are capable of forming 620,448,401,733,239,439,360,000 distinct combinations, a number which the Jesuit Clavius, by a different process, makes but little less.

Many peculiarities of the mythology of the Phœnician people would induce us to accept Egypt as the parent of all their arts of civilisation; and the following passage, from their ancient historian Saconiatho, distinctly points to the Egyptian origin of Phœnician letters. It is one of the few fragments of his works preserved, and is to the following general effect.

The Phœnicians received the art of writing from Taaud (no other than the Egyptian Thoth), who was descended from Protogonus, the first man, and Æon (life), the first woman, whose children, *genus* and *genta*, dwelt in Phœnicia, and were the ancestors of Taaud, descended from them in the following line:—

1. Protogonus.
2. Genus.
3. Uriphos.
4. Capus.
5. Hypsurarius.
6. Agreus.
7. Chryson.
8. Techrites.
9. Agrovenus (Noah).
10. Amun-Haym, or Ham.
11. Mesor (Mizraim).
12. Taaut.

This fragment of Saconiatho of Berytus has been preserved in the works of Eusebius. He compiled his history from the registers, furnished him for that purpose by Jerobalus, priest of the Jaco, and other records, which Josephus informs us were preserved in the inner part of the temples with great vigilance, as containing the most memorable events connected with the hierarchy and the national history. The remarkable coincidences with the Mosaic records contained in the passage above quoted cannot fail to be observed.

It appears pretty evident that the Phœnicians preceded the Hebrews* in the knowledge of letters; for, located upon the coast of Asia Minor, and near neighbours of the Hebrews, they have left monuments of the art of writing in the peculiar character of their nation, dating several centuries prior to any Hebrew remains. It is most probable, and in accordance with the remarks of Tacitus, and the facts which have been here advanced, that in their active commercial enterprises they may have acquired the principles of the art in an imperfectly alphabetic form, either directly from the Egyptians, or through the medium of the Assyrians; and their having, in their trading voyages to other nations, communicated to them the art thus acquired, may be the cause of their receiving the credit of its first *invention*, so frequently awarded to them by many Greek and Roman writers.

* The term Semitic, or Shemitic, as applied to the group of languages of the descendants of Shem, to which the Hebrew belongs, is incorrect; inasmuch as the list of races using languages allied to the Hebrew, comprises the Phœnician branches of the race of Ham also, and the western division of the race of Shem; and it has been proposed, therefore, to use the term Phœnicio-Shemitic, to express this family of languages.

Leaving out of the question the claim of the Phœnicians to be the originators of the art, it appears, at all events, certain, that they were the people through whose means the wonderful invention of writing was disseminated in western Europe, to become there a means of civilisation and progress never dreamed of in the East. The written monuments of this interesting people mark most of the traces of their progress in the West; they went forth as it were to civilise Europe through the medium of writing; and as they proceed on their adventurous course westward, we find every where written monuments of their route. At Cyprus, at Athens, at Malta, in Sicily, and at Carthage, the eldest daughter of the Phœnician Tyr; also at *Gades*, the modern Cadiz, the first Phœnician colony in Spain; and still farther west traces of Phœnician writing are found.

In Italy, the Etruscan, the Samnite, and the Oscan inscriptions are all in a character closely allied to the pure Phœnician, and Italy has never sought to deny the source from which she derived the inestimable art, without which the eloquence of Cicero would have died with the tongue that gave it utterance, and the verses of Virgil and Horace would have been but recitations, forgotten after the generation to which they were addressed, or preserved only in vague traditions like the supposed rhapsodies of Ossian, or the rude ballads of Wales.

I have stated that the Phœnician mode of writing, if acquired in Egypt, consisted probably of a selection of such of the phonetic characters of the Egyptian system as were found most effective in expressing the sounds of the Phœnician language; and if such was the case, a positive alphabet, consisting of a limited number of signs, was at once acquired, and disentangled from all the cumbrous machinery of the rest of the Egyptian system.

That a limited number of characters selected from the Egyptian scriptorial system merely for their accepted phonetic characters, and without any reference to the pictorial origin, should soon lose all traces of their primitive forms, and become mere arbitrary signs, modified continually till they assumed the kind of forms most readily written, is easily conceivable; and by this kind of transposition of a set of characters from one language to another, we obtain a striking glimpse of the manner in which a system of arbitrary signs grew out of pictorial ones, and finally throwing off their allegiance to art, became feudatories of science. We may imagine how they were by degrees arranged upon new principles; and eventually, and lastly, separated scientifically into vocals, gutturals, linguals, dentals, labials, nasals, &c. &c.; for the scientific ticketing and labeling never takes place till all the main ingredients of an art or science have been collected and applied.

Before we have animals classed into mammalia, and other distinct families, we must have vast collections made, and all the main points of curiosity and utility satisfied by the existence of private and public museums. Then come our classifiers; for the formation of vast collections must necessarily

precede the first steps towards classification, just as a complete mode of writing must precede the formation of a grammar. Before we have Aristotelian canons of art applied to the poetry of the Drama, we must have dramas, in their highest form too, executed without the existence of any law, except the artistic instinct of the individual poet; and before we have our grammarians and philologists, we must have already existing, copious languages, as well as the means of their accurate notation by means of accepted arbitrary signs, invented and applied by the successive energies of many succeeding eras: so that for a moment to suppose, as some very learned writers have done, that any nation set about originally making an alphabet by classing sounds into labials, gutturals, &c. &c., is manifestly absurd.

But to return to the Phœnician alphabet: it possesses, as we have seen in this and our introductory chapter, the reputation of being the oldest system of true letters known to Europeans, having been carried by its inventors, the most commercial and enterprising people of their age, to many parts of Europe, prior to the foundation of the power and celebrity of either Greece or Rome. It became the immediate parent both of the Greek and Roman alphabets, and in Italy remained in use nearly in its original form, for writing the Oscan, Samnite, and other Italiot dialects, till the fall of the western empire of Rome; though in its native position, Asia Minor, it is not found on the coinage of Tyre and Sidon much after the Alexandrian era; and in Carthage, and the north coast of Africa, and the coasts of Spain, it was replaced by the Latin, after the epoch of the Roman conquests, during the last two centuries prior to the Christian era.

The most ancient monuments which exhibit characters closely allied to the Phœnician, are the tombs of Etruria, in which short inscriptions are occasionally found, the supposed dates of which are various, but many belonging to an epoch at least seven centuries before the birth of Christ. There are also fragments of the most ancient kinds of Etruscan pottery, which occasionally bear inscriptions, and which may be of about the same date. A few Ms. fragments are known, written in the true Phœnician character on papyrus; but these do not belong to a period anterior to the second or third century before the vulgar era. Of a similar period, occasionally perhaps earlier, are Oscan and Samnite inscriptions (both offshoots of the Phœnician) found on the early and massive copper coinage of the Italiot states.

The coins of Carthage, and her colonies in Spain and Sicily, also exhibit the character in a modified form, the Punic. In the Spanish provinces of Carthage it was used in several varieties of the Celtiberian dialect, in its adaptation to which it suffered many modifications. The oldest native Phœnician letters to which a positive date can be assigned, are considered to be those on the coins of Cilicia, issued 394 B.C., but the Punic characters on Sicilian coins are probably somewhat older.

The first specimen of the characters which I have engraved is from a

rare fragment of papyrus, preserved in the Louvre, of uncertain date, but possibly not earlier than the second or third century prior to the Christian era. (See Plate IV. No. 4.) The general aspect of this specimen of Phœnician writing so strongly resembles some examples of the cursive Egyptian, called the demotic, that it would appear at once to decide the question of its Egyptian parentage, but for the existence of a cursive style of Assyrian, or Chaldean, writing, spoken of in the preceding chapter, which still leaves its origin somewhat doubtful.

The second specimen (Plate IV. No. 6) is from a tomb in Libya, erected during the Carthaginian supremacy, or possibly in the early part of the Roman possession of that country; for it is not likely that the language and literature of Carthage would immediately disappear even after such a conquest as that of the Romans. The style of this inscription, being in *intaglio*, shews that the easiest method of cutting sunk inscriptions was one in which the wedge-like or cuneatic form was necessarily adopted; and from this cause the present example strikingly resembles the cuneiform writing of Assyria in general character. The next example (Plate IV. No. 6) is also from a sepulchral monument in the same district, and probably of about the same period; it exhibits in a remarkable manner the different characters the letters assume when carved in relief instead of being sunk as in the former specimen, as the resemblance to Assyrian characters entirely disappears in the *raised* example.

Though the values of the alphabet of the Phœnicians are now pretty well known, yet ignorance of the language, which is lost, prevents the deciphering of inscriptions in that character with any degree of certainty; although the language of Phœnicia Proper was undoubtedly much like the Hebrew,—and both appear to be derived from the same root as the Arabic. In Italy and Spain the difficulty becomes still greater; for the Etrurian and Celtiberian dialects were very distinct languages; and it is found impossible to decipher Etrurian or Celtiberian inscriptions in pseudo-Phœnician characters from want of the slightest clue to the details of the language, though, as I have stated, the values of the characters themselves have been pretty well ascertained.

Yet, that the Etruscan language (probably a dialect of the Phœnicians) was still spoken in the Augustan age, we learn from Aulus Gellius; and that Claudius approved its cultivation we know by part of a speech reported in Tacitus: "Retulit ad Senatum super Collegio Haruspicum, ne vetustissima Italiæ disciplina per desidiam exsolesceret, quam tamen primores Etruriæ adhuc retinebant et in familias propagabant." We also learn from Ammianus Marcellinus that the Etruscan records were preserved in the college of augurs till the middle of the fourth century after Christ; and that the augurs assisted the Emperor Julian in ascertaining the nature of the sacred mysteries of the pagan worship at the time he attempted to re-establish polytheism, by reference to their ancient records written in the Etruscan letters and language.

It would appear, then, that the Etruscan language and letters were lost, like those of the Egyptians, at a comparatively recent period, both, no doubt, suppressed by the rapidly rising Christian hierarchy, which found the ancient systems of theology most strongly rooted among the races still speaking antique dialects, who were thus comparatively uninfluenced by the more recently dominant languages in which the tenets of the Latin and Greek churches were conveyed.

The series of alphabets in Plate V. exhibits the near relationship of the Phœnician, Greek, and early Roman letters, which will be more fully alluded to in describing the Hebrew characters in the next chapter. But this seems to be the place to state simply, that the early alphabet of the Phœnicians appears to consist of a greater number of letters than was at first adopted from it by the Greeks, twenty-two characters having been with tolerable certainty verified, which appear to correspond to our A, B, G, D, H, V, Z, CH, TE, Y, KA, L, M, N, S, E, P, TZ, KO, R, SH, TAU, most of which will be found, on comparison of the series of alphabets in Plate V., to have been, through the medium of the Greek and Roman, the parents of our own letters. In concluding my observations on the Phœnician character, I should observe, that while we deny the Phœnicians the credit of inventing an art which was evidently borrowed from Egypt or Assyria, Europe was yet immediately indebted to Phœnicia for the introduction of that important art; and the whole of Asia Minor, and Greece also, remembered without thought of evasion the Phœnician gift of letters; while many Grecian writers, as well as oral tradition, preserve the recollection of the fact.

The date at which the Phœnicians first achieved the creation of a pure phonetic alphabet must at present remain matter of conjecture; but if the Greek claim to the possession of the art of writing prior to the siege of Troy, 1150 B.C., be a valid one, then the Phœnician system, which was certainly the parent of that of Greece, must have been in use at least thirteen or fourteen centuries before the Christian era; and supposing that the writing of the Jews in the time of Moses was a phonetic system, and that the Phœnician alphabet preceded it, the fifteenth or sixteenth century before the Christian era must be allowed as the date of the most ancient European alphabet.

The next interesting point in the progress of the art of writing towards complete perfection, is its further development among the Greeks; for much yet remained to be effected, as both in the Phœnician, and in the Hebrew, which will form the subject of the next chapter, the vowels are, except as initials, carried, as it were, by the consonants; a method by which those systems become partly *syllabic* in their arrangement; that is to say, strictly *literal*, —a defect nearly, if not entirely excluded from the alphabet of the Greeks.

EARLY ALPHABETS FROM PHŒNICIAN TO ROMAN

Modern Characters	Ancient Phœnician	Ancient Hebrew	Ancient Greek	Samaritan	Oscan & Samnite	Early Roman	Modern Hebrew	Greek Names
A	𐤀	𐤀	Α Α Α	𐤀	𐌀 𐌀	𐌀 Α Α	א Aleph	Alpha
B	𐤁 𐤁	𐤁 𐤁	𐤁 Β	𐤁	𐌁 𐌁	𐌁 B	ב Beth	Beta
G	𐤂 𐤂	𐤂 𐤂	𐤂 Γ 𐤂	𐤂	𐌂	C G	ג Ghimel	Gamma
D	𐤃 𐤃	𐤃 𐤃	Δ 𐤃 Ρ	𐤃	𐌃	D D	ד Daleth	Delta
He	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄 Ϝ Ε	𐤄	𐌄	E	ה He	Eta
V	𐤅	𐤅	F Ϝ Ϝ	𐤅	𐌅 𐌅	F	ו Vau	
Z	Z	—	I	𐤆	𐌆	Z	ז Zain	Zeta
CH	𐤇	E	𐤇 H	𐤇	𐌇 II	H	ח Cheth	Chi
Te	𐤈	—	⊙	𐤈	—	—	ט Teth	Theta
Y	𐤉 𐤉	Z	Z Z	𐤉	I Ч	I	י Yod	Upsilon
K	𐤊 𐤊 𐤊	𐤊	𐤊 K	𐤊	𐌊 𐌊	K	כ ך Caph	Kappa
L	L L L	L	Λ 1 L	𐤋	𐌋	L	ל Lamed	Lambda
M	𐤌 𐤌 𐤌	𐤌	M M	𐤌	𐌌	M	מ ם Mem	Mu
N	𐤍 𐤍	𐤍	𐤍 N	𐤍	𐌍 H	N	נ Nun	Nu
S.	𐤎 𐤎	—	⊤ [ξ	𐤎	—	—	ס Samach	
E	⊙ ⊙	∪	⊙	𐤏	⊛ ⊙	O	ע Ain	Epsilon
P	𐤐	𐤐	𐤐	𐤐	𐌐	Γ	פ ף Pe	Pi
TZ	𐤑 𐤑	𐤑	Ζ	𐤑	-	—	צ ץ Tzade	
Ko	𐤒 𐤒	𐤒 Ρ	Φ Φ	𐤒	-	Q	ק Koph	
R	𐤓 𐤓	𐤓 𐤓	𐤓 Ч Ρ R	𐤓	𐌓 𐌓	R	ר Resch	Rho
SH	𐤔 𐤔 𐤔	𐤔	M M	𐤔	𐌔	S	ש Shin	Sigma
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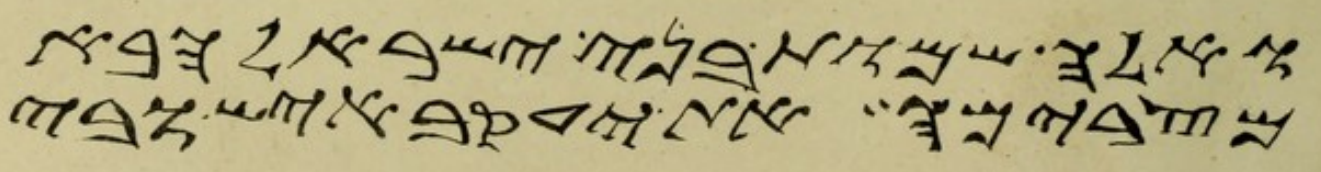

FROM A HEBREW PENTATEUCH, WRITTEN IN THE SAMARITAN CHARACTER IN THE IX^th CENT^y A.D.

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CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE PROBABLE ORIGIN OF THE HEBREW ALPHABET, AND THE FIRST USE OF WRITING AMONG THE JEWS.

THE Hebrew language, and the character in which it was written, have a deep interest for all nations of Christendom, as being the means by which that knowledge has been transmitted to us, upon which the Christian faith is founded.

Though few monuments of Hebrew writing exist which are not posterior even to the Christian era, with the exception of the disputed inscriptions on the rocks of Mount Sinai, of a few characters on Babylonian cylinders of uncertain authenticity, and those on the coins of the Maccabees; it is yet certain that writing was known to the Jewish people in the time of Moses, if not before. Moses, as is well known, was skilled in all the knowledge of the Egyptians, and of course in the art of writing. He must also have been aware that the Egyptian system of expressing ideas by means of writing consisted of pictorial, symbolic, and phonetic characters; and he knew that these three classes of characters were blended by the Egyptians into one homogeneous general system; as we find it in works known to have been in existence in his time, among which is the obelisk of Luxor, recently erected in Paris.

That Moses introduced this art of writing among the Jewish people, if they did not know it before, appears certain, as in more than one passage of the Pentateuch, writing is spoken of as an art well known.

If he were the direct means of conferring a system of writing upon the Jewish people, he probably perceived, when a foreign language was to be expressed by Egyptian characters, the advantage of only adopting the *phonetic* signs—leaving the heavy paraphernalia of the pictorial and symbolic characters untouched. Conjectural evidence, if the term evidence may be so qualified, is, however, in favour of the view that the Phœnicians had already effected this elimination of the Egyptian system, and founded in a neighbouring state an alphabetic system ready to the hand of the Hebrew people; and that when they returned to the land of their fathers, and found themselves neighbours of the Phœnicians, they adopted the alphabet of that people, with certain modifications, which may either have been effected at the time, or may have subsequently grown up; the differences being such as were likely to have ensued in a written character when practised by nations whose political and religious institutions were so distinct.

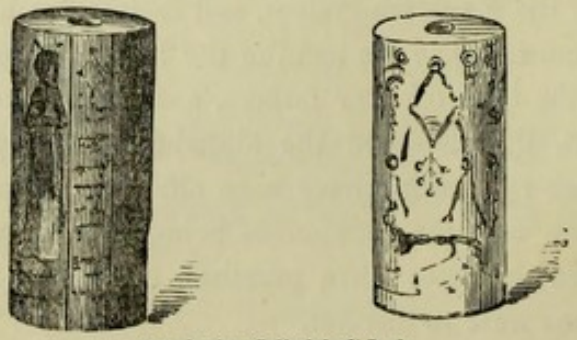
However this may be, the earliest known Hebrew alphabet, that now distinguished as the Samaritan, bears evident traces of a common origin with that of Phœnicia.

So that, whether the Jewish system of writing was a direct adaptation of portions of the Egyptian system by Moses, or some earlier patriarch, or whether it was received through the medium of an already perfected Phœnician alphabet derived from the same source, is unimportant.

A striking proof of the immediate derivation of both the Phœnician and Hebrew characters from a hieroglyphic system is the original *names* of the signs which form the Hebrew alphabet, which have fortunately been preserved, and which indicate clearly their pictorial origin. Whether the Hebrew was immediately founded upon the Phœnician arrangement or not, cannot, as stated, with our present means of observation, be determined; but the great similarity of the two alphabets, as will be seen by examination of Plate V., would naturally lead to this inference, rather than that which supposes a direct Egyptian origin. That the Jewish alphabet was rather derived immediately from Phœnicia, the civilisation of which province preceded that of Judea, appears most probable; as in most of the arts of life there are evident traces of their having followed in the track of their more advanced neighbours.

This, however, appears the proper place to state, that the rock inscriptions in the region of Mount Sinai have been thought by a recent author to be the work of the Israelites during their sojourn in the "wilderness;" and if that could be verified, it would go to prove, as these inscriptions appear to be in a character closely allied to the Egyptian enchorial or demotic, that the Israelites, on their departure from Egypt, carried with them the demotic, or more popular manner of writing of that country. If such were the case, it would shew that the Hebrews at that time used a hieroglyphic system of writing in a cursive form, and were not as yet in possession of a true alphabet.

The first allusion to writing in the books of Moses is that referring to the writing of the commandments, or the *tablets* of stone "after the manner of a signet"—by which we may understand engraved writing like that of the Assyrian cylinders, or seals—such as those here engraved, which, when rolled over warm wax or soft clay, left a flat and *legible* impression of the writing of the signet.



Babylonian Cylindrical Seals.

In the Exodus the following notice of writing also occurs: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book;" and no difficulty appears to have arisen in consequence of this direction—so that Moses was evidently well acquainted with some mode of writing, which was occasionally practised as an art at this time.

Whether this was a partially iconographic system, like that of the Egyptians, must be left to conjecture; but according to the present received date of the age of Moses, the early Samaritan alphabetic characters may have been in use, for the Phœnicians most certainly possessed the art prior to that epoch; indeed, when compared with the dates of Egyptian writing, the era of Moses is, comparatively speaking, a modern one. Minute investigation nevertheless involuntarily leads us to the conclusion that writing was at that time but rarely practised among the Jews, except for monumental inscriptions, sacerdotal records, or signets; a view illustrated by the following passage: "And the *stones* shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings on a signet," &c. It would appear also that the public documents were written on plates of metal, or brass, or gold, or like the decalogue on tablets of stone, which Moses describes as having received on Mount Sinai, in the form of "two tables of testimony, *tables of stone*, written with the finger of God."

Although the preceding statements tend to prove that the Jews were in possession of some mode of writing as early as the time of Moses, no existing monuments of that period have been discovered, except the doubtful inscriptions of Mount Sinai; the earliest authentic examples of Hebrew letters being those occasionally found on cylindrical signets of the epoch of Alexander the Great, which belong to the fourth century B.C. The next most ancient examples of Hebrew writing are the inscriptions on the coins of the Maccabees, the earliest of which belong to the second century B.C. At that time the alphabet of the Samaritan Jews could not have undergone any such serious change as to obliterate entirely its first character, if we may judge from the progress of the Phœnician and the Greek during a similar period. Indeed the stationary character of the Hebrew alphabet, or rather the Samaritan branch of it, may be further illustrated by comparison of a portion of a Samaritan Pentateuch, written in the eleventh century of our era (Plate V.), with the characters on the coins issued by the Maccabees, written two centuries B.C., when it will be perceived that, after a lapse of thirteen centuries, but trifling variation had taken place.

We may therefore take the earliest examples preserved of the Samaritan, which is the most ancient form of the Hebrew alphabet, and consider them as representing pretty nearly the state of that alphabet when first derived, directly or indirectly, from the phonetic signs of the Egyptian system. The fact of the Hebrew language having been preserved, while that of the Phœnicians has been lost, enables us to trace the connexion of the alphabet with

its Egyptian parent more clearly than the Phœnician, as the original names of the letters, previously alluded to, have thus been preserved, which are, in fact, those in use at the present day.

These names, as I have stated, at once betray the pictorial origin of the characters themselves; and as they were doubtless similar to those which distinguished the Phœnician characters, they serve as an additional proof of the immediate derivation of the Greek also from that stock, as stated by ancient authors, the *names* being nearly identical with those of the Grecian alphabet; as will be seen by the following examples (see Plate V.).

	Greek Names.	Hebrew Names.		
A	Alpha . . .	Aleph	signifying	*Ox*, or *chief*.
B	Beta . . .	Beth	,,	*House*.
G	Gamma . .	Ghimel	,,	*Camel*.
D	Delta . . .	Daleth	,,	*Door*.
Z	Zeta . . .	Zain	,,	*Line*, or *blade*.
M	Mu	Mem	,,	*Spot, water*.
N	Nu	Noun	,,	*Fish, race*.
K	Kappa . . .	Kaph	,,	*The palm of the hand*.
Ph	Phi	Phe	,,	*Mouth*.
R	Rho	Resch	,,	*Head*.
Sh		Shin	,,	*Teeth*.

In the first of these characters, *Aleph*, corresponding to our A, which signifies either ox, or chief, the horns of an ox are still traceable in its Samaritan form (see Plate V.); while the character as written in a specimen from a Samaritan Pentateuch of the eleventh century (Plate V. No. 2), still exhibits some remnant of a rude outline, which might represent the head of an ox, with the two horns pointing to the right; or rather, perhaps, the entire figure, as may be understood by reference to the plate of Egyptian specimens, in which it is shewn how excessive abbreviations of outline portraiture were managed. The letter in question is the second of the upper line of my specimen (Plate V. No. 2), when read from right to left; it also occurs as the last letter of the same line.

In the second letter, *Beth* (B), signifying a house, some have sought to trace the pictorial rudiments of such a structure; but the original form appears to me to have been utterly lost. Not so with the third, *Ghimel*, a camel, the long neck and head of which animal appears to be portrayed in this letter, and even preserved in the Greek gamma derived from the Phœnician form of it. It is, however, somewhat singular that the camel is an image rarely, if ever, found among Egyptian hieroglyphics, and the Ghimel was, possibly, one of the additional letters originated by the Phœnicians or Hebrews, to suit some particular sound in their language, which was not precisely represented by any phonetic character of the Egyptians; which is not unlikely, as we find the Greeks, with a closely allied alphabet, using their gamma to express a

peculiar guttural sound, into which they translated the sound of the Roman C; as, for example, when they write Gaius for Caius, &c. &c. The fourth letter, Daleth (D), a door, appears very like a simple adaptation of the double doors of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, and it also resembles a similar character found in early Chinese writing. The seventh letter, Zain (Z), a sword, offers no remains but its name of its pictorial origin. The tenth, Jod (Y), hand, though but a line, reminds the student of the hand so frequent in Egyptian hieroglyphics, which in the Egyptian language was *tot*, and which was used to express phonetically the sound for which we use T; but we ought, perhaps, rather to look for the resemblance of the Egyptian T (the hand) in the Hebrew *Tau* (see Plate V.), in which, however, no such trace is to be found. We have, indeed, been able to trace but few positively pictorial links demonstrating that intimate relationship which Champollion the younger, in 1822, and afterwards Gesenius, in 1829, sought to establish between the Hebrew and Egyptian systems of writing. But if we confine our examination to the *principles* upon which both systems are based, we shall find the analogies more striking. The Egyptians, as we have seen, acquired the phonetic portion of their system in the following manner. The iconographic, or portrait-characters, were, under certain circumstances, made phonetic, or sound-expressing. Thus the pandean pipe, called *Sebi*, was adopted for the sound S; a vase, named *Kelol*, gave them K; a lion, *Labo*, furnished L; as in the Hebrew system *Aleph*, ox, furnishes A; *Beth*, house, B, &c. &c., as shewn by the existing *names* of the characters, which are proof sufficient, though the characters themselves may have lost much, if not all, the peculiarity of form of the objects on which they are founded; a result easily appreciated when it is considered that, to facilitate and expedite the art of *writing* such characters, abbreviations and simplifications were continually taking place, till excessively simple and easily executed forms were obtained, in which process the original shape necessarily became greatly obscured, or entirely lost. The disfigurement of the Phœnician and Hebrew signs is the more easily conceived, when we take into consideration that they were adopted, most likely, not from the full hieroglyphic forms of the Egyptian characters, but from the already simplified hieratic writing, or possibly the still further abbreviated demotic, or enchorial.

It is also to be observed, that the omission of the vowels* in Phœnician and Hebrew writing is a natural consequence of the peculiar origin of their system of writing; for the initial consonant of the name of the object forming the letter, naturally suggested the vowel which followed, and rendered the use of a distinct character for that purpose superfluous, as the sign T, founded on the sound *tot*, would naturally suggest a connection with the vowel O, and with the simple addition of the S, founded on *sebi*, the two characters would natu-

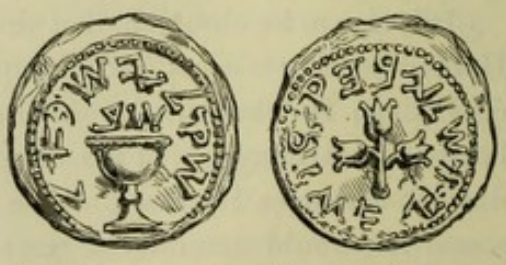
* The vowel-points and accents of modern Hebrew, to supply the absence of vowels in the alphabet, are of comparatively modern introduction.

rally suggest the syllable *tos*, though only written TS; while ST would, on the same principle, suggest *set*, &c. &c. That such was the manner in which the system of the vowel-carrying consonants of the Hebrew and Phœnician alphabets arose may be rendered clear from a single example: The kaph or K, corresponding to the Greek kappa, was founded upon the name of the palm of the hand (Kaph), represented by a character which indicated the initial sound of that name, *ka;* while the koph, though expressing the same consonant, is a different sign, and has a different attached vowel-sound, *o*, being evidently a sign founded upon an object the initial sound of which was *ko*. The koph of the Phœnician and Hebrew alphabets formed part of the early Greek alphabet, but was only originally used by them when the sound of *k* was followed by the vowel *o*, as in Korinth, on the ancient coins of which city the koph is found, as the initial letter of the name of the city, according to the custom of the early coinages of all the Greek states. When, however, a purely *literal* system was better understood by the Greeks, and it was found that their kappa could be made to represent either the sound *ka* or *ko* by the relative addition of *o* or *a*, the koph was discarded as superfluous.

The Hebrew system of attached vowels, which was clearly intelligible so long as the derivation of the signs was felt, became afterwards obscure, and certain accents, &c. were required to indicate the vowel-sounds intended. In the Phœnician system, this absence of distinct vowels forms one of the great difficulties of interpretation.

The first alphabet of the Hebrews, now known as the Samaritan, was abandoned by the ten tribes after the captivity in Babylon, in favour of a modification of it closely resembling the Chaldæan; their new form of writing then adopted being, probably, an adaptation of a cursive form of the cuneatic writing of Assyria and Babylonia. The other two tribes, however, maintained the ancient alphabet unchanged even to modern times, for in the eleventh century the Hebrew Pentateuch,* from which my specimen is taken, was written in ancient Samaritan characters; and it is even considered by Gesenius and other *savants*, that the books of Moses may have been originally written in that character, or perhaps an earlier and more cumbrous form of it.

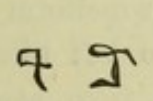
Although the ten tribes abandoned the ancient alphabet after their captivity for all ordinary purposes, they still used it for state inscriptions and other monumental purposes, and especially for the public coinage, of which the existing shekels of silver issued by the Maccabees and their successors are among the most interesting specimens preserved in numismatic cabinets. The most usual inscriptions on these coins may be translated: on one side, "Shekel of Israel," and on the other, "Jerusalem the holy," the types or figures being



* The Pentateuch is the only portion of the Bible acknowledged by the Samaritans.

the flowering rod of Aaron and the cup of manna. After the return from captivity the alphabet of the Hebrew people had become, as I have said, greatly influenced by the system of *cuneiform* writing of Babylon and Assyria, the study of which the recent discoveries by Botta and Layard, and the progress made in deciphering it by Grotefend, Burnouf, Rawlinson, and Hinks, have rendered almost a popular subject.

EXAMPLES SHEWING THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF THE CUNEATIC SYSTEM ON THE SAMARITAN OR ANCIENT HEBREW ALPHABET.



Daleth in the Samaritan and ancient Hebrew.

Daleth after the captivity in Babylon, from a Ms.

Daleth as it might be written in pure cuneiform.

Daleth in Persian cuneatic.

On examination of the second Hebrew alphabet, in Plate V., it will be found that nearly all the characters are formed of one leading element—a straight line, thick and blunt at one end, and sharp at the other, in short, the wedge-like or arrow-headed element of the writing of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia;* upon which Champollion Figeac strikingly remarks, that "the later Hebrew alphabet is a cuneiform alphabet in the second generation."

But, notwithstanding this acute observation of the French savant, it appears to me that the difference between the Hebrew and cuneiform characters may be explained, while still leaving the two manners contemporary; for the cuneiform, as we most commonly know it in great monumental inscriptions, consists of formal and elaborate engravings on stone, in which substance the execution of rounded or complicated forms would be much more laborious and difficult than the cutting of straight wedge-like incisions; while it is known, from a few recently discovered examples, that a kind of cursive or more rapidly executed cuneatic writing was in use at the same period, which was, no doubt, the model upon which the modifications of the Hebrew alphabet were formed, and upon which also the Arian and Parthian alphabets were probably founded, though thought by some to be derived from the reformed Hebrew.

It is possible, also, that the cursive and irregular form of the Assyrian characters may be more ancient than the well-defined cuneatic; for the monumental inscriptions cut on stone are so copious and so numerous, that it is easily conceivable that some method of abridging the labour may have been sought, which eventually resulted in the reduction of all the irregularities and curves to a combination representing all their leading characteristics by means of straight lines placed at different angles, which would be most easily

* The Hebrew square character, thought to have furnished the model of the Arian and Parthian alphabets.

carved thick at the end where the chisel first entered,* and thin at the termination of the line,—thus giving the wedge-like form.

At the same time it may be supposed, that, in writing on papyrus, or cloth, or any other substance of that kind, the more irregular forms of the original alphabet would be preserved, and that the cursive manner, probably still preserved in the Chaldean, was really the *cursive cuneiform*, or rather cursive Assyrian, which the Hebrews naturally adopted; and its resemblance to their own ancient alphabet would go to prove, as I have previously suggested, an Egyptian origin for the Assyrian characters, as well as those of the Phœnicians and Hebrews. The direction of the cuneiform character, however, from left to right, instead of from right to left like the Hebrew, would seem to support the view of its derivation from another source.

Before finally quitting the subject of Hebrew writing, it will not be irrelevant to allude in a few words to the rock inscriptions of Mount Sinai, which in general character very closely resemble the Egyptian enchorial writing. These curious records have been assigned by different archæologists to widely different epochs; but a recent author has attempted to shew that they are the written memorials of the Israelites, inscribed during their sojourn in the wilderness. The site is certainly that alluded to in the Exodus; and Mr. Forster has brought forward many interesting arguments to make good his position. His views have not been favourably received by the scientific world; but should they, nevertheless, prove to a certain extent correct, it will appear that the ancient form of the Hebrew alphabet was immediately derived from the enchorial or demotic Egyptian, especially as it is attempted to shew that several of the characters are almost identical with those of the subsequent Hebrew alphabet. This view must, however, remain at present nothing more than an interesting conjecture, which a further accumulation of evidence will either confirm or destroy.

* See chapter on cuneiform writing, for more detail on this subject.

CHAPTER IX.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREEK ALPHABET.

WE have seen how the Phœnician and Hebrew characters were derived from the Egyptian, or from some similar source, which, like it, had developed a system of hieroglyphic writing to the highest extent of which it was capable, without abandoning entirely the iconographic or pictorial character.

The Hebrews and Phœnicians, in taking their system of writing from the Egyptians, or, as I have said, from some system of pictorial writing in a similar period of development, have, it has been shewn, entirely abandoned all the imitative and symbolic portions of the system, and adopted only the phonetic or sound-expressing portion; certain hieroglyphics being thus made to form a set of arbitrary characters partly *syllabic* and partly *literal*, by which their new possessors were enabled to effect the exact notation of every sound in their respective languages. These characters may be considered syllabic when a consonant carries a particular vowel-sound with it, as in the cases of the Hebrew koph and kaph, the sound of *k* being in the former followed by the vowel *o* without its being written, and in the latter by *a*. To systems of letters still encumbered by machinery of this kind, we cannot with propriety apply the term alphabet, in its present acceptation, which means strictly a certain number of separate characters or letters, among which vowel-sounds are all separately and distinctly represented by vowel-characters, and dominant sounds by distinct and separate dominant characters termed consonants; every consonant being capable of combination with every vowel, either before it or after it, and imparting to it another value, either by its own power alone, or in conjunction with other consonants. In short, an alphabetic system, strictly so called, is one in which no syllables exist ready-made, as it were, in the form of single characters or letters, but in which every syllabic sound of the language is capable of perfect notation by means of a combination of two or more distinct characters.

The term "alphabet" is, as every school-boy knows, derived from the names of the first two of the Greek letters, Alpha and Beta; and the honour of conferring the title upon such a perfect system of letters as the one described, is strictly due to the Greeks, who, as far as existing monuments shew, were the first finally to abandon the last remnants of a partially syllabic

arrangement still lingering in the Hebrew and Phœnician characters, and frame a distinctly *literal* system for the notation of their language. The Greeks, however, in this elimination of composite letters, though they abandoned those of a purely syllabic form, composed of combinations of consonants and vowels, yet retained composite consonants, as the psi (Ψ) PS, the theta (Θ) TH, &c.,—a complication which was finally abandoned in the later Roman alphabet, which forms, in fact, the next step of progress towards our own.

The alphabetic characters of the Greeks were, as we have every reason to believe, modifications of those of the Phœnicians, and were at first only sixteen in number.

Herodotus, the earliest of the Greek historians, clearly alludes to the Phœnician origin of the Greek characters in the following passage, in which, speaking of that people, he says, "they brought fresh knowledge into Greece; and, among other things, *letters*, which were not in use before." He further tells us, that the Greeks much admired the art of writing as practised by the Phœnicians, and "eventually modifying the form of their letters, employed them for writing their own language."

Pliny also mentions the tradition, that Cadmus brought letters from Phœnicia to Greece, and that they were originally sixteen in number; to which Palamedes, about twenty years after the taking of Troy, is supposed to have added the four double letters, Θ, Ξ, Φ, and X, representing TH, XH, PH, and CH, called theta, xi or xsi, phi, and chi. To these twenty letters Simonides is stated to have made the further addition of Ξ, *H*, Ψ, Ω (Z, EE, PS, OO), called zeta, eta, psi, and omega; before the adoption of which, two omicrons (OO) were used instead of Ω, and two epsilons for eta, *H*.

The Ionian Greeks took their letters from the same source; and Dionysius of Miletus tells us, that the poet Linus was the first to make use of the letters which Cadmus brought from Phœnicia. From the manner in which these and other facts are stated by ancient authors, it has been inferred by some that the Greeks possessed an imperfect alphabet previous to the introduction of the Phœnician elements by Cadmus, and that the original alphabet was Pelasgic,—a fact more than once alluded to by the Greeks themselves; for we are informed by Greek writers that Linus, who was the first to use the letters of Cadmus, had already written a history of Bacchus in Pelasgic letters; and Orpheus is also said to have written poems in the Pelasgic character. But this does not alter or change the evidence in favour of a Phœnician origin for the Greek alphabet; for the earliest examples of the characters of the Etrurian, Oscan, Samnite, and other Italiot states, which may certainly be considered branches of the Pelasgic system, were clearly, by their close resemblance, derived from the letters of Phœnicia; and the Greeks, another branch of the Pelasgic race, undoubtedly derived their first alphabet from the same source; which first alphabet, after the new form introduced by Cadmus, was probably termed Pelasgic, as closely resembling those of other Pelasgic tribes, especially

those of Italy, if not identical with them. It was only when the ancient alphabet of the Greeks had been finally incorporated with the more recently adopted letters of Cadmus, that it became distinctively known as the Grecian alphabet. The sixteen letters of which the original Pelasgic alphabet was composed are generally considered to be—

Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ι Κ Λ Μ Ν Ο Π Ρ Σ Τ Υ
A B G D E I K L M N O P R S T and U or Y.

These, as well as the new letters, are all of them found in the Samaritan or Phœnician alphabets. The first additions were the

Θ Ξ Φ and *Χ*
Th Xsi Ph Chi.

These last letters agree with certain sounds found in all the Oriental dialects in which they are used; and it was probably for the purpose of expressing Phœnician words adopted by the Greeks that the new letters were introduced. Whether these four letters constitute the reformation by Cadmus, leaving to Palamedes only the honour of being the first to use them, is a question which we have not at present the means of solving. Homer, or the earliest transcribers of his poems, only used the *twenty letters* just named; and it is evidently a thought of his critics, and not his own, that his poem is divided into *twenty-four books*, to celebrate the twenty-four letters of the new Greek alphabet, since he only knew twenty.

The next and last four letters adopted were, it is said, not added till after the time of Thucydides, who, like Homer, though more than four centuries later, only used the previous twenty. The last four new letters, *Ζ, Η, Ω, Ψ*, were only modifications of some of the primitive characters; thus *Η*, as I have stated, was used as an abbreviation of *ΕΕ*, *Ω* for *ΟΟ*, *Ψ* for *ΠΣ*, and *Ξ* for *ΚΣ*. It may be stated here, that they sometimes used the *Η*, or long *e*, as an aspirate, writing *ἑκατον HEKATON;* and that, in the Æolian dialect, the character conveying the sound of V or W was used instead of the aspirate, which character, from its formation resembling two gammas placed one over the other, ⍹, was called the digamma or double gamma. It was used in the word *ἑσπερα*, as *Ϝεσπερα*, and instead of *ωον* the Æolian wrote *ωϜον*; from which the Latin, in many respects nearly allied to the Æolian dialect, has *vespera* and *ovum*.

Such is the order of the formation of the Greek alphabet, as described by the learned Benedictines and more recent philologists,—a description, in the main, sufficiently accurate for all general purposes; nevertheless, authorities exist to prove many deviations from this order of progress; and also the existence of other facts not yet discussed and arranged by the learned. Of these I will only mention two examples: first, the early use by the Greeks and other Pelasgian tribes of the ק or koph of the Hebrews and Phœnicians; the

last-named character being found on the early coins of Corinth,—more properly Korinth,—on early coins of Syracuse, and on some of those of the earliest Italo-Greek cities of the south of Italy. It was used only when the following vowel was *o*, as the kappa, derived from the Phœnician kaph, was used before the vowel *a*; in which cases, however, the vowel was added by the Greeks as a separate character, and not carried by the dominant, as in the Phœnician and Hebrew kaph. When it was eventually found by the Greeks that the kappa followed by *o* fulfilled precisely the same functions as the koph, the latter was abandoned, sharing the fate, no doubt, of other similar characters of oriental origin, of which Grecian adaptations have not yet been noticed. Secondly, I may mention here that the omega (Ω) was used at a much earlier period than the one generally stated, as proved by the inscription of the curious coin of Getas, king of the Edoneans, in the British Museum. But such niceties of date, &c. &c., are of little consequence, as they do not disturb the general soundness of the previous position; and the question of whether Thucydides himself used the four last letters, which certainly appear in all the Mss. of his works that have reached us, or whether they were added in subsequent copies by scribes or critics of the age of Alexander, as the legitimate mode of writing Greek in that day, is very unimportant to the question before us—that of a general outline of the progress of the art of writing.

The *names* of the Greek letters, which tend so much to prove the derivation of the characters themselves from the alphabet of the Phœnicians, have been thought by some to be of comparatively modern origin; but many circumstances may be adduced to prove their antiquity. Among these, not the least interesting is the curious work of the poet Callias, termed the "Tragedy of Letters," in which he introduced a chorus of women spelling to music, and singing *beta-alpha* BA, *beta-epsilon* BE, *beta-omega* Bō, &c. If this curious evidence of the antiquity of the names of the Greek letters were insufficient, their affinity to those of the Hebrew and Samaritan alphabets, and probably the Phœnician, which is so closely allied to them, must be at once conclusive, and at the same time prove their direct descent, through the middle state of the Phœnician letters, from an original pictorial form,—the common source of all systems of letters. The following comparative examples of a portion of the Greek and Hebrew names will be a sufficient example:

	Greek names.	Hebrew names.
A	Alpha	Aleph
B	Beta	Beth
G	Gamma	Ghimel
D	Delta	Daleth
Z	Zeta	Zain
M	Mu	Mem
N	Nu	Noun
K	Kappa	Kaph
Ph	Phi	Phe

The Hebrew names being evidently, as more fully explained in the chapter on Hebrew writing, those of the objects of which the letters were originally pictorial representations.

The system of numerals in all primitive modes of writing is highly characteristic of the general principles upon which the art of notation of language has invariably been founded, forming, as it does, an essential branch of every system of writing. The earliest set of Greek numerals exhibit evidently the original derivation of the Greek alphabet from a system in that secondary stage, when the *sound* of a spoken word began to be represented by means of characters which had formerly been the mere pictures of objects,—a transition which has been described in the chapter on Egyptian writing, as occurring in the following manner; the name of the human hand, for example, being *Tot*, the hieroglyphic character representing the hand was eventually used to represent the sound of T, the dominant one of the word *Tot*. In a somewhat similar manner the first mode of numeration was adopted by the Greeks. For the word *one* was in old Greek ἴος; and when an abbreviation of the *written* name into the form of a numeral was required, something like the old Egyptian system of progression recommenced, the initial letter of ἴος, *I*, being taken to represent the numeral 1. Other numerals were similarly derived; as the first letter of *Πεντε*, *Π* was taken to express 5, and *Δ*, the first letter of *Δεκα* (*ten*), to express 10; *Ηεκατον* (*a hundred*) lent its first letter, *H*, to stand for 100; *Χιλια* (*one thousand*) furnished its *X* to express 1000; and *Μυρια* (*ten thousand*) its *M* to express that number. Analogous derivations may be traced likewise in the Roman numerals.* The Greek numbers just described were afterwards abandoned for a new series, founded on the settled succession of the alphabetic characters, *A* signifying *one*, *B two*, and so on, in the manner used to express the dates found on the Greek coins of Egypt, &c. But it was not till about the time of Alexander, in the fourth century, or end of the third century B.C., that the latter reformation was effected, all inscriptions of earlier date being expressed by a system founded on the initials of the words by which they were known.

In the elder system, to the initial of the name of one a single stroke was added for *II.*, a second for *III.*, and so on to *IIII.*, when another initial letter was taken; for 5, *Π.*; to this a single stroke was added for 6, *ΠI.*, two strokes for 7, *ΠII.*, and so on to ten, when the initial letter of the name was

* The Arabic numerals, which are now commonly used, as more convenient than the Roman, may have a similar origin—in the initials of words in the oriental alphabet signifying the respective numbers—but are more probably modifications of the ancient Egyptian numerals engraved in Plate III., and described in the chapter referring to Egyptian writing in general, to which they bear a strong general resemblance. The Egyptians had also a distinct method of numeration, founded on initial letters of the names of the numbers, like the Greeks, and from this branch of the Egyptian system the Greeks probably derived that method.

again taken, to which the addition of a single stroke made 11, and so on to 14; 15 being formed by adding the initial of 5 to the initial of 10, as ΠΔ. Two initials of 10 made 20, ΔΔ, three 30, four 40; the initial of 5, Π, when enclosing a Δ, is multiplied by 5—as [Π], for 50, to which the initial of 10 was added for 60—as [ΠΔ], &c. &c. In the alphabetic system, in which α stood for 1, ι for 10, ρ for 100, the number 100 was written ρι, &c.

Though many evidences have been already adduced in favour of the Oriental origin of the characters of the Greek alphabet, none are stronger than the fact, that in the earliest known inscriptions, the Greek writing reads from right to left, like the Hebrew, Phœnician, and Egyptian. But this mode of writing was not permanent; and, indeed, the *direction* of the writing appears to have been at first undetermined; though mostly from right to left, as I have stated. Before it became settled in its final direction, that from left to right, very curious examples of a transition-stage are found, especially on coins, the inscriptions on which run alternately from right to left, and from left to right; a mode which has been termed *boustrophedon*, because it runs as an ox ploughs a field, *up* one furrow and *down* another.

The final settlement of the Greek method of writing, in horizontal lines to be read from left to right, was an event by which the direction of the writing of all modern Europe has been governed; though perhaps its adoption by the Greeks was, at last, the result of accident or caprice; one or other of which have, in fact, governed the establishment of the forms of many of our most important moral and social regulations. The Greek system of writing, when once thoroughly emancipated from the trammels of its Eastern vassalage, may be described as the European style, to distinguish it from all Oriental systems; for it is, in fact, itself the immediate parent, in conjunction with the allied Pelasgic alphabet, as modified by the Romans, of all the existing systems of writing in Europe. I have not yet alluded to the antiquity of Greek writing; indeed, the period at which that art became known in Greece is one of the disputed points among archæologists; some asserting that it was unknown in the time of Homer, that is, about the eighth century before the Christian era; and that his poems were recited, like the bardic songs of the North, and preserved by oral tradition; but the passage in which that poet describes Bellerophon carrying certain tablets to the King of Lycia, on which were inscribed signs intimating that the warrior was to be put to death, appears a sufficient answer to those who assert that writing was unknown to the Greeks in the time of Homer. Besides which, Greek inscriptions on coins exist of the seventh, or perhaps eighth century B.C. So that we must apparently allow the Greek alphabet, in its earliest form, an antiquity of at least nine or ten centuries prior to the Christian era; and if, as stated, it was in existence prior to the Trojan war, twelve or thirteen.

The preservation of the Greek characters in nearly their original forms to our own time, is a curious example of the escape of certain monuments

from what appeared inevitable destruction, through means the most apparently unlikely. The subjection to the foreign yoke of Rome—a nation speaking a different language, and using a different set of characters for its notation—was an event, without which the barbarian incursions of the Gauls, the Goths, and other illiterate tribes, followed by the irresistible tide of conquest of the Moslem, would certainly have obliterated this beautiful trace of antique elegance and literature. But the eastern empire of Rome, which included Greece, surviving that of the west, and Christianity being firmly established previous to the disruption of the two empires, Constantinople became the chief seat of the eastern branch of the Christian Church, and was thus the means of preserving the language and letters of Greece. It was from this new centre of empire, Christian Constantinople, that an alphabet was given back to Egypt, the original parent of that of Greece; the ancient hieroglyphics being abolished by the Christian hierarchs, as a stronghold of paganism, and replaced by the Grecian alphabet, with the addition of a few signs from the ancient system.

The Greek alphabet was, through the same or similar means, given from the same quarter to the newly-converted Sclavonian races, among whom it travelled through Wallachia and Bulgaria to Muscovy, and from Moscow to St. Petersburg; where Greek letters, with some modification, are still the characters in which the Ukases of the present Czar are at this day issued to the people of an empire extending over a large portion of the habitable globe.

Thus the Christian power, while it extinguished the antique writing of the Egyptians in the East, and with similar views destroyed the records, and abolished the study of the ancient Etruscan writing in the West,* was the means of preserving the letters and literature of Greece, notwithstanding all their polytheistic associations.

But we must retrace our steps, and consider the epoch of the first establishment of the Greek alphabet. At this stage of the progress of the art of writing, when the immediate parent of European letters, the alphabet of Greece, was finally completed, much might be said respecting the further progress of the Oriental systems, and their various ramifications; but my object has been merely to trace the progress of the Oriental methods so far as the point at which their great European offshoot was fairly launched on an independent course; and therefore, having traced the birth and parentage of Greek letters among those of the East, and their early affinities with them, I must finally dismiss the Oriental portion of this subject. But one peculiar anomaly, in the midst of a series of progressing systems, I must not omit

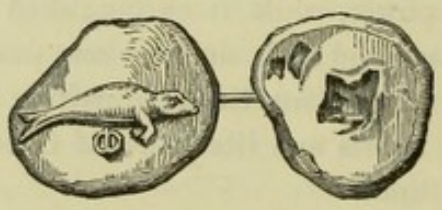
* The ancient Etruscan records were deposited in the college of Augurs at Rome, where the ancient language was preserved, and they still existed in the time of Julian, who made use of them in his attempt to re-establish paganism; but they were soon afterwards destroyed through the influence of Christian ecclesiastics, who dreaded lest they should be used again, as they had been by the apostate emperor, to re-establish the ancient and still-venerated forms of the antique faith of Italy.

to mention. I allude to the set of arbitrary alphabetic signs said to have been invented by Pharnabaces, in the third century before the Christian era, for the purpose of writing the Armenian language, and to supersede the cuneiform characters which were introduced there by Semiramis at the period of the Assyrian conquest; the progress of whose triumphant course is still marked by the numerous rock inscriptions in the neighbourhood of Lake Van, and about the ruins said to be those of the palace of Semiramis.

As arbitrary and conventional alphabets could only be suggested to the inventive faculties of man after the true problem of letters had been worked out by such successive steps and stages as I have attempted to describe, such efforts form no real link in the history of the development of the art of writing, and can therefore receive but a passing notice in this work.

Having given a brief general sketch of all that is known respecting the manner of the establishment of the Greek alphabet, and the probable epoch of its earliest use, it will be interesting to examine a series of monuments in which its progress is displayed, arranged in chronological succession.

The earliest existing specimens of Greek characters are those found upon ancient money. Some of the earliest coins known* are the gold staters of the Phoceans, which bear the initial letter of the name of the city, ϕ, in form very like the modern character, though probably belonging to the seventh, or even eighth century before the Christian era.

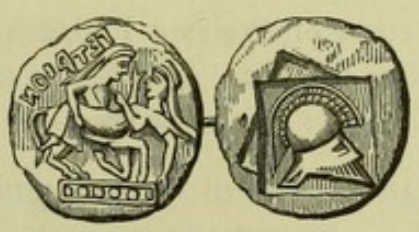


Gold Coin of Phocea.

The earliest specimens of coinage in European Greece are the didrachms of Ægina, and the silver money of Thebes in Bœotia, both belonging probably to the seventh century before the vulgar era. On the latter, the earliest pieces have the initial character of the name of the city, the *theta* (th), formed by two short parallel horizontal lines, with a dot between them, somewhat resembling the modern xi (Ξ). The next series have the character formed like a hollow square, with a dot in the middle; and at last, the perfect character, the circle with the short internal bar or dot appears. On the earliest coins of

* The gold *coinage* of Lydia, according to Herodotus, was the first ever issued; but if so, the invention was soon copied by the Greek colonies of Asia Minor, and some of their coins appear as old as those attributed to Lydia. It must be clearly understood, that *coined* money, or single pieces, each adjusted to a certain weight, and stamped with a public seal to guarantee such weight, are the pieces of money here alluded to, and not the pieces of silver or gold long previously in use, which were always weighed *en masse;* any number of pieces, more or less, forming the *talent*, the *shekel*, or *minah*, according to their *aggregate*, instead of their individual weight.

Corinth the Phœnician *koph* is used as the initial letter of the name instead of kappa, being in form, a circle with a short depending line from the lower part of the figure. (See Plate V., Ancient Greek.) On the coins of Lete, possibly of the end of the seventh or beginning of the sixth century B.C., the name of the Letean people occurs in full, written from right to left, in characters strongly resembling in general appearance the Phœnician, and almost identical with the Pelasgian or Italiot alphabets of the Etrurians, Oscans, &c. It is probably an actual example of the Pelasgic manner of writing, alluded to by many authors as having been superseded by the letters introduced by Cadmus, whose reformation of the alphabet may possibly have consisted in nothing more than greatly improving and defining the existing forms, and giving them more distinctness and regularity. The resemblance of the Letean inscriptions to the Pelasgic alphabets of Italy may be tested by comparing one of the most ancient coins of that state with the series of Phœnician and Oscan alphabets, &c. in Plate V.



Silver Coin of Lete.

The remark of Pliny, "that the Greek alphabet was originally the same as the Roman," has been thought by some critics to be a modern misreading of his text, and that he meant to state that the Roman was originally the same as the Greek. But he evidently meant that the Greek was formerly the same as the Pelasgian, of which the Roman was only a modification in form; and in this view he is borne out by the most recent modern researches, among which are many illustrations of Pliny's statement, that the Greek letters were originally like the Roman; not the least remarkable of which is the discovery of ancient Greek inscriptions in which the Greek rho (P) is written with a short tail (P), closely approaching the Roman R in character.

Of the fourth, third, and second centuries B.C. many Greek records in marble exist; such monumental inscriptions being the mode of public advertisement in state matters before printing and journalism were invented. We have seen that the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Persians practised this mode of advertising state matters before the Greeks; though, no doubt, the Greeks themselves may have produced monuments of this kind at a period long anterior to the date of any such monuments now in existence. Among the most interesting remnants of Grecian art of this class are the marble tablets known as the "Parian Chronicle," now preserved among the Arundelean marbles at Oxford. The inscriptions are Athenian, and of the second or third century before Christ; they are in the form of a brief record of the public acts of the city, and other important events of Greece generally, from a very early epoch

to that mentioned above as apparently the date of the inscriptions themselves. The letters in this series of records are of the usual kind of the later Greek inscriptions, having lost nearly all the primeval archaic character.

But it is rather with *written* than *engraved* writing that I profess to have to do; and I will therefore hasten to the earliest specimens of Greek writing on *papyrus*, the predecessor both in name and character of our modern paper; which is a similar vegetable fabric, and though not made from the sedges of the Nile, is yet, as is well known, the product of a vegetable substance (flax) after it has already served another purpose.

The long occupation of Egypt by the Greeks, consequent upon the conquests of Alexander, has been the means of preserving to us Greek manuscripts written in that region of an earlier period than any yet known of Greece, Italy, or Asia Minor.

The specimen, No. 1, Plate VI., is from a letter addressed by a public functionary named Dioscorides to a subordinate named Dorion, and regards the disembarkation of passengers from the Nile. M. Champollion considers that it belongs to the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, who occupied the throne of Egypt from 285 to 247 B.C. The sigmas and epsilons of this document are of the semilunar form: it is to be read—

ΔΙΟCΚΟΥΡΙΔΗC ΔΩΡΙΩΝΙ ΚΑΙΡΕΙΝ· ΤΗC ΠΡΟC ΔΩΡΙΩ ΕΠΙCΤΟΛΗC ΤΟ ΑΝΤΙΓΡΑΦΟΝ
ΥΠΟΚΕΤΑΙ . . . . ΕΡΡΩCΟ LΚC ΞΑΝΔΙΚΥ $\bar{\Delta}$ ΘΩΥΘ $\overline{\text{ΚΕ}}$.

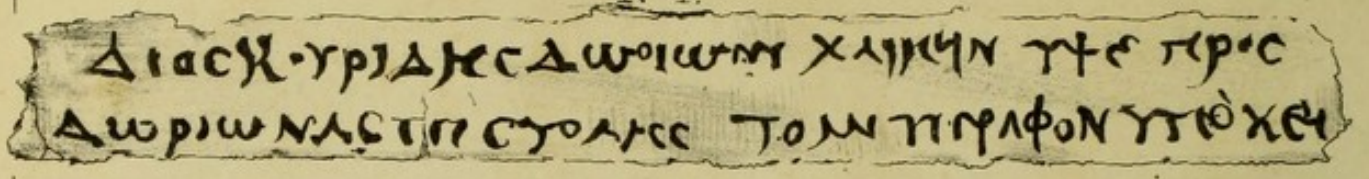
Which may be translated, "Dioscorides to Dorion, saluting. Of the letter addressed to Dorion the copy here follows (follows the order to conform to its contents). Farewell; the year 26, the 4th of the month *Xandic*, (which is) the 25th of *Thoth*." It will be seen that the Macedonian month, as well as the Egyptian, is here given. The year 26 refers to the twenty-sixth year of the reign, like the dates on the Ptolemaic series of coins.

Papyri of this description are generally found in the catacombs sealed up in earthen vessels; an ancient custom, referred to in the Hebrew Scriptures; as when Jeremiah purchasing a field, after having written the contract, sealed it up in an earthen vessel, &c. Origen describes two Greek versions of the Bible which he discovered, preserved in a similar manner.

After what has been said of the earliest Greek inscriptions in marble and metal, and the first example of writing on papyrus, it may be well to state, that the remains of ancient Greek writing are generally divided into three classes: the first embraces inscriptions on marble or stone, and those on metal (which are nearly always in square capitals), that is, with few curves; in inscriptions on coins the letters are of a similar character to those of stone inscriptions, that is, nearly always square capitals. The second class, which belongs to the earliest Mss., contains that class of writing termed *uncial*, which is composed partly of capitals and partly of rounded letters, the earliest specimens of which are found on the papyri occasionally discovered in Egypt. The third class is formed of writing entirely composed of the *lower-*

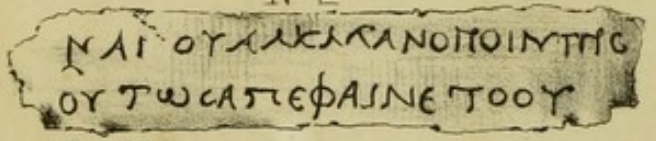
GREEK WRITING.
(Earliest Examples.)

Nº1.



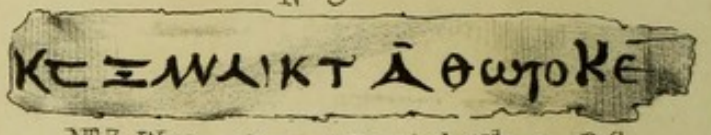
Nº1 Written on Papyrus in Egypt 260. B.C

Nº 2



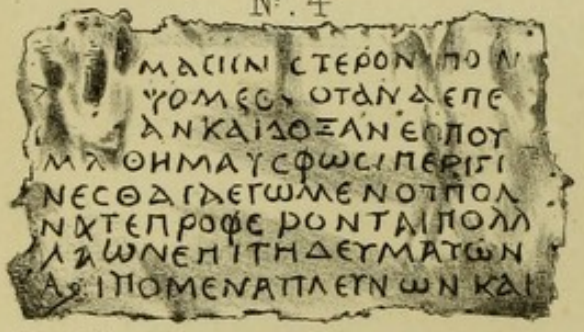
Nº2. Written on Papyrus in Egypt in the 3rd century B.C.

Nº 3



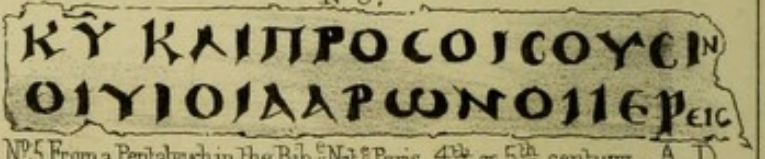
Nº3. Written on Papyrus in Egypt in the 3rd century B.C

Nº. 4



Nº4. From a Greek M.S. buried at Herculaneum in the year 29. B.C.

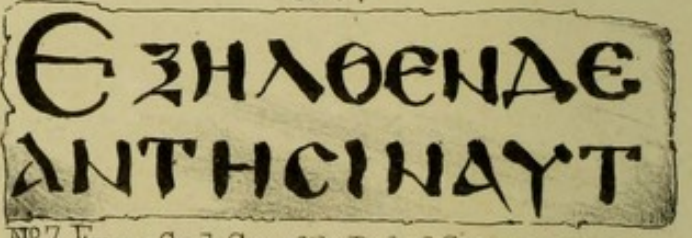
Nº 5.



Nº5 From a Pentateuch in the Bib.e Nat.le Paris, 4th or 5th century. A.D

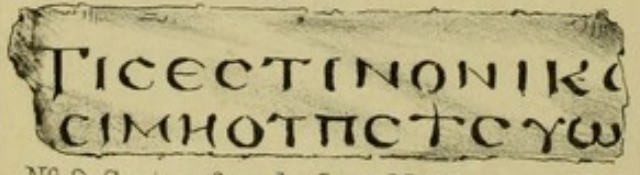
Nº6 From a Greek Copy of the Book of Genesis written between 185 & 255 A.D.

Nº 7.



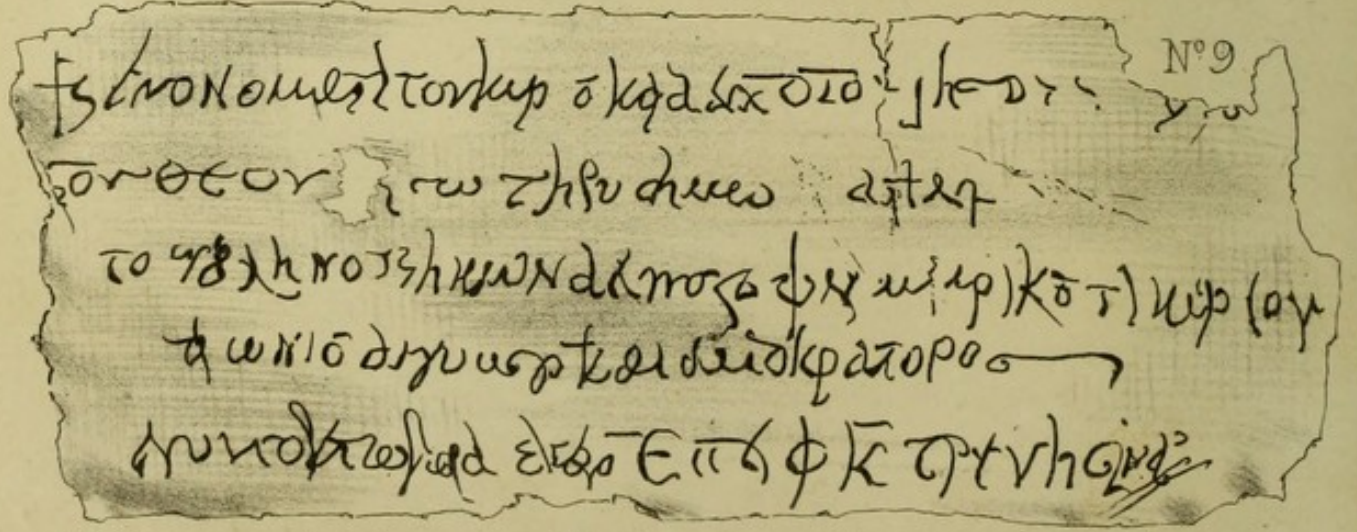
Nº7. From a Greek Copy of the Book of Genesis written in Gold on purple vellum, 4th century, A.D

Nº 8



Nº 8. Specimen from the Greek M.S. known as the Codex Alexandrinus (4th century) A.D

Nº 9



Nº9. (cursive Greek writing) from an Edict of the Eastern Emperor Maurice, issued in the VIIth Century A.D

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casc characters, as we should term them, as distinct from capitals or uncials, being entirely composed of letters of a cursive character, the forms of which were gradually developed as a more rapid mode of writing was acquired. This class, it is easy to conceive, is of later date than the two others, the uncial forming, in fact, the link between the formal and carefully engraved letters of stone or metal inscriptions, and the flowing character gradually acquired, as writing on portable materials, such as papyrus and parchment, became general.

The monuments of Greek writing with the pen or *calamus* previous to the Christian era are of modern discovery, and are the result almost exclusively of the recent researches in Egypt; Montfaucon, when he wrote his *Palæographia Græca*, being unacquainted with any Greek Ms. earlier than the fourth century of our era. The earliest examples of public acts and private contracts are, although strictly speaking, of the *uncial* character, much more cursive in their style than the regular manuscripts of esteemed works, written by professed scribes, as may be seen by comparison of the first specimen with No. 2, Plate VII., two lines from a carefully written treatise on rhetoric, executed in Alexandria during the early and greatest period of Ptolemaic domination, when the "Musæum" and the schools of that city were in all their glory. The last named is of about the same period (the middle of the third century B.C.) as the former specimen, but probably rather earlier. The characters in some fragments of Homer, of a somewhat later period, are said to mark the advance towards the earliest uncial characters of the set form, that are known.

My next example (No. 3, Plate VI.), from MM. Champollion and Sylvestre's work, does not, however, exhibit so near an approach to the true and set uncial manner as even the former specimens. It is from a petition of the nineteenth year of the reign of Ptolemy Philometor, the year 164 B.C., in which the king and his queen, Cleopatra, are addressed on behalf of two twin sisters attached to the duties of the temple of Serapis, on the part of their guardian. The letters in this monument of calligraphy (No. 3, Plate VI.) are much worse formed than in the two previous specimens, and more confused,—the *M*, *Π*, *H*, being nearly indistinguishable, and the whole approaching rather the confirmed cursive manner in appearance, though still belonging strictly to the *uncial* class, the rounded characters being intermixed with the square capitals.

When we arrive at the last century previous to the Christian era, we find examples of early Greek Mss. elsewhere than in Egypt; and from a singular source, that of the buried city of Herculaneum, in Italy, partially destroyed about seventy-nine years before the Christian era, and injured by subsequent eruptions, till totally destroyed by the most violent eruption of Vesuvius on record, that of the year 471 A.D.

The Mss. recently discovered were buried in a portion of the city destroyed in the first eruption. These interesting monuments are in a degree

calcined by the burning lava, but have been partially unrolled by the patient perseverance of the Father Antonio Piaggi, and his assistants. They were discovered in an excavated villa without the city, supposed to have belonged to the Pison family, and were contained within a wooden cabinet, carbonised like themselves, but still exhibiting traces of ornamental inlaying, similar to the marqueterie of modern times. The specimen (No. 4, Plate VII.) is from one of these Mss., and is part of a treatise on music by Philodemus, a contemporary of Cicero, who has sketched his character. Philodemus does not so much, as far as can be judged from the fragments preserved, attempt to develop the science of music, as understood in his time, as to advocate its utility and influence on civilisation, in which argument he opposes the Stoic philosopher Diogenes.

All the rolls of ancient Greek Mss. discovered at Herculaneum are, as stated, completely carbonised, and of a nearly black colour, the letters appearing white, or rather of a light gray colour, upon the dark ground. The passage in our example reads, in modern Greek characters, as follows, beginning at the middle of the second line, where the fragment given begins to be clearly legible. The engraver of our Plate has made an error at the end of the fourth line, which will be easily corrected by the reader.

Greek.	Translation.
Οταν δε περι-	But since they say that
ουσιαν και δοξαν εκ του	riches and glory proceed
μαθηματος φωσι περι-	from this study, we may
γινεσθαι, λεγωμεν οτι	answer, that ~~this is a thing~~ these things are
ταυτα προφερονται πολ-	obtained by hard study, have neglected
λων επιτηδευματων, και	~~in which many are defec-~~ by many.
λειπομενα πλειονων.	tive.

M. Champollion gives a specimen of Greek writing of the age of the Antonines, the second century of our era, which does not differ materially, except as marking another step of decadence, from our specimen 3 of Plate VI.; the Greek character having now degenerated still further, and many letters being scarcely distinguishable from each other. It is, however, *uncial* in character, being formed of square capitals, intermixed with rounded letters; but its general appearance is such that it is technically termed *cursive*. This inscription is curious on other grounds than its calligraphy, as being a *nativity* cast by an astrologer of Alexandria, or some other town of lower Egypt, for a person named Anoubion, son of Psanavot, in the first year of the reign of Antoninus Cæsar, and the 18th of the Egyptian month *Tybi*, corresponding to the beginning of December 137 A.D. That the custom of casting nativities was, in a civilised age, practised in one of the most celebrated seats of learning, the city of Alexandria, is sufficiently curious, especially when it is considered that the great astronomer Ptolemy also dabbled in astrology; but it recalls to mind the still more singular fact, that the received historical date of Rome, 753 B.C., rests upon no better foundation than a *nativity* cast by the astrologer Tarrutius, at the desire of the learned Varro, and adopted by the stern

Cato without hesitation; so strongly had the Greeks, and, through them, the Romans, inherited the superstitions along with the arts of the East.

The earliest Christian manuscripts known are in the Greek character, and are mostly written in a confirmed *uncial* manner. The first indications of a set uncial style occur as early as the third century B.C.; but the subsequent steps of advance are lost, and it is not till above six centuries later, in the fourth and fifth century A.D., that we meet with the next examples of that method; at which period we find it developed into a regular and set style, and executed in some manuscripts with beautiful regularity. A change also in the materials for writing now takes place; for whereas the specimens of Greek writing previous to the Christian era, and for some time later, are all written on papyrus, the earliest Christian Mss. of the fourth and fifth centuries are almost invariably on vellum, which was never afterwards discontinued till the invention of paper—and, indeed, remained in use till after the invention of printing in the fifteenth century. In the fourth century of our era, the earliest existing copies of the Bible occur, written in Greek *uncials;* the earliest known examples being the Ms. of the Vatican No. 625, the celebrated Alexandrian Codex of the British Museum, and the Pentateuch of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris—the latter being by far the most regularly written; and the beauty of its carefully formed characters is very remarkable for the epoch, which is probably about the beginning of the fifth century. It is written in two columns, two lines from one of which form the specimen (No. 5, Plate VI.). An examination of this example will shew that the Latin calligraphy of a somewhat later date was closely copied in style from the uncial Greek Mss. of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries; which, in fact, appears a natural consequence of the fall of the western or Latin capital of the Roman Empire, in 465 A.D.; after which, all the arts, immediately connected with Christianity, took their tone from Constantinople, which may be considered at that time more as the metropolis of the Greek Church than as the capital of the eastern empire.

An additional cause of the supremacy of Byzantine art at this period is found in the fact, that, for full half a century or more before the final crash of Rome, Italy had been so distracted and wasted by barbaric invasions, that art was but little cultivated, and all refinements were imported from the eastern capital, which had, as yet, remained free from similar spoliation. The eastern or Greek capital was indeed in all its splendour, and the rapid spread of Christianity, and daily increasing political importance of the Christian Church, caused splendidly written Greek copies of the Old and New Testaments to become daily more in demand. These were executed in great numbers, and with great calligraphic elaboration, by the professed scribes of Constantinople, whose gradually increasing importance had long before caused them to associate themselves into corporate bodies or companies, which were only finally broken up after the invention of printing.

But though ecclesiastical works were those which chiefly occupied the scribes of this epoch, copies of other works were executed occasionally with equal, if not superior care; of which the fragment of Dion Cassius in the Vatican, and the copy of the works of Dioscorides in the Vienna Library, are examples. The last-named Ms. was written and illuminated for the Princess Juliana Anicia, daughter of the Emperor Olybrius, which shews the date of the Ms. to be the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century. The portraits of the imperial family form the subject of an illuminated frontispiece to this superb volume, in which the embroidered robes, bordered with pearls, are executed with the greatest minuteness, and the general effect is rendered extremely rich by the glitter of a burnished gold background.

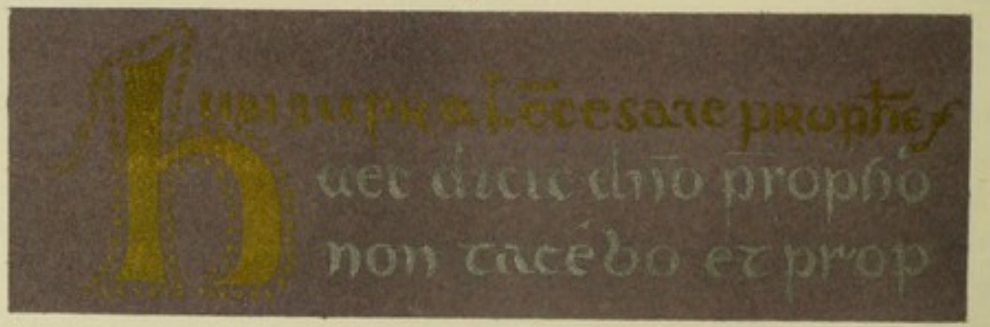
Among the earliest Christian Mss. still preserved, the celebrated one in the Cottonian Library may be cited. This rare monument was brought from Philippi by two Greek bishops, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and presented to Henry VIII. It was accompanied by a tradition, that it had belonged to Origen, who lived from 186 to 255 A.D.; and the style of the writing has induced many to believe that it does really belong to the early part of the third century, while others assert that it is not earlier than the fourth, or even fifth. A specimen is given in Plate VI. No. 6; the first line of which reads εξηλθεν δε, the second, τησιν, αυτ(ῳ). The celebrated copy of the book of Genesis, in the Imperial Library of Vienna, is another example of the earliest Greek manuscripts of a biblical character. It is a very splendid specimen of calligraphy, being written entirely in letters of gold and silver on purple vellum. The example, a portion of two lines, engraved in Plate VI. No. 7, will be sufficient to shew the formation of the characters, but not the glittering splendour of the Ms., the effect of which, however, may be understood by reference to Plate XIV*. The passage selected from the Vienna Ms. being the same as that of the Cottonian Ms., may be compared with it for the style of the letters. In speaking of Greek sacred Mss. of this early period, we must not omit to mention the celebrated Codex Alexandrinus, in the British Museum, of which a specimen will be found in the same Plate, No. 8. It is asserted that this fine Ms., which was sent by Cyril, Patriarch of Constantinople, to Charles I., was written in Alexandria, in the fourth century, by Thecla, a noble Egyptian lady. The first line of the specimen reads τις εστιν ὁ νικων, the second, ει μη ὁ πιστευων ὁ(τι). The somewhat more delicate and less massive style of this Ms. would appear to strengthen the traditional assertion of its being the work of a female hand.

One of the last examples of Greek writing of this epoch I can find space for, is a specimen of the luxurious manner of writing copies of the Gospels in letters of gold, sometimes upon purple vellum, which became much more prevalent from about the eighth to the tenth century. The earlier examples, however, are much finer, as may be seen from the next example on the same plate, which

1

2

3



4

5

H. N. Humphreys lith.

Day & Son, Lith.rs to The Queen

occurs on the same plate (Plate XIV*. No. 2) with later specimens. It is from a fragment of a copy of the Gospels, in the Cottonian Library, in the British Museum (numbered Titus 6, xv.). The letters are large silver uncials, with the names of the Deity, Christ, &c. &c., written in gold wherever they occur. The passage in the example stands *ΔΥΝΟΜΕΘΑΤΗ(Ν)*, &c. &c. This Ms. is one of the few existing which are really of *stained* purple vellum, and is probably of the fourth or fifth century, and very distinct in character from the more common *painted* purple vellum of the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, of which specimens will be found in later examples on the same plate; the Latin Psalter of the Bishop of Germains, however, from which a specimen is given, is a stained Ms. of the highest class.

For specimens of Greek writing of this period of a more cursive style than that of the set character of careful Mss., we must again look to Egypt. In that country, after its reduction to a Greek province by Alexander, the Greeks remained a dominant class, and retained all their original nationality in character, language, and modes of writing. They even retained their character under the Roman yoke; and, when forming a portion of the Eastern or Greek empire, the national character of the Egyptian Greeks became still more marked; for, by their final abolition of the hieroglyphic system of writing, through the influence of the Christian hierarchy of that portion of the Eastern empire, the mass of the people were compelled to use the Greek alphabet;* so that the whole population became more or less Grecian in general character; and as this now grecianised portion of the empire had the good fortune to remain comparatively free from barbaric invasion, while Greece Proper had been repeatedly ravaged by the incursions of various savage hordes, its government, social institutions, and arts were carried forward with little interruption.

One of the consequences of this state of things has been the preservation of many monuments of Greek writing in Egypt of a class distinct from those found elsewhere; and these have been, in most cases, preserved by the peculiarities of Egyptian sepulture, important documents being frequently buried in the mummy-case with the embalmed body of their possessor.

These circumstances, and the fortunate foundation of the Greco-Roman capital of Constantinople before the decay of the Roman power in the West, have led to the preservation of a series of Greek written documents of various descriptions, which afford us a complete series of illustrations of the progress of the art of writing, as practised by the Greeks between the third century B.C. to the overwhelming incursion of the Mahommedan Arabs in the seventh century A.D., a period of a thousand years.

The examination of the series of monuments thus furnished has enabled the most learned modern investigators in this interesting branch of archæology to adopt the following broad principles of classification for Greek Mss., and

* With the addition of a few demotic characters.

the following terms have been selected to express them. They divide them into those written in *capitals*, those written in *uncials*, and those written in completely cursive or *minuscule* character. The last class may be again subdivided into such Mss. as were written by *calligraphers* (beautiful writers, as the term implies), and *tachygraphers*, or rapid writers. The calligraphers may be considered to be that class of scribes who transcribed carefully Mss. of importance, which were generally written in *capitals* or *uncials* up to the ninth century; while the tachygraphers were that class of scribes who were employed upon current affairs, public or private, and who adopted an expeditious mode of writing, in which the letters gradually lost their exact original form, and became, as it were, tied together by connecting lines, to prevent the necessity of continually raising the writing instrument from the substance written upon,—a practice which eventually developed a cursive style, complete and consistent in all its innovations, and which was the origin of the *minuscule* character, or, as we at present term it in typographic phrase, "lowercase characters."

As a specimen of the tachygraphic transition in the midst of its career, M. Champollion has engraved two specimens of the seventh century, being charters or protocols of the eastern emperors Maurice and Heracleius, issued in Egypt shortly before the Arab conquest of that country.

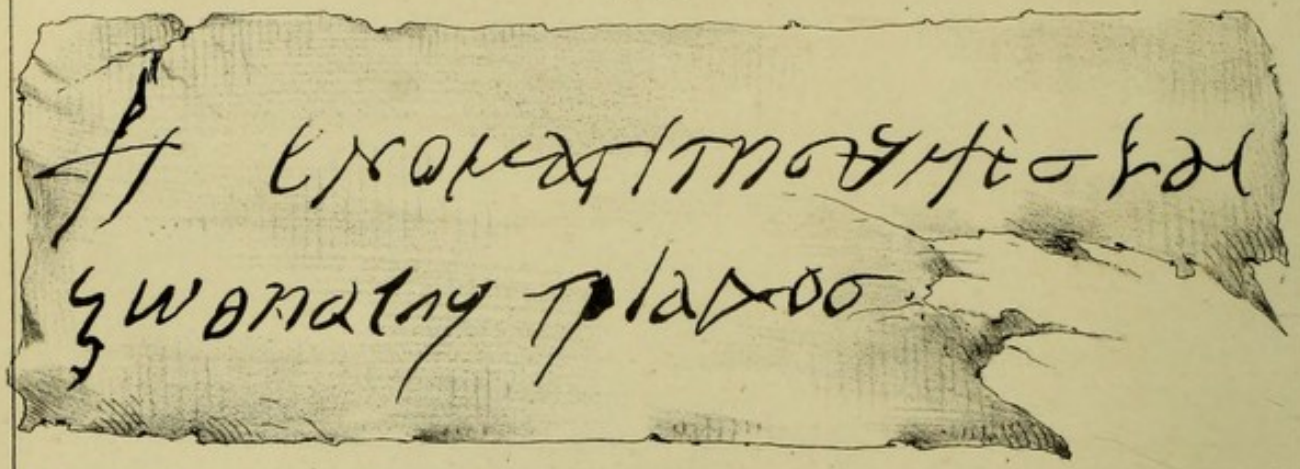
That of the Emperor Maurice (Plate VIII. No. 9) commences with the sign of the cross, the predominance of Christianity in Egypt being perhaps completer than in any other part of the East. The mingling of Greek and Latin forms is very remarkable in this document, as it is also in the inscriptions of the coinage of the Eastern empire, in which a strange confusion of the Greek and Latin letters occurs, both being employed in the same inscription. In the charter under description (that of the Emperor Maurice), the letters which have assumed a somewhat Latin form, or which display marked deviations from the correct Greek character, are the *d* for δ, the *h* for η, and the diphthong *ου*, which is sometimes written *ō*. The most common words are abridged at their termination, as we shall have occasion to observe in the Latin manuscripts of Western Europe; and the form of the π is arbitrarily varied on different occasions. The commencement of this charter reads, in our modern typographic Greek, as follows:

✠ Εν ονοματι του Κυριου και δεσποτου Ιησου (Χρισου), Θεου και Σωτηρος ἡμω[ν β]ασιλειας του γαληνοτατου ἡμων δεσποτου Φλ(αβιου) Μαυρικιου Τιβεριου, αιωνιου Αυγουστου και αυτοκρατορος οκτωκαιδεκατου ετους Επειφ. κ, τριτης ινδ(ικτου).

Which may be translated: "In the name of the Lord and Master, Jesus Christ and our Saviour, and of the reign of our most serene master Flavius (written Flabius) Mauritius Tiberius, always Augustus and emperor, the year 18, the 20th of Epiphi, the third indiction," &c. &c.

The charter of the Emperor Heracleius (No. 1, Plate VII.) exhibits a more leaning cursive hand, but with fewer changes of character.

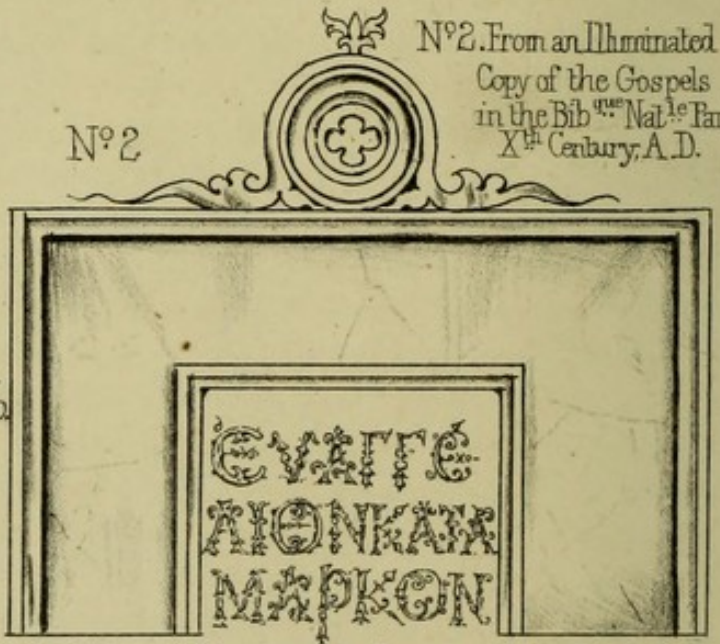
N°1



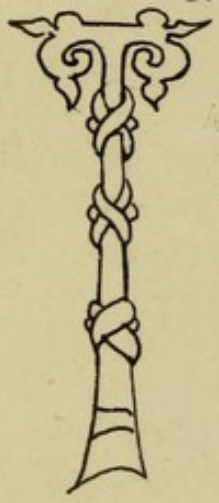
N°1. Fragment from an Edict of the Eastern Emperor Heraclius VIIth Century. A.D.

N°2. From an Illuminated Copy of the Gospels in the Bib^{que} Nat^{le} Paris Xth Century. A.D.

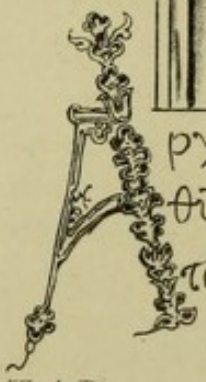
N°2



N°3.

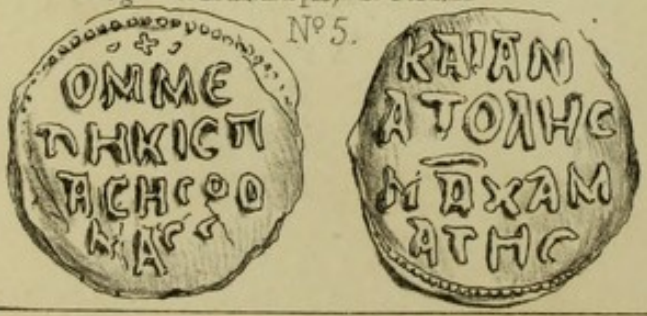


N°3. A Greek capital T, in red outline, from a M.S. in the royal library of Munich IX. century A.D.



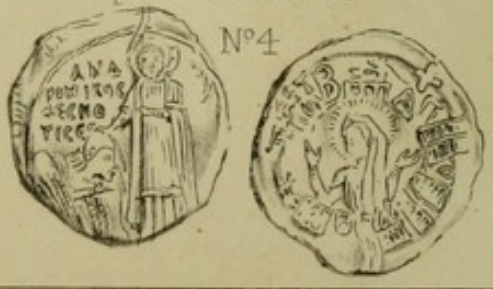
N°5. A coin struck by Mahomet. II. after the taking of Constantinople, 1453. A.D.

N°5



N°4. A coin of the Eastern Emperor Andronicus.

N°4



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Like the former example, it begins with the sign of the cross, and in our typographic Greek reads: ✠*Εν ο[νο]ματι της άγιας και ζωοποιου Τριαδος** —which may be translated, "In the name of the holy and vivifying Trinity." The protocol then continues: "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the reign of the most serene our Lord Flavius Heracleius, always Augustus and emperor, the year 6, the 19th of Payni, fifth indiction."

The calculation respecting the accordance of the dates of the Greek and Egyptian months named in these charters, need not be entered into here; it will be sufficient to state, that the first was issued about 600 A. D., and the latter about 616.

In the ninth century the Greek uncial writing assumed, in some cases, a square and more angular, but, at the same time, a more leaning character; and it is in the eighth and ninth centuries that the first examples of large decorative capitals commonly occur (see Letter T, No. 3, Plate VII.).

The minuscule, or lowercase Greek character began to develop itself in careful Mss. in the tenth century. At first it was very regular; and the letters, though occasionally joined, very distinct and carefully formed, of which the manuscript in the French Library (known as "the Gospels of Mazarin,") is an exquisite example; as is the Plutarch of the Florence Library, in a similar style. The example from the above-named "Gospels of Mazarin," Plate VII. No. 2, is from the commencement of the Gospel of St. Mark, and has that kind of ornamental capping which afterwards became general in rich Greek Mss., and sometimes very elaborate in those of the highest class; but always in a style very distinct from the illuminations of Mss. executed in Western Europe. The 'capping' in the present example is formed of a solid mass of burnished gold with a slight bordering, enclosing a space for the prettily-decorated capitals in which the title of the gospel is written. The large capital A is also of gold, but enriched with small touches of blue, red, and green colours. The elegant minuscule characters of the body of the text are entirely of gold. Notwithstanding all this *luxe* of enrichment, the manner of illuminating Greek Mss. never, as we shall see, equalled the splendour and profusion with which those of Italy, and especially France, England, and Ireland were decorated; the latter even as early as the seventh century.

In the eleventh century the style of Greek writing became more leaning and cursive, and continued acquiring a still more running character, till the fall of Constantinople drove many Greek authors and calligraphers to Italy, where, in the fifteenth century, the final cursive character of Greek writing assumed that form in which the earliest practitioners of the art of printing, who then began to appear, transferred it to their types, and so rendered it permanent; that being the form in which the Greek character is printed and read at the present day.

* These fragmental examples are but small portions of the original monuments, and the same length of line has not been observed, as not suitable to the size of the plate.

In briefly tracing the origin and development of Greek writing, I have not thought it necessary to allude to the details connected with the accents, points, seraphs, &c. &c., which appeared in the later phases of its progress, as matters requiring more space for clear elucidation than could be afforded in this volume; and the same observation may apply to the treatment of the later periods of Hebrew writing in a former chapter.

It may, however, be briefly stated that the modern Greek soft accent is ', and the aspirate '; though more anciently the H was used as an aspirate, as in Latin: thus ἑκατον (a hundred) was written *HEKATON*, at the time that its initial character was taken to represent that number, as I have stated in speaking of the Greek system of numerals. At a later period, half the *H* was taken to represent the soft accent *I*, and the other half the aspirate *I*.

It would be going beyond my limits to describe how, under the barbaric influence of the Turkish subjection of Greece, the language and letters became by degrees degraded into the modern Romaic; or how, at an earlier period, the Greek alphabet, along with the Christian tenets of the Greek Church, became diffused among the Sclavonic and Muscovite nations; and in what way it became, with certain modifications, the existing alphabet of Russia.

But before quitting the subject, I must not omit to say something more than I have hitherto found room to do of the period at which a decorative character was introduced in Greek writing, in a manner analogous to that of the illuminated Mss. of the West of Europe; for which species of decoration, in fact, Greek ornamentation formed the model, though it never attained to the same magnificence as the schools founded upon it.

In Greek Mss. of the fourth and fifth centuries we find already *enlarged* capitals; but possessing little other distinction than mere size, and that moderate, being seldom more than three times the depth of the general text.

In the sixth century, a little more decoration was used, but still of a simple character; and as late as the seventh and eighth centuries, the decorative capitals are generally only in outline; of which the example No. 3, in Plate VII., will give a good general idea. It is from the Evangelistarian of Prince Radzivil, in the library of Munich, and is in red outline, the body of the text being black. In the ninth century such letters became richer in design, and the heads of chapters were ornamented with a kind of capping of Byzantine ornament, always more or less in the style of that in Plate VIII. No. 3; though towards the tenth century they became occasionally very rich and intricate in their detail. Nevertheless the Greek illuminations never expanded into the elaborate borderings and gigantic arabesque capitals of the western illuminators, which form the glory of our Ms. books of the middle ages. The Greek Mss. are, however, occasionally illustrated by miniature pictures; but in this branch of ornament also they are less profuse than the manuscripts of Western Europe; though in those from the fourth to the tenth centuries they are very superior in power of drawing.

Before finally quitting the subject of Greek writing, it may be interesting to exhibit one or two examples of its decadence in Constantinople from another source—that of the Greco-Roman coinage—which was continued in that city till its fall beneath the overwhelming numbers of the conquering hordes of Mahomet II.

In the reign of the first successors of Constantine the Great, the inscriptions of the coinage of the Eastern Empire struck at Constantinople were entirely Roman or Latin; but as the Latin influence declined, Greek letters were mixed promiscuously with the Roman in the monetary inscriptions; after which, several characters were formed by a kind of modification between the two alphabets, but eventually the Greek element prevailed. The gold coin of Andronicus, Plate VII. No. 6, has a Greek inscription, in which the imperial name is accompanied by the title of *Despotos*, assumed by the later emperors; the inscription reads, ANΔPONIKOC ΔECΠOTIΔEC, the C being used for Σ. The political supremacy of the Greek Church at that period is strongly expressed by the crouching figure of the emperor at the feet of his patron saint. The reverse of this coin bears the recently-assumed type, the walls of Constantinople surrounding a portrait of the Virgin Mary.

One of the most interesting Byzantine monuments of this class is the coin No. 5, Plate VII., struck by Mahomet II. after the taking of Constantinople, perhaps the last time that Greek characters were used in an official monument, till the restoration of Greece as a modern kingdom: the inscription is to be read on the first side, OM MHΔIKIC ΠACHC RΩMAC, and on the other, KAI ANATOΛHC, &c. &c. This strange mixture of Turkish and Greek may be thus translated: "The Sovereign of all Greece and Anatolia—Mahomet, &c. &c."

All subsequent coinages at Constantinople bore inscriptions in the language of the conquerors; and the official language and written character of the provinces which formed the Eastern or Greek empire became either Turkish or Arabic. But the Greek, though in a debased form, was still preserved and written in Greece Proper by the mass of the people; and when Byron made his ill-fated expedition to aid the Greeks in their recent struggle for independence, he made their possession of the ancient language and letters one of his most powerful arguments to rouse them to effective resistance against their barbarian oppressors, when, in one of his appeals, he exclaimed:

"Ye have the letters Cadmus gave—
Think ye he meant them for a slave?"

CHAPTER X.

ON THE FORMATION OF THE ROMAN OR LATIN ALPHABET, AND OF THE EARLIEST KNOWN ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS AND MSS.

THE earliest forms of Roman letters of which examples are to be found in existing monuments, are those exhibited in the ancient Latin alphabet in our plate V. Their close semblance to the Oscan and Samnite letters, and their near affinity to the letters of the Greeks, at once prove the common origin of all from the Phœnician stock; and more remotely, in all probability, from the Egyptian.

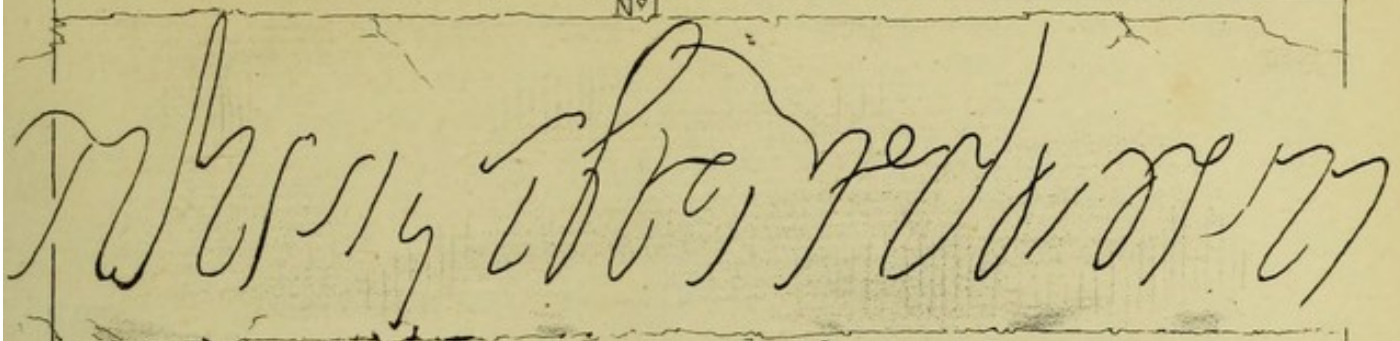
As the immediate parent of our own system of writing, the Roman is more interesting to us than any other, and its monuments, as belonging to a period nearer our own times, are more numerous. The gradual transitions of this alphabet from that of the Pelasgians, or other Italiot and Etruscan systems, upon which it was founded, to a fixed and regular style peculiar to Rome, is best traced on a series of Roman and Italiot coins, with the assistance of a few sculptured monuments, cinerary urns, &c., by means of which nearly every link of the transition may be examined.

But such minute details are not within the province of the present work, in which the great outlines of the general subject can alone be described, leaving the smaller technicalities to be filled up by the inquiring student from his own researches, which, as regards the Roman alphabet, he will find no difficulty in doing, from the sources above suggested. In the present chapter I must confine myself to a very brief account of those features which immediately preceded the perfect form of this system of writing, stating what were the essential features by which improvement on former systems was chiefly manifested in that of the Romans; the earlier phases or closely analogous ones having been previously discussed in treating of the Greek alphabet.

The most striking improvement upon the Grecian system effected in the alphabet of Rome, was the final rejection of all characters bearing in any degree an affinity to the *syllabic* functions of many of the characters of all systems more ancient than that of Greece. In describing the last-named alphabet, I have stated in what manner they rejected the *syllabic* characters, or rather vowel-bearing consonants, of the Phœnician and Egyptian systems, while they preserved characters representing combinations of consonants, which still bore a strong affinity to syllabic signs. I allude to the

SPECIMENS OF LATE ROMAN AND MEDIÆVAL ITALIC WRITING.

Nº1

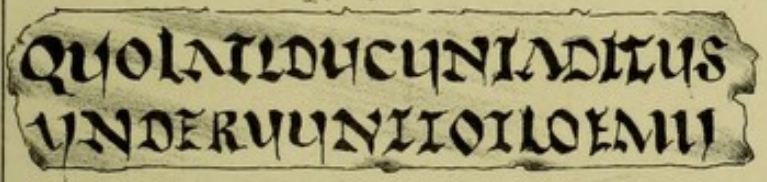


Nº1. Fragment of a legal deed executed in the 3rd or 4th century, A.D

Nº2

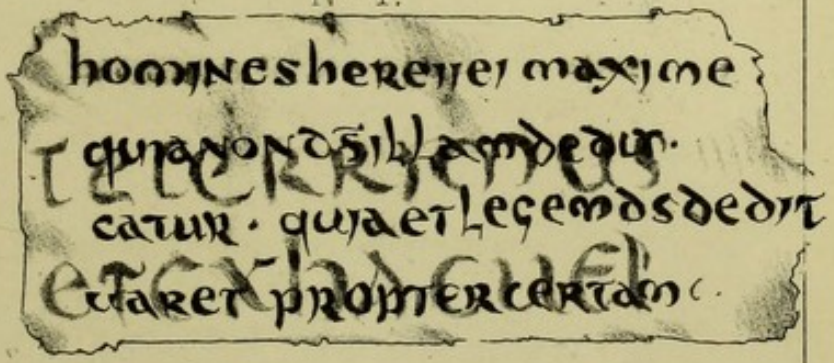
Nº2. A portion of the 3rd Eclogue from a M.S. Virgil of the 4th or 5th century, in the library of the Vatican.

Nº 3



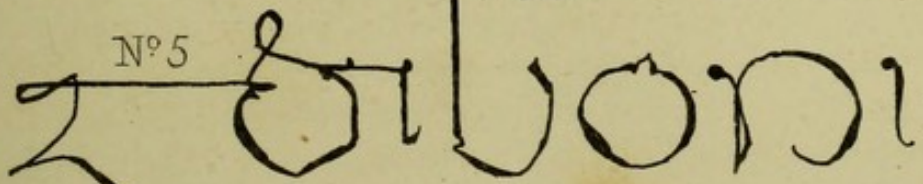
Nº 3. A portion of 2 lines of the Æneid (Bk 6 line 43 & 44) from a M.S. of the IV.th century, in the Vatican Library.

Nº 4.

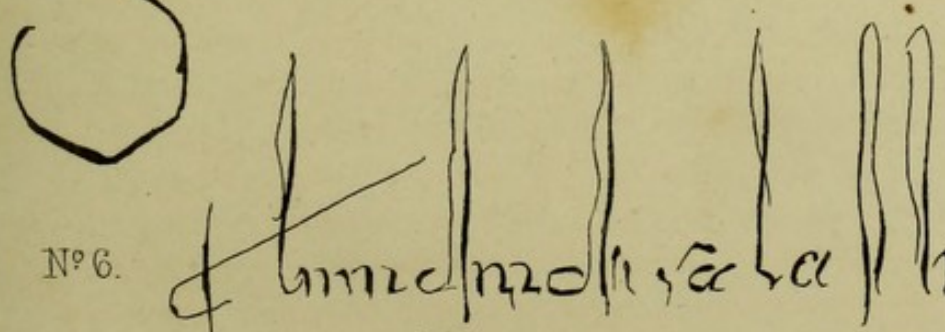


Nº 4. Specimen of a Palimpsest Copy of Cicero's "Republic" in the Vatican Library.

Nº5

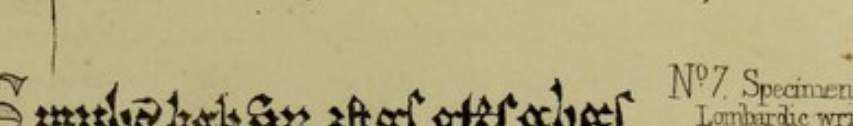


Nº5. Fragment from a Bull of Pope John VIII. 876 AD.

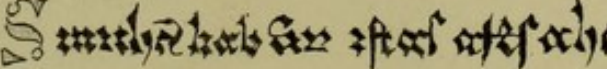


Nº 6. Fragment from a charter of Grimoaldus Duke of Beneventto 9th Century A.D.

Nº6.



Nº7.



Nº7. Specimen of the brisé style of Lombardic writing X.th century, A.D.

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Φ representing PH, the Ψ representing PS, the Θ representing TH, &c. &c., all of which may be said to have been finally abolished by the Romans, in the formation of the most strictly *literal* alphabet that had hitherto appeared. Or, stating the case more strictly, the Romans never invented combined characters of this kind, in the course of improving for their own purposes the Pelasgian letters, upon which their alphabet was founded, as the Greeks did in forming their system directly upon that of Phœnicia.

The same kind of progress thus observed in the art of writing, that from primeval rudeness to excessive complication, followed by a progressive course of simplification, as order and system gradually simplified the useless redundancy of accumulated materials, is to be observed in the course of language itself, of which writing is but the system of notation. Thus, from the rude early dialects of central Asia there gradually arose the majestic fabric of the Sanscrit, the most copious and redundant language of which we have any knowledge—from which source the modern dialects of India have eventually sprung, but infinitely simplified. As in the West, the Greek became much simpler than the Oriental dialects upon which it was founded; the Latin being a still more recently simplified dialect of the Greek. The modern languages immediately derived from the last-named sources have still further simplified all the original principles. Of this, the English, the most recently perfected of the important languages of modern Europe, is a striking example; and taking this course of simplification as the true test of advance, the English language may be placed at the head of all the languages of the world, as the most simple. A few of the most marked simplifications, and consequent improvements, to which I allude, in the case of the English language, are, first, the great reduction in the number and complexity of the inflections of Verbs, which yet admit of still greater reduction, in fact, of nearly total abolition, except in the auxiliaries. Secondly, the rendering both Nouns and Articles indeclinable by inflection. Nearly all the modern nations of Europe had abandoned the cumbrous machinery of the Latin and Greek, and other ancient languages, by means of which twelve distinct terminations belonged to every Noun, and nearly three times that number to every Adjective; instead of which they expressed the relative Cases by means of the prefixed Preposition and Article, the Noun itself suffering no change, except for the formation of the plural. But in the more recent elaboration of the English language, this simplification was carried still further, and the Article was not made to agree either with the Sex or Number of the Noun, but allowed to remain unchanged in every sense of application, as *the* man, *the* woman, *the* men, *the* women, &c. Lastly, the system by which the Gender of Nouns in all ancient languages was influenced by sound as well as sex—a system preserved more or less in all other modern languages, founded on the Latin—has been totally and boldly abolished in our modern English, all nouns being neuter, except such as denote sex. These three cardinal bases of simplification, though not nearly all that might

be pointed out, are sufficient to shew how far the English is before all other languages in the advance to perfection by the straight way of simplification.

As the English was the latest nation to systematise a modification of the language founded partly on the Latin, so the Romans were the last to modify, in the West, an alphabet based upon the same materials as that of Greece; and in that modification achieved the valuable *literal* simplification which led to the foregoing digression. Thus, the sound of PH, represented by the Greek Φ, was exhibited by two distinct letters, which were available in their separate form for many other combinations; though eventually the F, not found in the parent system, replaced the Φ. The same may be said of the Ψ, PS, the X, CH, and other characters of the Greeks. In the progress to these results, some anomalies exist, a few of which must be particularised; though it will not be necessary to enter upon minute technicalities.

The earliest Latin alphabet of which we have any record was composed of sixteen letters, like the early Greek, and written from right to left, like the Phœnician, to which the early Roman system, as founded on the Pelasgian, necessarily bore a great resemblance in another feature—that of the occasional omission of separate vowel-characters. The alphabet of the Etruscans, the instructors of the Romans, was very similar, as was that of the Samnites, Oscans, and other Italiot tribes; but the language of these people is unknown, though it has been thought by some to have been a dialect of the Sanscrit, the sacred language of India, brought from Asia by the first Pelasgian colonists of Italy, a people of undoubted Indo-Germanic race.

In the early Roman, as in the Oscan and Etruscan alphabets, the characters being few, sounds were but imperfectly expressed; thus, the words agna, quotidie, faxit, vox, were written *acna, cotidie, facet, vogs;* and with the occasional omission of vowels, libero, bene, carus, canete, are found written *lebro, bne, krus, cante,* the first vowels in bene and carus, and the second in canete, being omitted. It is thus seen that G was at first supplied by C; and after G was added, C was used for K, which was then considered superfluous, though still used by the priests in the ancient word *kalendæ,* and others founded upon it, as ancient forms are frequently preserved in sacerdotal matters long after their general disuse; the Etruscan language and characters having been used in the Roman College of Augurs as late as the reign of Julian.

Both F and H were comparatively late additions; and for the Greek Υ, the Roman V, the vau of the Phœnicians, was substituted, having precisely the same form as the Roman character which represented the sound of the modern U; from which circumstance the inconvenient practice of intermixing the initial U's and V's in dictionaries arose, and is unfortunately still continued. The uniformity of these two letters was bequeathed to us with the Roman alphabet, and their written distinction as U and V is of very recent date.

The sound of Q was originally represented by a double letter, as CV, and

the C was anciently pronounced like our K. But Q, though not found in the ancient Latin alphabet, is said to have existed in the Arcadian Greek, to which, and the Æolian, the Roman language was most immediately allied. By some authors, Damaratus is said to have brought the Arcadian letters to Tarquinium, when he settled there; and his son, Tarquinius Priscus, is supposed to have introduced them to Rome about 560 B.C. In this alphabet the G stands for C, VV is used in the place of F, C for K, and our W, X, Y, and Z are unknown.

Diaconus says the Romans first adopted the Υ and Ζ from the Greeks, in the time of Augustus, before which they wrote SS for Z, and I for Υ; while Priscian states, that Υ was only added for the more correct notation of Greek proper names. But notwithstanding the assertions of these two authors, whose evidence is nevertheless of great weight, it is yet probable that these additions were made previous to the reign of Augustus, as well as that of the X, which was originally written CS, as, Macsimus instead of Maximus. The W, or double V, never existed in Roman times, but is a letter grafted on the alphabet of Rome by nations of Teutonic and Sclavonic origin.

The letters G, H, K, Q, X, Y, Z, were the letters latest introduced, and Q is found for the first time in the inscription on the tomb of Scipio Barbatus.

The early style is well illustrated by the following passage from the ancient Arvalian song, which is a very curious example both of the ancient Latin and its ancient orthography, preserved in an inscription, in which the want of space between the words gives an appearance of great confusion:—

ENOSLASESIVVATENEVELVERVEMARMARSINSINCVRRE-REINPLEORES.

Enos, lases juvate neve luerue marmar sins incurrere in pleores, equivalent to the Latin phrases, *nos lases juvate neve luerhem* (for *luem*) *marmor, sives incurrere in flores.*

As there were no printing-presses in Roman times, the scribes of each successive age, in writing the old books over again, used the orthography and character peculiar to their own time; so that it would be almost impossible, from monuments of that description, to estimate the kind of writing, or form any accurate conclusion as to the date of the originals; and in fact no Roman Mss., the papyri of Herculaneum and Pompeii being Greek, are known earlier than the third or fourth century, when the Christian scribes imparted a peculiar style to their works, which endured with little alteration from the fourth to the tenth century.

It is only therefore in stone or metallic monuments belonging to different periods that the real progress of the Latin language and alphabet can be traced. But monuments of this class have been arbitrarily made to form a special class by the old philologists; and their language, termed lapidaric Latin, as being different to the ordinary written or spoken language. This, however, is an

incorrect view, as there can be no doubt that such inscriptions fairly represent the mode of speaking and writing the language at the time they were executed; and the opinion that the Latin of ancient inscriptions was of a special class, no doubt arose from the fact, that in all Roman manuscripts which have come down to us, the mode of writing the language is alike. But it must be taken into consideration that no Mss. which have reached us can pretend to a higher antiquity than the fourth, or, at all events, the third century of our era; in which it is not surprising that even between the Latin of extreme periods—that of Cato and that of Jerome—no difference of orthography is found; while monuments of metal or stone exhibit striking differences and display the real links of progress in the gradual development of the language, and the progressive modes of writing it, the traces have been effaced in Mss. by successive races of copyists, each putting something of the fashion of his own epoch. Thus, as it is only the works of the later scribes that have reached us, it is consequently only of the comparatively recent methods of spelling and writing the Roman language that Mss. afford examples.

It is a singular fact, and worthy of observation here, that long before the Roman alphabet, now universal in Southern and Western Europe, had travelled beyond the limits of Italy, that of Greece had already penetrated into many parts of Gaul; and Cæsar informs us, that the Romans, on their invasion of that country, found on one occasion the countersign or password of the Roman army in possession of the enemy, written in *Greek* characters. Tacitus also records, that, when the Romans first penetrated to the north of Gaul, they found many inscriptions in the Gallic language, written with Greek letters.

But, in point of fact, the Roman alphabet itself was Greek; and the Greek alphabet, as the principal element in the formation of those of Gaul, Germany, Etruria, and Spain,* and even the Latin letters themselves, may, as regards Europe, be termed the universal alphabet; for it was, in a greater or less degree, the immediate parent of all the present modes of writing. The forms of the Greek letters may, in short, be said to be the parent of those of all Western Europe, especially in their ancient forms, with which the old Roman alphabet was, as Pliny informs us, identical; the Romans having planted it, with but few modifications, in all the vast countries of the West which acknowledged their empire; thus establishing the more ancient form of the letters of Greece (with certain improvements) throughout the whole of Europe, only modified in their aspect by the artistic treatment and peculiar manipulation of Roman scribes.

To return to the Roman alphabet strictly so called; it may be stated that the earliest known examples are inscriptions belonging to the latter periods of the republic; and these, as I have before had occasion to state, are nearly

* Though a stronger admixture of the original Phœnician was used in writing most of the Celtiberian dialects.

all of the stone or lapidary class, as they are termed. The earliest are irregularly written, and with an archaic style about the form of the characters; while the later, though much more regular, and marking better the division of words, exhibit also an orthography more like that which is now accepted as correct; and about the time of Augustus such inscriptions lose almost entirely their archaic character, and the letters assume the forms which became permanent.

The finest examples of Roman Capitals, in which all inscriptions both on stone and metal were made, are to be found on the imperial coinage from the reign of Augustus to that of Nero. These capitals, as we now term them, were at first, in the Roman, as in all other alphabets, the only letters; and that they were so even at the period just referred to is very likely; the handwriting of Cicero, or other authors of the period, being probably composed entirely of capitals, though perhaps slightly sloping, as more easy to write in that position; and exhibiting possibly some modification of the squareness of certain letters suggested by practice in rapid writing. It is not probable that a cursive hand, properly so speaking, existed at that time, nor till long afterwards, as the oldest Mss. known are written entirely in rustic capitals, as they are termed; the fashion of writing the bulk of a Ms. in cursive characters, and using the ancient or *capital* form of the letters for the beginning of chapters, being, comparatively speaking, quite a recent innovation.

The earliest examples of Roman letters, in their distinct and characteristic form, are found upon the coinage of the Republic as early as its first issue of silver, about 270 B.C. The inscriptions alluded to occur upon coins struck to the Grecian standard of weight, being didrachms, which were probably executed for the Romans by Greek artists of Capua, shortly after the subjection of that Greek city. But the letters in which the inscription "ROMA" is written are, though executed by Greek artists, as distinct from the Greek forms as they are from those of the Samnites, as exhibited on coins of that people during the social war. The most striking peculiarity is the tail of the R, which descends as low as the upright line; while, in the most ancient specimens of the Greek rho, it is always short, as P; but although the letters in the early inscriptions just described are of the most complete Roman form, others of a somewhat later period still exhibit strong traces of their Pelasgian origin.

On early Roman coins of the empire, the beauty, and fine artistic effect of the inscriptions is such, that they really appear to form part of the general decorative device of the coin, which may perhaps be accounted for, by supposing that they were executed by the same artists who engraved the principal devices; which are, as examples of monetary portraiture, of a degree of excellence unrivalled, except by a few specimens found on certain classes of Greek coins, which neither ancient nor modern art has yet approached. The engravers of the Roman coinage no doubt derived their artistic skill

from the race of Greek engravers long established in the Greco-Italic cities of the southern portion of the Italian Peninsula; but they gave eventually to their works a national stamp almost as attractive as the superior excellence of those of the Greeks themselves. While, however, the inscriptions of the early coinage of the empire were probably the work of artists educated in the Greek school of art, the large and laborious inscriptions on stone were most likely executed by inferior hands,—indeed, by a class of men who were only cutters of letters; which is amply sufficient to account for their inferiority in excellence to those executed by the most skilful artists of the age on the imperial coinage.

The order of succession of the letters of our modern alphabet has been the subject of much discussion among learned philologists; but all that can be determined upon the subject is, that it is the same as the Roman; and as that of the Samaritan, or earliest form of the Hebrew, as well as the Greek, and probably the Phœnician, were placed in nearly the same order, founded very probably upon the accidental arrangement of the first set of phonetic characters selected by the Phœnicians from the Egyptian hieroglyphic system: the A, B, C order, originating probably thus, being, through the medium of the Greek and Roman, extended to all alphabets founded upon them. This appears the only probable solution of the question; as, upon what principle the A, or aleph, of the Hebrews was fixed upon as the first letter, or the beth, or B, for the second, no information as yet procured affords any other explanation.

A few examples of well-defined Roman letters exist on vases and other fictile objects; but they are not of earlier date than those described on the Capuan coins, and therefore do not call for especial description. After the reign of Augustus, it is from a series of coins, examples of those of nearly every reign being preserved, that we obtain the best uninterrupted chain of illustration of the course of the Roman alphabet in its more sculptural forms. These examples extend to the fall of the empire, at which period they exhibit strong marks of the decadence of the art of Roman writing of this class. The stone inscriptions of triumphal, &c. arches, afford examples, in a series almost as perfect as that of the coinage, on a larger scale; both series offering slighter changes in the respective forms of the letters, during a period of five or six centuries, than that which is exhibited between our printing types of the Caxton era and those of the present day.

That the Romans possessed, at an early period, a more *cursive* style, yet founded upon that of the formal capitals of numismatic and petroglyphic inscriptions, is also certain; for the system of writing practised by the Greeks, as recorded by Herodotus, on metal tablets covered with a thin layer of white wax, which, when scratched with a pointed instrument, displayed the characters inscribed by exposing the dark colour of the metal, was also known to the Romans; and citizens of distinction always bore about them tablets of this description, which, by having a raised border round the edge, prevented the

writing, when two tablets were placed over each other, from being defaced. The cursive writing thus practised, was composed most probably, as I have stated, entirely of capitals, but rapidly written and of a less formal character than those of monumental inscriptions, and in many instances perhaps in a somewhat modified form, suited to rapid execution, such as that alluded to by Quintilian, when blaming men of good education for neglecting the art of rapid writing (cura bene et *velociter* scribendi); an art which, it thus appears, was well known, though far from common.

At a later period, however, a positively cursive style, the immediate parent of our own running-hand, arose; but even then the more formal or monumental manner of the metallic and petroglyphic inscriptions was still used in valuable and carefully executed manuscripts, and, in fact, continued to be so long after the rapidly cursive style was used for all common matters of business; such as accounts, transfers of property, or official decrees of inferior import.

Those employed in writing in these distinct classes of character were called respectively, as with the Greeks, calligraphers and tachygraphers; the former, as the term implies, being *beautiful* writers, the latter *rapid* writers, as clearly defined by Eusebius. It is somewhat singular that specimens of the later cursive manners have come down to us of a date anterior to the earliest known examples of the more careful hand; one of the best authenticated monuments of cursive Latin writing being that of a Ms. on papyrus, written in Egypt during the Roman possession of the country, and in the latter period of the empire, when all judicial and governmental decrees were issued in the Latin language. The papyrus in question, a passage from which forms the example, No. 1, Plate VIII., is now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and is the example from which M. Champollion has taken one of the finely executed plates of his work. It is a judgment relating to the possession of land, given in the case of a certain Isidorus. The first line, half of which is given as a specimen, reads, in the original—

AB INIQUIS EORVM DETENTATORIBVS SIBI RESTITUTI.

The British Museum also possesses a specimen of Roman cursive writing, executed at Ravenna in the reign of Justinius the Younger. This instrument, like the former, is written on papyrus, and is eight and a half feet in length by one in breadth. It refers to the sale of a house and lands in the territory of Rimini, from a certain Domninus, to Deusdedit, for the price of five gold solidi, equal to about 4*l.* 10*s.* of our money; it is dated at Ravenna, 3d of June, in the 7th year of the reign of the Emperor Justinius (the Younger), A.D. 572, and attested by the *cross* of the vendor and by those of the witnesses.

A more remarkable specimen of the Roman cursive manner than either of the foregoing is the Latin translation by Rufinus of the "Jewish Antiquities of Josephus," which is a carefully written Ms. preserved in the Ambrosian lib-

rary of Milan. It is supposed to have been written in the reign of Theodosius the Great, and is in good set cursive hand, unlike that of any other Ms. of its class, and more resembling the style of the two deeds above described, though the characters are smaller and neater. It has, indeed, from its superior regularity, been termed semi-cursive; but the formation of the letters differs little from those of rapidly written deeds and other documents in the true cursive.

One of the earliest specimens of the more careful style, in which valuable Mss. were written entirely in capitals, or uncials, is a *palimpsest* copy of "the Republic" of Cicero, supposed to have been written as early as the second or third century, A.D. Palimpsest, as is well known, signifies "anciently scraped," or effaced, and is applied to such manuscripts as have been effaced by scraping away the written surface of the vellum, to make way for another work on the same parchment. In the present instance the Ms. so scraped was a copy of "the Republic" of Cicero, one of the long-lost works of that author, at last unexpectedly recovered through the means of this palimpsest Ms., by the persevering labour of the Cardinal Mai, in 1828, who, under the more modern text of a commentary of St. Augustin upon the Psalms of David, discovered an ancient Ms. of "the Republic" of Cicero, in large Roman uncials; which are, as I have before explained, square capitals and rounded letters, mixed.

The original Ms. is in two columns, the superposed work being written all across. (See specimen No. 4, Plate VIII., shewing one of the ancient columns, overwritten by the more recent work.) The original words in the specimen read — Tecerrimus et ex hac vel; the superadded writing may be easily deciphered, taking care to notice the abbreviations, such as d̄s. for dominus, &c. The large characters and careful manner in which this Ms. was originally written shew the high estimation in which the works of Cicero were held at that late epoch, probably the fourth century A.D.

Casley mentions several curious palimpsest Mss., among which are a copy of the works of Ephraim Syrus, written over a very ancient Ms. of the New Testament, and now in the French National Library. The act of writing over copies of the works of classical, and as they were termed pagan writers, does not appear extraordinary in the age when such acts of Vandalism were chiefly committed; but when we find a copy of the New Testament so overwritten, it shews that the scarcity of parchment, which was the alleged excuse for scraping down existing Mss., must have been greater than we can conceive, and that in remote monasteries a monkish scribe had no other means of writing or transcribing a new work than by erasing the existing writing from the parchment of a redundant copy of some work in his monastic library. The same author also mentions an Evangelistarium of the twelfth century in the library of the Archbishop of Canterbury, written upon vellum from which a work not older than the previous century had been erased.

I may here cite another example of a recently discovered palimpsest of great

interest, though it might find a more appropriate place in the chapter devoted to the progress of Greek writing. I am alluding to the detection by Mr. Cureton, late of the British Museum, of a portion of the poems of Homer beneath the Syriac text of a Ms. recently imported.

The Syriac book in which this obliterated Ms. was discovered was obtained from the convent of St. Mary Deipara, situated in the valley of Ascetics, in the desert of Nitria. The library of this convent appears to have been obtained originally from the neighbourhood of Bagdad by Moses Nisibis about the year 931 A.D. The Syriac version of the works of Severus of Antioch (Patriarch from 512 to 515 A.D.), which covers the obliterated poems of Homer, appears to have been written about the end of the sixth century.

In the fragments of Homer's poems thus recovered, are portions of books 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24; in all 3873 lines; twenty-six verses of the ordinary editions being omitted in the corresponding portion of this version, and four not found in them being inserted. Above 3000 lines of the poem are thus discovered, which are of more ancient date than that of any other known example of a similar quantity; the fragments of papyrus described by Mr. Burke containing only 100 lines; and the fragment recently found, placed in the hand of a mummy, containing only 300 verses; while the illustrated Ms. at Milan contains only 800 lines. The oldest *complete* copy is said to be the one in the British Museum; which is of the thirteenth century, a date quite recent in comparison with these ancient examples.

To return from this digression to our chronological arrangement of examples from Roman manuscripts, the next specimen, No. 3, Plate VIII., consists of two half lines from a Ms. Virgil, traditionally described as of the age of Constantine, but by some thought to be even of the time of Septimus Severus. It is written in elegant capitals, and in square pages of a quarto form. The illustrative paintings with which it is embellished are so good, that they have been thought, on that account, earlier than the age of Constantine; and even if of the time of Septimus Severus, they must have been copied from still earlier authorities of great excellence. This fine Ms. is preserved in the library of the Vatican.

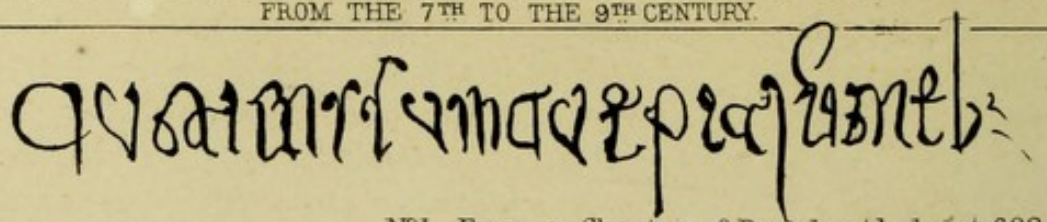
In the same noble collection there is a small Ms. Terence, also attributed to the third or fourth century, which is written very neatly in small *rustic* capitals. But we may obtain a more striking specimen of the writing in Roman capitals from another early copy of Virgil in the same library (No. 2, Plate VIII.); which, though of a somewhat later date than the Terence just mentioned, is yet perhaps not later than the fifth century. It is also illustrated with paintings, but of a coarser description than those of the previously described copy. This Ms. is above fourteen inches square, and numbered 3867 in the collection. It was known in the fifteenth century as "the Roman Ms.;" and there is no doubt but that it really is a relic of the calligraphic art of the last days of the empire.

The last-named specimen is from the first page of the third eclogue, at the head of which page is a painting of three shepherds with their flocks; the names of the speakers being appended in their proper places, in red ink. This fine Ms. shews the estimation in which the poems of Virgil were held even in the decline of Roman civilisation; and the large scale of the letters and the regularity of the writing testify that the art of the calligrapher was still flourishing. Such copies of the classics, written actually in the handwriting of Roman scribes, are of the greatest rarity, and must be deeply interesting to all true lovers of classic learning.

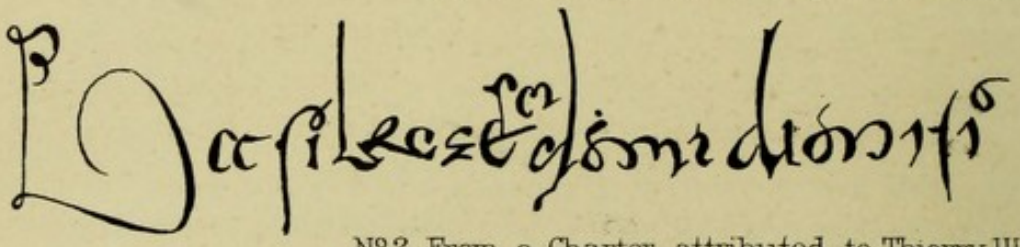
No Latin copies of the Gospels, or of any other portion of the sacred Scriptures, are known of dates so early as those of the Roman Mss. just described. Mr. Westwood has, however, in his *Palæographia Sacra Pictoria*, given specimens from two Mss. preserved at Cambridge, which are perhaps little inferior in antiquity, and which he assigns to the fourth or fifth century A.D. The description of early Latin copies of the Gospels will, however, find their place in the next chapter, on the earliest development of the different kinds of writing in Europe after the fall of the Western empire.

In estimating the true original phonetic values of the vowels of the Roman alphabet, some difficulties occur in consequence of their different acceptation by modern nations now using the Roman alphabet. It is probable, however, that the A was, as pronounced by the French and Italians, equivalent to *aa*, and that the U was, as pronounced by the Italians, *oo*. There is some reason to believe, however, that the English pronunciation of the I and the E is more correct than that of Italy and France. The former letter, which occurs in the Roman name Sabina, is represented by the Greeks, on the Græco-Roman coinage, by the diphthong EI, equivalent to the modern German EI and English I. The second E in the surname Severus is, in a similar position, expressed by the Greek *H* or long E; from which it would appear that our pronunciation of that character is nearer to its ancient value than the French, which gives to it the sound of our A; a further evidence of the correctness of our own pronunciation of that letter being, that in the French adaptation of the Latin word ecclesia, *église*, they represent the second E by their I, equivalent to our E.

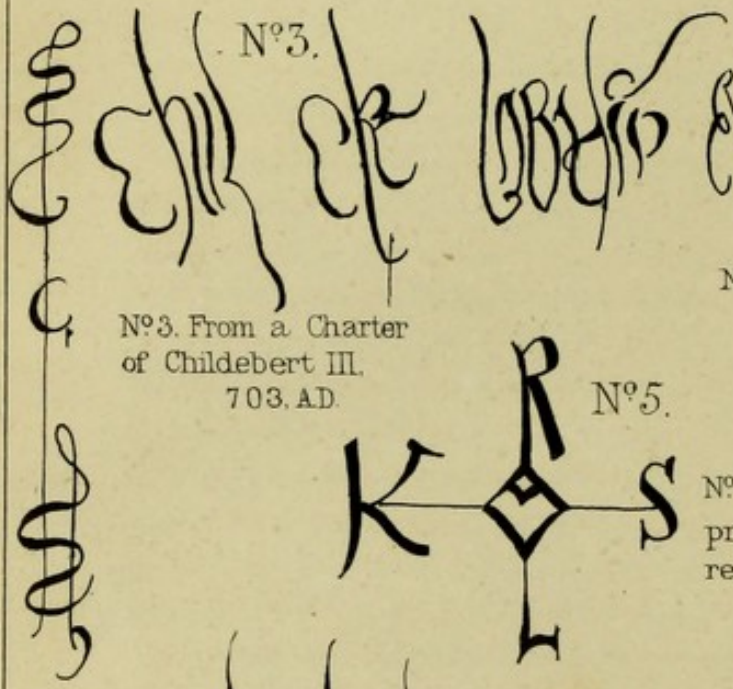
On the decline of Roman supremacy we shall be able to trace the gradual debasement of the beautiful letters of the Roman alphabet, and their assumption in different regions of new characteristics, the chief classes of which may be distinguished as the Lombardic, or Italic, in Italy—the Visigothic in Spain —the Anglo-Saxon in England—the Franco-gallic, Merovingian, Carlovingian, &c. in France—and the Teutonic in Germany. But this branch of the subject leads us immediately to the modern progress of writing as an established art, and to the treatment of its separate classes in detail, under separate and distinct heads.

Nº1. 

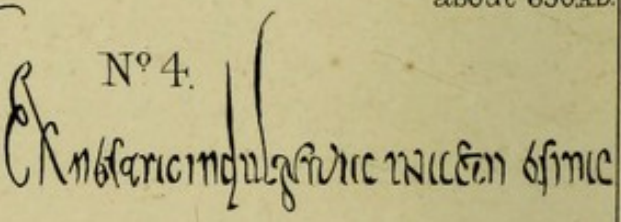
Nº1. From a Charter of Dagobert I, about 628 AD.

Nº2. 

Nº2. From a Charter attributed to Thierry III. about 690 AD.

Nº3. 

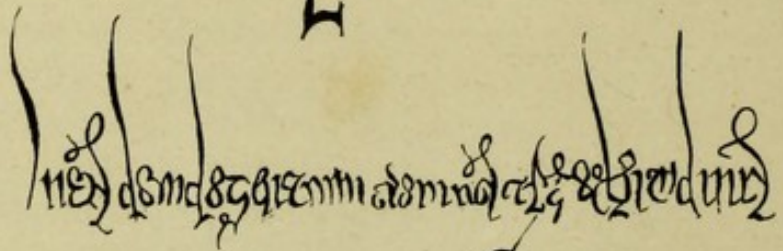
Nº3. From a Charter of Childebert III. 703. A.D.

Nº4. 

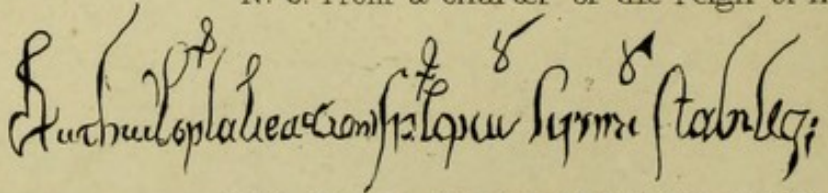
Nº4. From a Charter of Charlemagne, about 785. A.D.

Nº5.

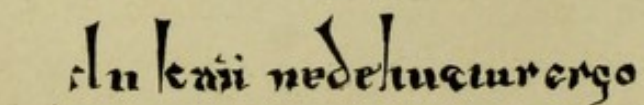
Nº5. The Monogram Signature to the preceding Charter of Charlemagne respecting the Abbey of La Grace.

Nº6. 

Nº6. From a Charter of the reign of Hugues Capet, date 988. A.D.

Nº7. 

Nº7. From a Charter of the German Emperor, Conrad I. date 988. A.D.

Nº8. 

Nº8. Specimen of the Visigothic hand, common in the South of France & Spain in the 8th Century.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE RISE OF THE MODERN NATIONAL STYLES OF WRITING IN EUROPE, AND THE ORIGIN OF HIGHLY DECORATIVE OR ILLUMINATED MSS.

BEFORE commencing a consecutive account of the general progress of writing in Europe, after the fall of Rome and the disruption of her provinces, it may be as well to explain more fully than I have done before, the precise meaning of three terms which may frequently occur in the ensuing pages, namely, capital, uncial, and minuscule.

Nearly all the principal methods of ancient writing may be divided into square capitals, rounded capitals, and cursive letters; the square capitals being termed simply *capitals*, the rounded capitals *uncials*, and the small letters, or such as had changed their form during the creation of a running-hand, *minuscule*.

Capitals are, strictly speaking, such letters as retain the earliest settled form of an alphabet; being generally of such angular shapes as could conveniently be carved on wood or stone, or engraved in metal, to be stamped on coins. The earliest Latin Mss. known are written entirely in capitals, like inscriptions in metal or marble.

The uncial letters, as they are termed, appear to have arisen as writing on papyrus or vellum became common, when many of the straight lines of the capitals, in that kind of writing, gradually acquired a *curved* form, to facilitate their more rapid execution. However this may be, from the sixth to the eighth, or even tenth century, these uncials, or partly rounded capitals prevail. This style being more easily learned than the cursive style, was possibly the cause of its becoming the favourite manner of writing important books among monkish scribes, from the sixth to the eighth or ninth century; although deeds of law or common business, where dispatch was essential, were executed in a corrupted form of the ancient Roman cursive hand, by professional scribes, descendants of the Roman official writers.

The modern minuscule, differing from the ancient cursive character, appears to have arisen in the following manner: During the sixth and seventh centuries, a kind of transition style prevailed in Italy and some other parts of Europe, the letters composing which have been termed *semi-uncials*, which, in a further transition, became more like those of the old Roman cursive. This manner, when definitively formed, became what is now termed the minuscule manner; it began to prevail over uncials in a certain class of Mss.

about the eighth century, and towards the tenth its general use was, with few exceptions, established. It is said to have been used occasionally as early as the fifth century; but I am unable to cite an authentic existing monument. The Psalter of Alfred the Great, written in the ninth century, is in a small Roman cursive hand; which has induced Casley to consider it the work of some Italian ecclesiastic.

Having thus briefly described those terms referring to the medieval writing of Europe most frequently used by paleographers, it only remains, previous to entering upon an account of the progress of writing in England, to give a very simple outline of the manner in which the alphabets of modern Europe were founded upon their classic predecessors, those of Greece and Rome.

The Grecian alphabet, partly from ancient intercommunications prior to the Roman supremacy, and partly through the influence of the Greek Church in the eastern and north-eastern portions of Europe, became the parent of the ancient Gothic, Runic, Sclavonian, Bulgarian, and Russian alphabets, with some few others; the Roman being the basis upon which the system of writing of all the other nations of Europe was founded, including Italy, Germany, Spain, France, England, &c. &c. It will be sufficient to state, of the alphabets founded on the Greek, that the Gauls used the Greek alphabet before the invasion of the Romans, and abandoned it for that of Rome, after their subjection to that power in the form of a Roman province. But Greek letters had travelled further north, where the Roman arms never penetrated; and there the ancient Gothic and Runic alphabets were founded upon it. At what period this took place is uncertain, though the restricted extent of the Runic alphabet, only sixteen letters, corresponding in number to the earliest form of the Greek alphabet, would lead to the inference that it must have been at a very early period; which hypothesis is, however, at variance with the supposed invention of a Mœsogothic alphabet founded on the Greek, by Ulphilas in the fourth century; and also, by the fact that there are no well-authenticated monuments of the Runic or ancient Gothic alphabets known anterior to the fourth or fifth centuries. The Sclavonian, Illyrian, Bulgarian, and Russian alphabets, more directly founded on the Greek, appear to have been first adopted at the time of the spread of Christianity to those countries, through the medium of the Greek Church, about the last-named epochs, namely, the fourth or fifth centuries of our era.

Though Runic characters were forbidden in some countries of the north of Europe after the conquests of Charlemagne, they were yet not discontinued in Denmark till after the thirteenth century, and the ancient Gothic was still later in partial use in Sweden, though both countries now use the modernised Roman alphabet. Among the Russians and other Sclavonic races, however, the peculiar adaptations of the Greek alphabet, originally adopted by them, still form their national alphabets.

It is not within the province of this work to enter upon any account of the Oriental alphabets which have arisen upon the ruins of those described in the early part of it, or those founded on the Greek, just referred to. But this chapter would be scarcely complete unless accompanied by examples consisting of one or two of the alphabets founded on the Greek, and therefore the ancient Gothic, Runic, and Russian alphabets, with the corresponding values of the letters in Roman characters, will be found in the annexed engraving. It will be perceived that in the Russian many letters have been added to suit the peculiar sounds of the language.

Modern Russian.		Modern Russian.		Runic.	Gothic.	
А	a	У	u oo	ᚨ	𐌰	a
Б	b	Ф	f ph	ᛒ	𐌱	b
В	v or f	Х	ch	ᚷ ᛉ	𐌲	g
Г	gh	Ц	ts	ᚹ	𐌳	d
Д	d	Ч	tsch	ᛖ	𐌴	e
Е	e or ye	Ш	sh	ᚠ ᛈ	𐌵	f
Ж	.	Щ	stsh	ᛁ	𐌹	i
З	z	Ъ	ĕ	ᚲ	𐌺	k
З	z	Ы	ui	ᛚ	𐌻	l
И	i or e	Ь	ē	ᛘ	𐌼	m
І	i or e	Ѣ	ye	ᚾ ᛏ	𐌽	n
К	k or c	Э	x	ᛇ ᛝ	𐌿 ᛟ	o
Л	l	Ю	ksi	ᛦ ᚠ	𐍀	p
М	m	Я	ps	R	ᚱ	r
Н	n	Θ	th	ᛋ	ᛊ	s
О	ō	Ѵ	v	ᛏ	𐍃	t
П	p				ᚢ	v
Р	r				ᚺ	h
С	s				𐌸 ᛩ	q qu
Т	t					

The Roman alphabet, and manner of writing, adopted in the other nations of Europe, was, of course, known and used in Gaul, Spain, parts of Germany, and Britain after they became subject to the power of Rome. They continued in use in those countries after the fall of the empire, and the modern distinctive national styles did not begin to develop themselves till towards the end of the sixth century, and did not assume their permanently national characteristics till the end of the seventh.

The writing of Italy, after the fall of the imperial power, has been termed Lombardic, but might, with greater correctness, be termed Italic, as it was found in use in the country and adopted by the Lombards, but not invented by them. This style, with the Romano-Gallic of Gaul and the Viso-Gothic of Spain, are the first distinct modes of writing which appear in Europe after the fall of Rome; and were doubtless founded on the styles which existed in those countries respectively at the time of that great catastrophe. They were followed by the national styles which have been termed Merovingian, Carlovingian, Capetian, Saxon, Norman, Spanish, &c.

The Roman cursive hand, as used in diplomas, of which I have previously given a specimen (Plate VIII. No. 1), continued in use after the incursion of the barbarians; and the famous "Charter," as it is termed, of Ravenna, now in the French Library, is in this manner. This curious document contains, beside the will of one Constantinus, a dyer, dated in the year 480 A.D.; another, made by Georgius, a dealer in silks, son of Julian of Antioch, of the year 522, and other deeds, transacted in the presence of the magistrates of that city. This, and another interesting monument in the British Museum of a similar class, relating to a sale or transfer of certain lands, are both written on papyrus. In addition to being most interesting specimens of the ancient Roman cursive manner of writing still practised in Italy at that period, both monuments are singular evidences that the disturbance of social relations, on the fall of Rome, was not so great as is generally supposed, though painted by historians as one of general dislocation and convulsion; for there are many other similar monuments of the period in existence, in which marriage-settlements, wills, grants, rights to property personal and real, and even minute litigations concerning trifling matters, are minutely detailed, as in the most settled periods of organisation; tending strongly to prove, that, with the exception of the general governing power, little else was changed; excepting, of course, numberless isolated cases of spoliation, naturally consequent upon making provision for a sudden increase of population, in the form of an army of conquerors.

As a specimen of the style of cursive writing immediately descended from the Roman, I have engraved in fac-simile a small portion of a bull of Pope John VIII. (Plate VIII. No. 5), written on papyrus, in lines above eighteen inches long; the letters of the first line being fully twice the length of those in the word given as a specimen, which forms the commencement of the second line, and is to be read *Geiloni;* the first line being, "Johannes ep. serv. serv. di Geiloni," &c. &c. The date of this bull, given at Rome, corresponds to the 15th of October, 876 A.D.

The next specimen (Plate VIII. No. 6) is in the more usual Italic or Lombardic style. It is from a charter of Grimoaldus, Duke of Beneventum, one of the Lombardic princes of that district, who, having made terms with Charlemagne, on the reduction of the territories of King Didier, the last

Lombardic prince of the north of Italy, still held great part of the territory which now forms the kingdom of Naples. The specimen is from the commencement of the charter, and reads, allowing for abbreviations, "In nomine Domini Dei, Jesu;" after the word Christi, which follows, the original document reads on, "nos vir gloriosissimus Grimoaldus, Dei Providentia," &c. &c.

The tall letters of this last specimen exhibit precisely the character of those which were copied from the Italic style, at a later period, in both French and English charters; in the former long before the latter; proving, in both cases, that Italy was still the centre from which the tone of the arts of civilisation was imparted to Western Europe, as before the fall of Rome.

Several specimens might be added, from earlier periods of the Lombardic writing of the sixth and seventh centuries, did the plan of this work allow it; but sufficient has been shewn to illustrate the fact, that the ancient Roman cursive hand was the foundation of the earliest *cursive* writing of modern European nations, as much as Roman *capitals* and *uncials* were the foundation of the letters of the more careful Mss.

Before proceeding to describe the style of writing practised by the Frankish conquerors of Gaul, which was the first strictly national manner established, I must allude briefly to another Italic style, which may possibly have been the prototype of the angular or modern Gothic letters, which, about the thirteenth century, prevailed all over Europe. This style is termed by French paleographers *Lombarde brisée*, from the angular break in the down-strokes of the letters, especially the M's, N's, and letters similarly formed. The line given as a specimen (Plate VIII. No. 7) reads, "Similes habent istas tres alias," &c. &c. This manner of writing must not be confused with the different cursive styles in which diplomas, &c. &c. were written rapidly by official scribes, as it belongs to the class of careful writing founded on the Roman style (Nos. 2 and 3, Plate VIII.), which was that in which careful calligraphers executed valuable Mss.; a style to be treated of separately at the end of this chapter.

In Gaul, as in Italy, the Roman system of writing was not suddenly changed by the barbarian conquest and subjection of the country; and both the official writers and the private companies of scribes still continued their vocations as before.

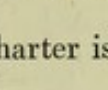
The earliest specimen of Franco-Gallic writing known is a portion of the Homilies of Avitus, Bishop of Vienne in Dauphiny, written on papyrus in a cursive Roman hand. It is considered by the ablest and most critical paleographers to be of the sixth century, as St. Avitus died in the year 525. The earliest Gallic charters of the Merovingian period are also written on papyrus, which was not as yet superseded by the general use of vellum. The specimen (Plate IX. No. 1) is from an edict or charter of Dagobert I., discovered by Mabillon at St. Denis, where it was in use as waste-paper to fold up more recent documents. The specimen reads, "Quotienscumque peti-

tionibus," &c., referring to a confirmation of the partition of certain patrimonial property between one Ursinus, described as a *vir inluster*, and one Beppolinus,—names shewing how large an admixture of Roman lineage yet remained among the Gallic population; the style also exhibits the strongest affinity to the late cursive Roman, even more so than to the well-known Franco-Gallic.

The next specimen (Plate VIII. No. 2), also written on papyrus, exhibits, on the other hand, strong Franco-Gallic characteristics; it is attributed to Thierri III., and supposed to have been written about the year 690 A.D. The portion engraved reads, "Basilicæ sci Domni Dionisi," &c. (the church of St. Denys, &c.) The deed contains the will of the son of one Iddane, in which he bequeaths property to Chramnetrade, his wife, and to the church of St. Denys. The names contained in this document are, as well as the style of the writing, more Frankish than Roman, being such as Boppolan, Meduald, Thorrias, Rodolen, &c.

A charter of Clovis III. is published in the work of M. Sylvestre, of somewhat similar style, but written on vellum, in which the king is styled "Chlodovius Rex Francorum vir inluster," &c.

My next specimen (Plate VIII. No. 3) is from a charter of Childebert III., and like the one just mentioned of Clovis III., it is written on vellum, which, from about this time, entirely superseded papyrus in the north-west of Europe. The flourish at the beginning is a variation of the monogram (usually in the form of a cross), "In nomine Christi," in the name of Christ, after which the name of the king, Childeberthus, is written in larger letters than the rest of the deed, as Chil-de-berthṡ, the last syllable having a mark of abbreviation. Like Clovis III. and his predecessors, he is styled Rex Francorum et vir inluster,—a title which belonged, in the Eastern Empire, to the dignity of consul, and which had been adopted by the Merovingian kings since Clovis received the rank and dignity of consul from the Emperor Anastasius. At the end of this deed of Childebert, is what appears to be the sign-manual of the king himself, written in very large characters, as Childeber-cthus Rex. These three specimens represent the cursive manner of writing known as the Franco-Gallic and Merovingian styles. During the reign of Charlemagne great progress was made in general civilisation in France; not only in the science of government, and in the fine arts generally, but especially in the elegant manner in which some of the diplomas, capitularies, and charters of the reign were written, as shewn by the specimens (Plate IX. No. 4), from a charter of this reign, which exhibits immense progress in neatness of execution over the previous specimen of Childebert III. This document is a grant respecting the monastery of La Grasse; at the end of which, the new emperor of the West is styled not only King of the Franks, but also of the newly conquered Lombards, and, Patrician of Rome,—a title conferred upon him by the Pope in 754. The more regular style of writing adopted about

this time in France is termed, by paleographers, *Caroline*, or Carlovingian; of which, in the more set styles used in careful Mss., some magnificent specimens are known, to be described hereafter. The reign of Charlemagne indeed marks a distinct epoch in the art of French writing; for, by the advice of Alcuin, Warnefreide, and other learned men, a system of punctuation was adopted at this period for books, and soon after even for diplomas. Among the peculiarities which the student will not fail to remark in Mss. of this period, are the various abbreviations, the figure & being used not only for the conjunction *and*, and its Latin form *et*, but also for the letters E. T., as in the word petiit, which in this charter is written  .

It was in this reign that monograms were first used as signatures at the end of deeds. They were principally formed, as in the example from the deed just described, of the cross (as used by the Merovingians) for their only signature, with the letters of the name superadded; which, in the present instance, are, K. A. R. O. L. V. S. (See Plate IX. No. 4.) Monograms of this kind are from this period constantly found on the charters of the French kings till the reign of Philip III., after which they were discontinued. Eginhard, one of the secretaries, and the historian of Charlemagne, states that the emperor himself, at an advanced period of life, learned to write; and he informs us that "he commonly kept under his pillow tablets and little books to accustom himself during his hours of rest to form his letters; but he succeeded badly in that tardy toil, unseasonably commenced." Lambecius and others, from this passage of Eginhard, have supposed that the large ornamental capitals so peculiar to this epoch are the letters alluded to by the historian; and that the king thus practised the art of illumination for his amusement; but Sismondi considers that the common cursive writing of the time is alluded to. However this may be, Charlemagne never succeeded in learning to write, notwithstanding his wish to do so; indeed it is not till long after this time (with few exceptions) that we find any but churchmen or professed scribes able to write more than their name, and even that very rarely.

The last phase of cursive writing in diplomatic instruments of this period in France is termed the Capetian, from the name of the race founded by Hugues Capet, during whose sway this style prevailed. It is, however, simply a degradation of the Carlovingian manner, with a slight return to some of the peculiarities of the Merovingian period, as will be seen by the specimen (Plate IX. No. 5), from a charter of the reign of *Hugues Capet*, A.D. 988. At the end of the charter is—Signi gloriosissimi Hugonis Regis; opposite which is a monogram forming Hugo Rex. After this period the cursive hand of diplomas resembled greatly the minuscule hand of Ms. books, being distinguished from them by scarcely more than the long strokes and flourishes, for which there is seldom room in the closer lines of books.

The running hand in Germany was not nearly so free or regular as in

France and Italy, or even in England, as the specimen in Plate IX. No. 6, will shew, which is from a charter of the Emperor Conrad I., conferring a grant on the Abbey of St. Emmeran at Ratisbon, about the year 914 A.D. The writing of this German grant is more like the early Merovingian writing than the more recent French styles. In this place it will perhaps be desirable to give a specimen of the Visigothic hand as practised in the southern provinces of France, where it closely resembled the style of writing which the Visigoths of Spain had founded on the late Roman. The specimen (Plate IX. No. 7) is from a sacramentary of the Abbey of Gellone, in Languedoc, written in the eighth century, and slightly resembling in manner the set Saxon and other national styles of the period used in regular Mss.; for this specimen is not to be classed with the cursive writing of diplomas and such documents, but with the more carefully written Mss., as copies of the Gospels, &c. About the twelfth century the peculiar hand of the early diplomas had begun to pass out of practice, and in the thirteenth it was merged in the small sharp Gothic hand, then becoming general in all kinds of writing.

It would be impossible, in the compass of this volume, to follow out all the varieties both of the *cursive* and *set* manner of writing which succeeded each other in France during the Capetian and Ludovician periods, till the thirteenth century, when the styles called Minuscule-Roman, Minuscule-Carlovingian, Minuscule-Capetian, &c. &c., all merged in the angular Gothic which perfected itself in the thirteenth century, the various transitions leading to which we shall have ample opportunity of studying in following out the series of English examples which will form the subject of the next chapter.

OF THE RISE OF THE ART OF ILLUMINATIVE AND DECORATIVE WRITING IN WESTERN EUROPE, AND ITS PROGRESS TO THE TENTH CENTURY.

In treating of Greek writing in general, I have briefly described the mode in which later Grecian Mss. were occasionally decorated, or "illuminated," as Dante casually informs us the art of ornamenting manuscripts was termed by the French in his time. But in describing the kind of decorative art which distinguished the Mss. of Western Europe, it will be necessary to refer again to its origin in the East. Separate leaves of a square form, as in modern books, were first adopted for Mss. about the second or third century A.D., when the ancient scroll, or continuous roll, was abandoned.* Greater facility was thus afforded for decorating these separate pages with rich letters and ornamental borders than was afforded during the time that the scroll form of Ms. was in use. This change probably occurred, as I have stated,

* For some account of the origin of the present form of books, the reader is referred to the chapter on "Writing Materials."

PART OF AN ILLUMINATED PAGE FROM A M.S. COPY OF THE GOSPELS, OF THE 7TH CENTURY, NOW IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

not earlier than the second century of the Christian era; but previous to that time we have records of Mss. written on purple vellum in golden letters. The earliest Greek or Roman Mss. on vellum, those of the fourth and fifth centuries, have generally but little ornament, save occasional red or gold letters at the beginning of chapters. The Ms. Dioscorides, however, of the Vienna collection, of the fifth century, has large painted miniatures surrounded by narrow ornamental borderings; and fragments of a copy of the Gospels in the British Museum, of as early a date, have ornamental borderings and other ornaments on a gold ground, sufficiently rich to suggest the idea that this elaborate mode of decorating manuscripts originated in the luxurious capital of the Eastern empire shortly after the fall of the Western, and was probably a modification of a mode of ornamenting Mss. practised in Central Asia, or perhaps India; for nearly all the decorative arts may be traced to a far-eastern origin.

The Greek Mss. of this early period are rarely profuse in their decorations; and though decorative calligraphy appears to have originated in the East, we must look to the West for the full development of this beautiful art.

The decorative Lombardic, or rather Italic style of ornamental letters, formed of singular interlacing animals, may have formed the model upon which the elaborate Franco-Saxon, Anglo-Saxon, and Anglo-Hibernian *illuminations* were founded, though, in fact, no monuments of Lombardic works of that class exist of so early a date as those of Ireland and North Britain.

One of the earliest examples of Lombardic illumination in this manner is a copy of Bede's *De Temporibus*, which appears to have been executed about the tenth century, in a style greatly resembling in many of its features the Anglo-Hibernian and Anglo-Saxon manners, but having at the same time distinctive features of its own; which may arise from the fact, that such a style of decorative writing had existed in Italy from a much earlier period, and that the Irish and Saxon illuminators may have founded their manner upon it, which, if they did so, they greatly enriched both in the extent of its application and in excessive elaboration.

As a specimen of the Lombardic manner alluded to, I have given three letters on Plate XIV*. No. 1., from a Ms. in the Bodleian library.*

On the other side of the question, it is possible that, at the time of the greatest popularity of the works of Bede, many finely executed copies were made both in England and Ireland, illuminated in the peculiar manner of the sixth and seventh centuries, which, finding their way to Italy, where the works of Bede were in great demand, served as the model upon which the Lombardic style of illumination was founded; the Anglo-Hibernian decorations becoming for a time a kind of fashion in Italy. It is, however, more probable that each style arose independently, as the natural consequence, under different influences, of the amalgamation of profuse barbaric art with the fine and

* Douce collection.

simple forms of the Roman letters. But whether the Italic or the Hibernian were the earliest Mss. in which elaborately ornamented letters, formed of fishes, lizards, &c. &c., are found, is unimportant, and I only mention their respective claims in order to exhibit the analogy which exists between these styles.

The finest specimen of this class of illumination, which most paleographers agree in thinking originated in Ireland, at a time when the growing civilisation of Britain was trampled down by the Saxon invasions, is undoubtedly the "book of Kells," as it is termed, executed in the fifth or sixth century, from which specimens will be found in the plates containing a chronological arrangement of illuminated capital letters (Plates XXIII. and XXIV.).

But a monument of the same class of calligraphic art, of nearly equal richness, is preserved in the British Museum, where it is known as the "Durham Book," from its having been originally obtained from the ancient cathedral of Durham. Some idea of the elaborate richness with which this copy of the four Gospels is enriched, may be conceived by the facsimile contained in Plate X., which is a portion of the page forming the commencement of the Gospel of St. Luke.

This style of decoration, which is not entirely confined to writing, appears to have originated in Europe when the barbarian influence was, to a certain extent, predominant, in the first flush of conquest, and when the full effect of Roman civilisation and art had not as yet been felt; for we shall find at a later period the Roman style of ornament, with its acanthus scrollings, reappear by degrees and gradually extend, until lost in the peculiar feeling of that artistic phase which has been generically termed "Gothic."

Among other luxurious modes of embellishing Mss., that of dyeing the vellum purple, and writing in letters of gold and silver, is one of the most remarkable. I have previously alluded to this custom in my chapter on the progress of Greek writing, in which it appears to have been practised in Christian Mss. as early as the fourth century; while Latin Mss. of this description are very rare earlier than the eighth and ninth centuries, and after the tenth disappear. I have selected several illustrations of Mss. of this class from Count Bastard's magnificent work, specimens from which are reproduced in Plate XIV*. No. 4 is from the Psalter of the Bishop of St. Germain des Près, now preserved in the National Library; No. 3 is from a lectionary preserved in the same library (No. 688, sup. fond Latin); and No. 4 is from a folio Bible, written for Charles the Bald, the grandson of Charlemagne, and must therefore have been executed in the ninth century. It is written in gold rustic capitals in two columns, each column having a narrow band or border of silver with a red filagree ornament on it, outside of which the vellum is white. Several books written for Charlemagne in this style are still in existence, especially the famous one in the library of the Louvre; indeed it would seem that his connexion with the Greek empire, by the vast ex-

ABOUT XTH CENTURY.

A PAGE OF A M.S. VOLUME, WRITTEN FOR ARCHBISHOP DROGON.
(FROM COUNT BASTARD'S GREAT WORK.)

N. HUMPHREYS LITH.

DAY & SON, LITHRS TO THE QUEEN.

tension of his own dominions, was the means of re-introducing this luxurious mode of writing into Western Europe, along with many other of the ancient arts still flourishing in Constantinople. But the purple vellum Mss. which were produced under the fresh impulse given to the arts in the reign of Charlemagne were by no means equal to the more ancient specimens, the colour being, in general, only a body of paint spread upon the vellum, sometimes only on one side, instead of the beautiful stain of the Greek Mss. The specimen just described from the Bible of Charles the Bald is of this class. A fine specimen from a Greek Ms. of this class will be found in the example (Plate XIV*. No. 2) from the fine Cottonian Ms. Titus C. xv. written in silver on *stained* purple vellum, the names of Christ and the Deity being in gold. The stained vellum is supposed to have been first used in Christian Mss. during the reign of Constantine the Great, and both Latin and Greek versions of the Scriptures were no doubt frequently so written. Though but few Latin examples are known, the specimen from the Psalter of the Bishop of St. Germain (Plate XIV. No. 2) may, however, be cited as a fine Latin example, as early as the fifth century.

Ovid refers to purple papyrus at a much earlier period; and a copy of Homer written in gold letters on a purple ground is mentioned by Capitolinus, in his Life of the Emperor Maximus the Younger, which he received from his mother when he returned to his preceptor.

The British Museum contains a magnificent copy of the Gospels, written at Aix la Chapelle in the eighth century, the style of ornament being that known as the Charlemagne style. This copy has been long known as the Codex Aureus, or Golden Gospels, the entire text being written in gold, but on white vellum; in which style there is another copy in the National Library of France. Our national Museum possesses also a singular, and, it is believed, unique example of a manuscript of the tenth century, written entirely in red ink, except the headings of the chapters, which are gold, the appended date of which is DCCCCXLIX (949).

In decorative capital letters, the style of the "Durham Book" (Plate X.) and the Lombardic manner (No. 1, Plate XIV*.) gradually disappeared towards the eighth century (though in remote districts this manner was continued till the 12th), and was replaced by one in which, as I have said, the debased Roman treatment of the acanthus-leaf superseded to a great extent, as a medium of ornamentation, the lizards and interlaced bands of the styles above alluded to. In the ninth century immense letters began to appear, decorated in the manner, infinitely varied, of the gigantic C (Plate XIII.) from the Prayer-Book of Drogon, Archbishop of Metz, a grandson of Charlemagne, a magnificent specimen copied from the work of Count Bastard. Curious anthropomorphic letters, like the L formed of a kneeling angel, also occur about the ninth and tenth centuries, executed in the calligraphic school of Aix la Chapelle. About this epoch, from the eighth and tenth

century, great ingenuity was displayed by calligraphers, or illuminators working in conjunction with them, in reducing, not only the human figure, but birds and animals to the forms of letters; which, by the learned Benedictines in their great work, the *Nouveau Traité de Diplomatie*, have been divided into classes, and termed anthropomorphic, or formed of human figures; ornithomorphic, or formed of birds; ichthyomorphic, or formed of fishes; zoömorphic, or formed of quadrupeds; anthophyllomorphic, or formed of flowers and leaves; details into which it is not the purpose of the present work to enter. But the zoömorphic letter of Plate X., and the fish, quadruped, and bird-formed letters of Plate XIV*. will convey a sufficient idea of this class of calligraphic art; and Plate XV., from a Bible written for Charles the Bald, is, as before observed, a good example of the anthropomorphic class, the figure of an angel forming the capital L at the commencement of the Gospel of St. Matthew.

To describe all the peculiarities of illuminated ornaments which developed themselves in manuscripts between the sixth and tenth centuries would require a volume devoted to that purpose; and I refer the curious to my work, the "*Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages*," for minute details upon that subject. The general progress, however, of the styles of illumination will be found pretty accurately, though briefly developed, in the two plates of capital letters chronologically arranged for that purpose. (Plates XXIII. and XXIV.) I therefore dismiss the subject for the moment, as this work is devoted rather to the origin and development of letters themselves than to their parasitic decoration.

X^th CENTURY.

LIBER GENERATIONS

PORTION OF A M.S. BIBLE, WRITTEN FOR CHARLES THE BALD.
(IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, PARIS.)

N. HUMPHREYS, LITH.

DAY & SON, LITH^rs TO THE QUEEN.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROGRESS OF WRITING AND ITS DECORATIONS IN ENGLAND; WITH A GLANCE AT THEIR STATE IN IRELAND AND SCOTLAND, FROM THE DEPARTURE OF THE ROMANS TO THE NORMAN INVASION.

BOTH the Saxons, and the Gaelic races of Ireland and Scotland, used the Roman alphabet with but small variation; but there appears some reason to conjecture that reminiscences of a national British alphabet, received through Gaul, and formed of Greek or Pelasgian letters, still lingered in the country in Roman times, or, that "Gothic"* elements mingled, though but slightly, with the Roman, in the formation of the alphabet finally adopted by the Saxons.

No monuments, however, are known of a national alphabet previous to the final settlement of the Saxon invaders; the only previous examples of writing in this country being Roman, and consisting of certain inscriptions on altars, on cinerary urns, and on the imperial coinage, some portion of which may possibly have been executed, though in the Roman character, by British artists, although it is well known that the bulk of the coinage for the Western portions of the empire was manufactured at Rome.

In treating of the alphabet of the Anglo-Saxons, I have been led to these preliminary observations in consequence of the occurrence of letters on some of the earliest written monuments of that period, which are evidently of Greek or Pelasgian origin, unaltered by Roman influence. For instance, the Greek Φ, equivalent to the Roman F, is occasionally found; as also the M, in the earliest Pelasgian or Etrusco-Phœnician form. The form of the O also more strongly resembles the Pelasgian or Phœnician than the Roman, while the Y is not unlike the Greek Υ.

In the highly decorative capital letters of the Saxon period, the Roman uncials or rounded characters evidently served as the model, rather than the square or true capitals; probably from their waving outline presenting greater facilities for the curiously intervening decorations with which they are in some cases so profusely ornamented, as may be seen by reference to my specimens from the splendid Ms. of Lindisfarne, known as the Durham Book (Plate X.). The same remarks apply equally to the Lombardic or Italic decorative capitals, which are somewhat similarly decorated, though possessing distinctive characteristics in the details of their ornamentation. But although the uncial or round form of capital was generally used for

* The ancient Gothic alphabet being, as is well known, founded on the Greek characters.

decorative purposes up to the eighth or ninth century, square capitals were also used occasionally for the same purpose.

In speaking of these decorative, or rather "illuminated" capitals, as they have been termed, from the seventh to the ninth or tenth centuries, it may be remarked that they are frequently combined into groups forming a grand ornamental device at the head of a book or chapter, such as L I B, richly interlaced into a magnificent group of ornament at the head of the Gospel of St. Matthew, beginning, in the ancient Latin version, "Liber generationis, &c.," or the I N P at the beginning of the Gospel of St. John, which commences with the passage, "In principio, &c.," a fine example of which, though of a comparatively late period, will be found in Plate XVII., and a smaller specimen, from a Ms. of the period I am alluding to, in Plate XXIII., which contains also a series of illuminated capitals from the sixth to the thirteenth century; it is marked L. I. of the eighth century.

The general text of Anglo-Saxon Mss. was also mainly founded in style on the Roman uncials. In many cases these Mss. are most beautifully written, and, in fact, with more care than the Mss. in any other part of Europe at that period; as may be conceived, on the examination of the text of the specimen from the Gospels of Lindisfarne, Plate X., a work belonging to a class of books now considered Anglo-Hibernian, as being executed in the north of England; but in a style which had been brought to great perfection in Ireland in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, a period when Irish civilisation appears to have been in advance of that of England. A monument of purely Irish calligraphic skill of the sixth century is the famous book of Kell's, of Trinity College, Dublin, previously referred to, which is the only book of the class, surpassing in minute finish, as well as in elaborate decoration, the Gospels of Lindisfarne. The Franco-Saxon of France resembled the Anglo-Saxon in style, but it is not so fine, and never prevailed entirely in that country over the Romano-Gallic manner.

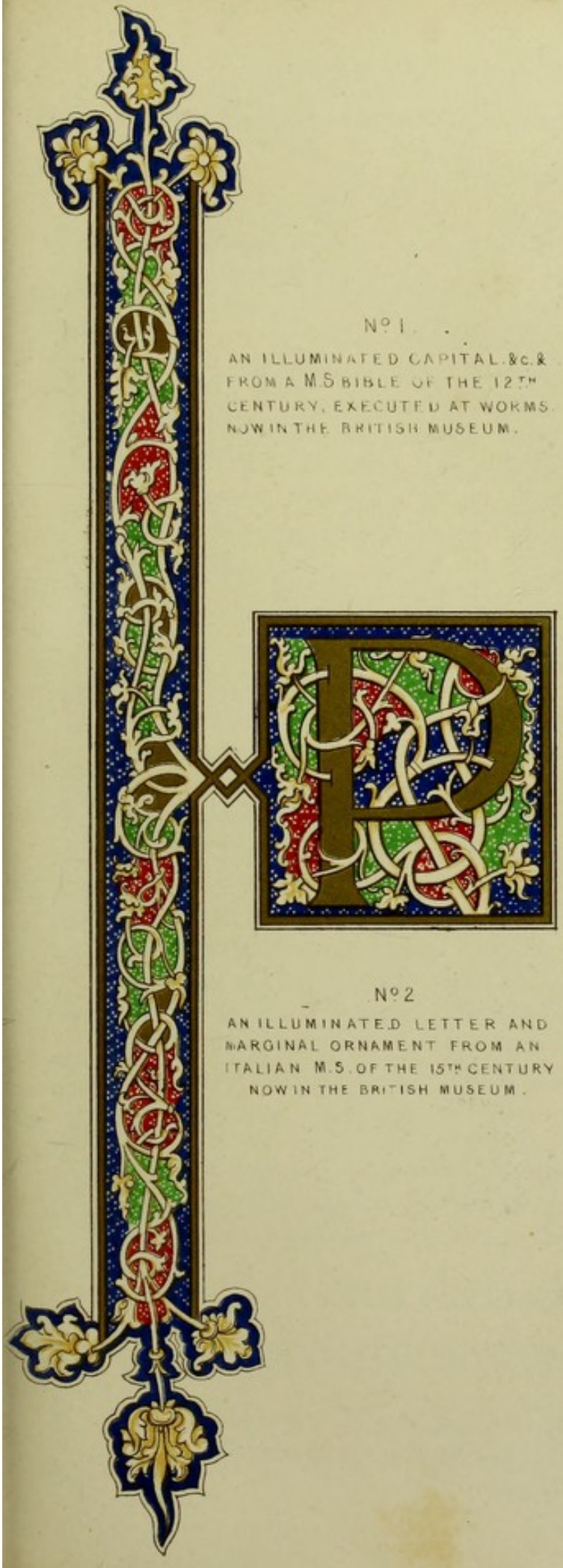
Having thus briefly alluded to the general characteristics of Anglo-Saxon writing and its allied styles, it will be well to examine a series of specimens from Mss. of various classes executed in England between the periods of the Saxon invasion and the Norman conquest, occasionally referring to continental examples, by way of illustration; for it will not be necessary to our purpose to treat separately of the writing of the different countries of Western Europe.

It should be observed here that the Saxon capitals which differ from the Roman, are C, E, G, H, and W, and that the small letters so differing are d, f, g, r, s, t, and w,* besides some arbitrary abbreviations, or rather signs, not always even founded upon the letters, such as ꝥ (that), a perfectly arbitrary sign; ꝺꝺ (esse), ȝ (hs), ⁊ (et), being other examples, some of which have more affinity to the alphabetic characters which they replace.

* See Saxon alphabet at the end of this chapter.

Nº 1.

AN ILLUMINATED CAPITAL &c. & FROM A M.S BIBLE OF THE 12TH CENTURY, EXECUTED AT WORMS. NOW IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.



Nº 2

AN ILLUMINATED LETTER AND MARGINAL ORNAMENT FROM AN ITALIAN M.S. OF THE 15TH CENTURY NOW IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

N. Humphreys. lith

Day & Son, Lith.rs to The Queen

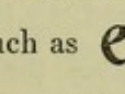
The first style of Anglo-Saxon writing has been termed

ROMAN-SAXON.

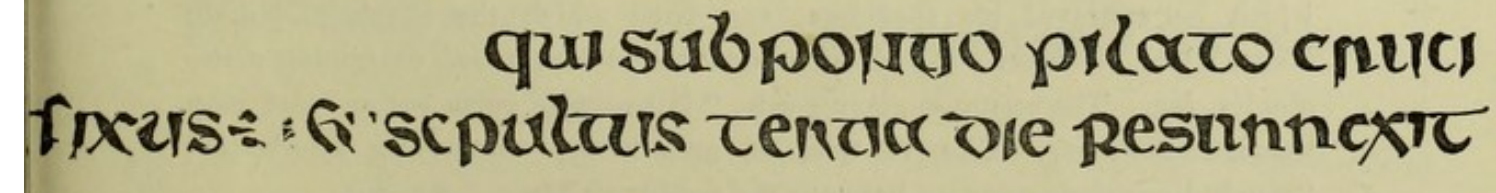
Of which *earliest* style of Anglo-Saxon writing, a monument till recently existed, belonging perhaps to the end of the sixth century. This was the book formerly in the Cottonian Library, destroyed by the fire, but of which Astle fortunately engraved a specimen. It was, traditionally, once the book of St. Augustin. In this monument of Saxon calligraphy, probably of the end of the sixth century, the R and C are much more Roman in form than in later Mss. (See specimen, No. 1, Plate XV.) Other Mss. of the period present the same peculiarity; and in the well-known *Codex Rusworthianus*, or Gospels, written by Macregol, most probably in Ireland, the letters are of this character; but among the capitals, the P is in the Greek form, *Π*.

The next most marked phase in Anglo-Saxon calligraphy is that termed

SET-SAXON.

This style was fully developed about the middle of the eighth century, and continued in use till the middle of the ninth. Its character is rather more flowing than the Roman-Saxon, as will be seen by reference to the specimen, No. 2, in Plate XV., from the Harleian Ms. No. 2965, of the eighth or ninth century. The specimen reads, "Dominus delecti et benedicti;" the word Dominus being abbreviated D̄s, with a dash to mark the abbreviation. The Set-Saxon was used in Wales to a much later period than in England, as proved by a Ms. of that style, with ornamental letters of even an earlier character, written by John de Gente Ceretica (of Cardiganshire), in the time of Sulgen, who was Bishop of St. David's in the reign of Edward the Confessor, in the eleventh century. A letter from this book is given in the Chronological Plate of Ornamental Letters (Plate XXIII.), where it is referred to an earlier period, as being in the well-known style of the seventh century. The Set-Saxon hand still closely resembles the Roman in general characteristics; but several examples of letters which have deviated from the Roman occur in it, such as 

The contemporary styles on the continent were similar to that of England, but without the Saxon peculiarities. A specimen given by Casley, to exhibit an ancient reading of the *Credo*, is a continental example of this period.



This example would seem to shew that the passage, "He descended into hell," was an interpolation; as in many early Mss. it is not found. The

passage above engraved reads, "Qui sub Pontio Pilato crucifixus est; et sepultus; tertia die resurrexit."

SAXON RUNNING-HAND.

Few Mss. were written in this hand till the reign of Alfred, under whose auspices learning was greatly diffused; and a consequent increased facility in rapid writing soon displayed itself. But in deeds or other public documents, as previously observed, a more cursive style than in ordinary Mss. had been adopted at an early period. The specimen I have selected to exhibit the cursive Saxon manner is from a Ms. (Plate XV. No. 3) in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, written about 891. The line reads, "Sed rursus eam quam munere plenam;" the last word being marked for two abbreviations,—one stroke only being used for n, and m being suppressed. The peculiarities of the s, and the e passing above the line, are constantly found in this style.

The next step in Anglo-Saxon calligraphy was the development of the more perfect and finished style, called

ELEGANT SAXON,

which is superior in regularity to any writing of the period on the continent; as was, indeed, the earliest "Roman-Saxon." The example (Plate XVII. No. 4), from the Homily of Elfric, Archbishop of Canterbury, is a fair specimen; and it was written in Saxon about the year 960 A.D. The abbreviation signifying "*that*," occurs twice in this specimen; which reads, in Saxon, "Ðat latoꝛ beð ðat hæꝛð oꝛȝin," &c.; which may be translated, "That which is latest, that hath beginning," &c. One of the most remarkable specimens of elegant Saxon writing, is the book containing Cædmon's poetical paraphrase of the books of Genesis and Daniel, written towards the close of the tenth century, and now in the Bodleian Library. The Saxon ꝓ (w) as used in ꝓitena-ȝemoꝛ, witena gemotes, or legislative assemblies, is evidently a corruption of the Roman V, written in the uncial manner ⱤⱤ: but the first stroke has been lengthened, by Saxon scribes, below the line; and this Saxon character doubled gives the form of our modern w, pp.

Among the earliest Mss. written in Scotland or Ireland in the Gaelic or Hiberno-Gaelic languages, is the one formerly in Mr. Astle's library, from which he engraved his specimen, and from which the example, No. 5, Plate XVII., is taken; it is from a book called *Emmanuel*, containing genealogies, &c. The example given reads, "Nirsatimini curio annso," and may be translated, as, "Observe this, or, nota bene;" continuing afterwards, "Such dissensions grew up between the nobles of Africa," &c. &c.

Mss. in the Irish language, though none are known of very early date, are often curious; and some of the writers would seem to have had access

FROM THE 6TH TO THE 11TH CENTURY.

N°1. abbas sirum pater

N°1. Specimen of the Earliest Style of Saxon, termed "Roman Saxon,"
6th Century.

N°2. Dilecq·abbedica

N°2. Specimen of the Style termed "Set Saxon,"
about 800 A.D.

N°3. [illegible]

N°3. Specimen of the Style termed "Cursive Saxon"
date 891, A.D.

N°4. [illegible]

N°4. Specimen of the Style termed "Elegant Saxon."
date 960, A.D.

N°5 [illegible]

N°5. Specimen from an Early Gælic M.S.

N°6 [illegible]

N°6. Specimen from an Hiberno-Gælic M.S.
10th or 11th Century.

N°7. †EGO SEBBI REX EAST SAX PRO

N°7. From a Charter of Sebbi, King of the East Saxons,
between 664 & 670 AD.

N°8 [illegible]

N°8. From a Saxon Charter, dated 704, A.D.

N°9 [illegible]

N°9. Portion of a Charter of Alfred the Great
from 800 to 825 A.D.

N°10 [illegible]

N°10. From a Charter of Edward the Confessor,
dated 1045 A.D.

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to older Latin Mss. than any now known; as, for instance, in a Ms. of the thirteenth century, a treatise on astronomy, described by Astle, several Latin words are spelt in the most ancient Roman manner, CS being used for X in Macsimus, instead of Maximus, and C for Q in catuor, instead of quatuor.

But the specimen I have thought best fitted to illustrate the style of an Irish modification of the Roman letters, similar to that effected by the Anglo-Saxon writers, is from an Irish Ms. of the tenth or eleventh century, in the Harleian Library, very carefully written in the Irish or Hiberno-Gaelic language. It contains a variety of tracts on various subjects, and is apparently a copy of an older work. The passage given as an example (No. 6, Plate XV.) reads, supplying the first letter, P, which is a large illuminated capital, "Poi ri aumrau aireagdai andeam hain Macho," the abbreviation being marked in the word andeam. In English, the passage reads, according to Astle, "There was a noble and famous family of Eman Macho," and the Ms. goes on to state, that of this family was "Concob Mac Factnae, in whose reign the Ultonians were a happy people," &c. It is stated by Vallancey that the Irish Druids possessed a kind of stenography, called the Ogham character; but this kind of short-hand is probably of much more recent origin. It is the character or cipher in which Charles I. corresponded when in Ireland, and has some analogy to the modern system of phonography; yet is rather a curtailment of the forms of existing consonants and vowels, than an attempt to classify, systematise, and note sounds by a series of arbitrary signs. It is formed by a series of figures, which receive their value according to their position in relation to a principal line, over, or beneath, or upon which they are placed, like the notation of music. The letters, twenty in number, are formed into seventeen groups, fifteen being consonants and five vowels.

The use of characters closely resembling the Anglo-Saxon continued partially in use in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales up to the fifteenth century; while in England they were superseded, in the eleventh century, by the Norman style. It will be necessary here to call the student's attention to the fact, that the same scribes wrote in a much more Roman style when writing Latin than when writing the Saxon, Gaelic, &c.; to suit which, many slight variations were made in the use of the letters, not practised when Latin was being written.

In concluding this brief analysis of the leading characteristics of Anglo-Saxon and Gaelic Mss., I shall give a series of examples from Anglo-Saxon charters, on examination of which it will be seen, that the cursive Italic or Lombardic style, used very generally on the continent in such documents, was not practised in England till a later period.

SPECIMENS FROM ANGLO-SAXON CHARTERS.

The earliest example I am able to give (No. 7, Plate XV.) is from a

charter of Sebbi, king of the East Saxons, before the style of English writing had formed its saxonised characteristics; it is, in fact, a fine example of what has been termed Roman Saxon. Sebbi, king of the East Saxons, was elected in the year 664, and the charter was most likely written between that epoch and 670, as the bishop, Ercnwaldus, whose signature (with others) the deed also bears, died in the last-named year. It is a charter making a certain grant to the abbey of Berking; the first line of which charter, after the sign of the cross, makes "Ego Sebbi Rex East-Saxˉ(onum), pro confirmatione subscripsi." The abbreviation, marked by a dash over Saxˉ, is supplied in the brackets.

It will be observed from these specimens and the accompanying remarks, that royal deeds, and other documents of that description written in England in Anglo-Saxon times, are generally in the set, careful hand, with uncials and capitals intermixed, which was used for valuable books, such as copies of the Gospels, &c. (see Plate from Durham Book); while in France similar deeds were written in the Roman cursive style, similar to the example engraved in Plate X. No. 1. There is another deed in the British Museum, similar to that of Sebbi, signed by Hlotharius, king of Kent in 679, the signature being simply a cross, described as the sign-manual of the king, as follows: "+Signum manus Hlothari regis." But the handwriting varied very considerably at that period, as now, especially in less carefully written documents; as an example of which the specimen engraved in Casley's Catalogue may be cited, beginning, "Maneatque nil hominis in sua firmitate hæc cartula," and dated the 13th of June 704; the style of writing of which slightly resembles what is commonly termed Lombardic in its slenderness and general character (see Plate XVII. No. 8). The annus Domini, or vulgar era, first became common about this period; and the date of this charter (704 A.D.) is perhaps one of the earliest examples of its use. The specimen I have selected to exhibit the state of Anglo-Saxon writing in the ninth century is from a deed of the reign of Alfred, preserved in the British Museum (Plate XVII. No. 9). It would appear, from the absence of the usual +, that the signature to this deed is wholly in the king's own handwriting; a supposition borne out by the fact, that it differs in style from that of the other portions of the deed, being written in a more free and cursive manner. This king's scholar-like attainments render it indeed improbable that he should have signed charters in the ordinary regal manner, with a +. Another monument of the Anglo-Saxon hand of this period, of high interest, is also preserved in the British Museum, namely, a charter, evidently written by the hand of St. Dunstan, or rather "by the action of his own fingers," as he graphically expresses it at the end of the document. It is carefully and evenly written throughout, but with a certain decision and boldness that seem in keeping with his well-known character. In the same national collection, among many other interesting documents of the period, is a charter of Canute, or rather, as it is written, Cnut, standing

thus: "+ Ego Cnut Rex* signo Sanctæ Crucis Christi roboravi et subscripsi;" but as the writing of the tenth century does not materially differ from that of the ninth, I must pass at once to the reign of the last Saxon king (except the usurper Harold), Edward the Confessor, who was, like his predecessor Alfred, a scholar, and whose own signature appears at the foot of a charter written in a character somewhat resembling the rustic Roman capitals of an earlier period, while the rest of the deed is in the more careful writing of the period. It is dated "Anno mil-quadragessimo-quinto (1045);" see Plate XV. No. 10, where a part of the last line is given.

The illuminations of Anglo-Saxon Mss. appear to have been founded on the Irish style, described in speaking of the Book of Kells and the Durham Book, though afterwards modified to a considerable extent through the influence of the style of Aix-la-Chapelle, described in the preceding chapter; but up to the ninth century it presented the peculiar dotted character, which is evidently derived from the Irish school. This dotting is generally red, a double or treble row of small red spots surrounding the outline of each capital letter. About the tenth century a style of rich calligraphic decoration arose, which has been deemed strictly national, and by some termed the Winchester school, from the finest known specimens having been executed there. A capital B, in Plate XXIII., will serve as an example of this style.

ABBREVIATIONS, MARKS OF ABBREVIATION, &c. &c.

This is perhaps the most proper place to speak of the abbreviations commonly used by medieval writers to abridge their labours. Such abbreviations occasionally cause considerable difficulty in the correct interpretation of the passage; but their adoption is excusable when we consider the labour of writing complete copies of the Bible by hand, especially as in most cases such contractions are so evident, that to those accustomed to read old Mss. they occasion little difficulty. The most common is the dn̄s or d s̄ for dominus, which, when once learnt, is never mistaken; and this and every other contraction is invariably marked by a dash above the word, as may be seen in the example No. 3, Plate XVI., where $\overline{\text{gra}}$ is used for gratia. The abbreviation of the word plenam (Specimen 3, Plate XV.), in cursive Saxon, is less evident, one line serving for the n, and the m being omitted; so that the sense alone can supply the omissions. The abbreviation for the word that,  (see Specimen 4, Plate XVIII.), is almost arbitrary; but such are few in number, and easily remembered. In the charter of Sebbi (Plate XVIII. No. 7) the word Saxonum is only written Sax, with the usual sign of abbreviation; but the already-cited examples will be sufficient to shew the manner in which such abbreviations were indicated. Contractions, similar to these, with those of the Latin termi-

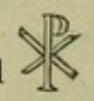
* In the tenth century, in the signature of Eadred; he is described by the Greek title of Basileus, instead of the Latin Rex.

nations unt, int, erunt, &c. are the most usual, the latter being found written as regt for regant, fuert for fuerunt, &c. &c.

Some of the most remarkable mistakes which have occurred in consequence of the contractions used in medieval Mss. may be illustrated by the following examples:

"*Christus* est veritas" was eventually written for "Spiritus est veritas," from the circumstance that the two words, as abbreviated in the Mss., only differed apparently in one letter, Spiritus being written *sps*, and Christus *xps;* for the Latins preserved the Greek letters in the name of Christ, and ignorant scribes mistook the Greek *rho* for the Latin *p*. By a similar error the Greek name *IHΣOYΣ* (Jesus) abbreviated as *IHΣ*, became IHS, the Greek sigma being written in the form of the Roman S. Afterwards, from the similarity of the Greek eta to the Roman H, the Latin scribes of the time took the liberty of writing it with the minuscule Roman h; thus depriving it of all its original meaning. The monogram, reduced to this form, has been sometimes interpreted *Iesus Hominum Salvator*. The dash, or mark of abbreviation above, was also submitted to a similar estrangement from its original purpose; and being considered a portion of the "cross," was eventually completed in the following manner: IĦS.

In Greek Mss. this mode of abbreviation was not usual, the words ιησους χριστος being generally written ις̄ χς̄. But on the Greco-Roman coinage of the family of Constantine the Great, issued at Constantinople, the word *XPIΣTOΣ* was abbreviated in the manner of a monogram, sometimes used as the principal type of the coin, in the form of the annexed woodcut.



The word *Δαβιδ* (David) is found abbreviated as *Δδ*, so that the full spelling in Greek is not shewn; but *β* (a Greek Beta) for *v*, is common in Greek orthography. Casley remarks that many historical names are strangely changed in translation, such as the "Xerxes" of the Greek historians to "Ahasuerus" in the Bible. But modern discoveries in cuneatic writing have shewn, that in that and other instances, the Biblical spelling is nearer to the Assyrian or Persian than that of the ancient Greek historians. This is especially remarkable in the name of Xerxes, which, according to Grotefend's reading of the cuneatic characters in which it is written, is composed of the following letters, KH-SCH-H-E-R-SCH-E. The Jao of the Bible being changed to the Jehovah of modern translation, is another example, the last form being unheard of till Luther's time.

The absence of any dot over the i, and the great similarity in the mode of writing u, v, m, and n, with the use of u for v and *vice versâ*, render the reading of words in which these letters occur somewhat uncertain, as may easily be imagined, when it is considered that the word minimum was written apparently with fifteen parallel strokes, and could only be made out by the sense of the context. It is from this cause that the dispute has arisen, whether the paleographic term uncial should not be inicial, or rather *initial*. It

was only in the twelfth century that the i began to be distinguished by a small hair-stroke, and not till the fifteenth that a conspicuous "dot" was used. As an illustration of another kind of mistake consequent on contractions, and the unsettled form of early cursive writing, I may cite the well-known example of the eleven thousand virgins of the calendar, at the twelfth of the kalends of November; some blundering reader made out of the first word of "Undecimilla, virgo et martyr," *Undecim mille*, or eleven thousand; and subsequent transcribers accepting such a tempting enrichment of the calendar as eleven thousand virgins and martyrs, altered also the last two words, and wrote boldly, "*Undecimille virgines et martyres.*" Thus, instead of a single victim, the unfortunate Undecimilla, a diminutive of Undecima, the name of a girl so called, possibly from being the eleventh child of her parents, the calendar became enriched with the record of eleven thousand martyrdoms.

Many mistakes or forgeries have occurred in the process of putting Greek Mss. into Latin, the seventh verse of the fifth chapter of St. John's Epistles being now well known to be spurious, being in fact a passage from St. Cyprian, and not found in the more ancient Greek Mss. of St. John's Epistles.

THE SAXON ALPHABET.

Anglo-Saxon.			English.	Anglo-Saxon.			English.
Ⱥ	A	a	a	N	n		n
	B	b	b	O	o		o
Ꞇ	C	c	c	P	p		p
	D	ð	d	R	ꞥ		r
E	Ꞓ	e	e	S	ſ		s
	F	ꝼ	f	T	ꞇ		t
Ꞩ	G	ȝ	g	Ð	ꝑ	ð þ	th
H	ꞕ	h	h	U	u		u
	I	ı	i	Ƿ	ƿ	p	w
	K	k	k	X			x
	L	l	l	Y	ẏ		y
M	Ꟙ	m	m	Z	z		z

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PROGRESS OF THE ART OF WRITING, AND ITS ILLUMINATION IN ENGLAND, FROM THE NORMAN INVASION TO THE INVENTION OF PRINTING; WITH SOME EXAMPLES OF ITS VARIATIONS OF STYLE ON THE CONTINENT, TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

THE writing introduced by the Normans differed but slightly in its main features from that in use among the Anglo-Saxons. But it was derived more directly from the debased Roman or Italic style, which had remained in use in France ever since the fall of the Roman Empire. The same kind of Italic writing had also been in use in Scotland and Ireland when writing Latin, especially in deeds and charters, and occasionally even in England, though the careful development of the Anglo-Saxon had, to a certain extent, superseded it. The specimen of English writing in the reign of the first Anglo-Norman king (Plate XVIII. No. 1,) is in a style which had already occasionally appeared in the reign of Edward the Confessor, and seems to foreshadow the establishment of the fine angular writing, termed the modern Gothic, which gradually developed itself towards the end of the twelfth century, and attained its greatest regularity and perfection in the fourteenth. But there are other specimens of the reign of William I., in which this approaching transition is not so remarkable, as in the smaller writing from a deed of the same period, engraved immediately below (see Plate XVI. No. 2). This deed commences, the abbreviations being supplied, "Willielmus Rex Anglorum H. de Portu et omnibus fidelibus suis Francigenis et Anglicis salutem" [William, king of the English, to H. de Portu, and all his faithful (subjects), French and English, health, &c.].

In the reign of Henry I. the writing, as exhibited in the specimen (Plate XVII. No. 3), shews the same transitional aspect, but not in so marked a manner; while other specimens of the period exhibit a set Norman character.

The specimen, Plate XVII. No. 5, is from a book of inquisitions made in the county of Lincoln, about the year 1104, for Robert of Caen, a natural son of Henry I. It reads, "Nigellas de Abaneio habet," &c.; and in expression and calligraphy is of completely Norman character, with scarcely an admixture of Saxon style, though only forty-four years after the Conquest.

The next specimen of charter writing is of the reign of Stephen. It begins

C. HUMPHREYS LITH.

DAY & SON, LITH^RS TO THE QUEEN.

FIRST PAGE OF A PROVENÇAL M.S. (FROM COUNT BASTARD'S GREAT WORK)

to exhibit a steady Norman influence, the fine regularity of the best specimens of Anglo-Saxon having disappeared (Plate XVIII. No. 4½).

The set upright hand used in careful manuscripts of this period, especially religious books, is well exemplified by the example from a Psalter, written in the reign of Stephen (Plate XVII. No. 4¾). It will be seen that it is much more even than that of the previous charter. At this period, and throughout the twelfth century, the Roman character, which appeared in the decorative capital letters in the reign of Charlemagne, became, to a certain extent, superseded; but not all at once, for many transition stages might be cited; and among others, the remarkable one which prevailed in the south of France, a splendid specimen of which, from a Provençal Ms. of the eleventh century, I have copied from Count Bastard's great work. (Plate VII.) This capital L exhibits in its ornamentation many of the characteristics which distinguish the Italian illuminations of a later period (the fourteenth century), but combines also the curious interlacing features from Lombardic and Hibernian Mss., which were used in a modified manner in those of the reign of Charlemagne, a style peculiar to the school of Aix-la-Chapelle.

The transitions from the Carlovingian style of illumination were eventually succeeded by a florid and original taste, which, though to a certain extent founded on a reminiscence of the acanthus scroll-work of the Romans, was yet so intricate in its character, and so bold and novel in its elaborations, as to claim the rank of a new and original style of ornament, which, in architecture, stained glass, and all kinds of jewellery, displayed its capacity for splendour of effect. The magnificent capital I (Plate XIX.), grouped with N and smaller letters to form the words "In principio" (which begin the Gospel of St. John in the Latin version), will convey an excellent general idea of this style; and other examples in the plates of illuminated capital letters (Plates XXIII. and XXIV.) will exhibit some of its varieties.

In the reign of Richard I. the cursive style of French and Italian deeds appears to have been adopted in England, which is strongly indicated in the example, Plate XVI. No. 6, by the long upward tails of some of the letters, and by the more flowing general style, strongly resembling similar documents executed in France and Normandy. Indeed, it is possible that the deed in question was written by a French or Norman scribe.

The next specimen, from a charter or deed of the reign of John, exhibits still more strongly the usual characters of the long-tailed letters as they are found in French charters, and bulls of the popes, of that and an earlier period. The marks across the tails of the tall letters might confuse a person not accustomed to read old manuscripts, especially that of the l in this example, making it appear like a t; but these are invariably either ornament or marks of abbreviation. In the charter of John, it will be seen, that the sharpness of the character of the modern "Gothic," as it is termed, is nearly complete. The charter commences with a recitation of the royal and other titles, at full

length, as they eventually appeared on the coins of Edward I., and were long afterwards retained, "Rex Angliæ, Dominus Hiberniæ, Dux Normanniæ, Aquitaniæ, et Comes Ardigaviæ," &c. (King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy, Aquitaine, and Count of Anjou, &c.) The famous Magna Charta, of which a perfect original copy exists in the Record-house at Westminster, exhibits a similar character of writing to that of the present deed.

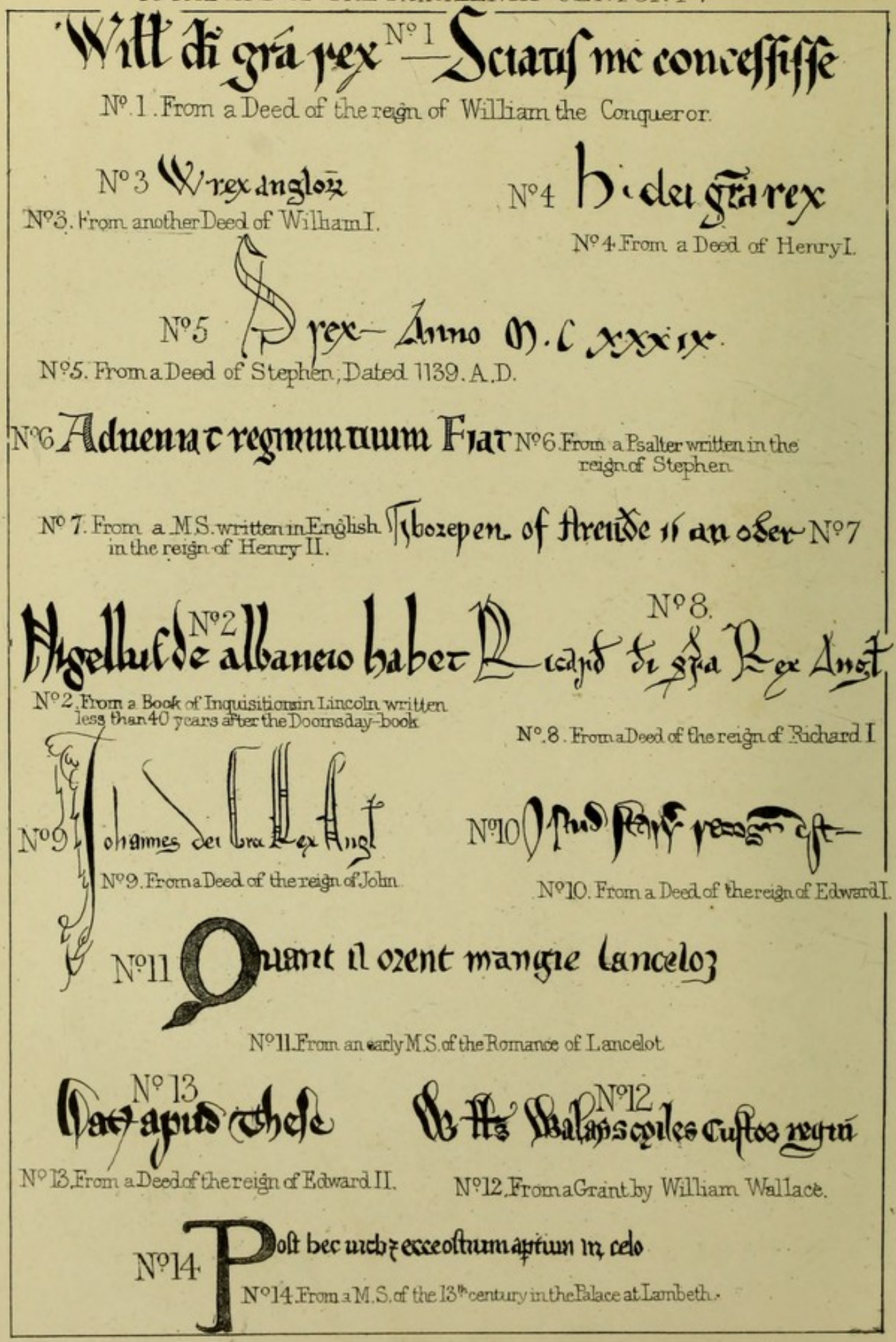
The set writing used for books at this period is well exemplified by the specimen No. 8½, Plate XVI., from a French Ms. of the romance of Lancelot, which is evidently of a somewhat later period than that supposed by Astle (eleventh century). It may be read, "Quand il orent mangae, Lanceloz," &c., which is from the passage, "When he had eaten, Lancelot begged the king that he would cause his arms to be brought to him."

That the national language, a compound of the Saxon mixed with other ingredients, which afterwards blended itself with the Norman-French of the invaders, and so formed a peculiar and distinct tongue, began to be used at an early period of Anglo-Norman rule, not only as the spoken language of the country, but also as a written, though as yet unsettled language, is shewn by the specimen of writing, No. 7, Plate XVI., which is in the English language of the time, reign of Henry II. A passage from this Ms. has been engraved by Astle, which reads,—"I borwen, of Strengthe, Fortitudo, that is Godes strengthe," &c. &c.; a portion of which appears in my specimen.

The specimens Nos. 8 and 9, Plate XVIII. are of the reign of Edward I., and exhibit the marked peculiarities found in similar legal documents of the time written in France and Italy, where the corporations or guilds of writers had never been dissolved, and where the official scribes were a race descending lineally from those of Roman times, but which in England were only just beginning to be formed. I shall have to shew that this *law-hand*, like that of the present day, was in some degree distinct from that of such private individuals as could write, and also from that of the calligraphers, who wrote in a more regular and more ornamental and careful style for books. The former is more distinctly tachygraphy, or rapid writing, as implied by the name; in which, nevertheless, certain embellishments, of a nature to be rapidly executed, were aimed at, such as strong and greatly-extended extremities to the tailed letters, and certain flourishes that could be easily thrown off *currente calamo*. The book-scribes, on the other hand, aimed, above all, at legibility and regularity, forming their letters in that careful and regular manner, which, at a somewhat later period, formed the model for the first printing types—the earliest *printed* books being an exact imitation of the style of the best *written* books of the period.

In the specimens from deeds executed in the reigns of Edward I. and Edward II. we have seen the style of writing assume all the characteristics of the regular modern Gothic, except that extreme regularity and completeness of

SPECIMENS OF WRITING FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO THE END OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.



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style which are displayed in the best specimens of writing during the succeeding reign.

The Scots appear to have been as advanced as the English in the art of writing, but the earlier monuments are not so numerous. The earliest charter of which Anderson gives a specimen is one of Duncan, the son of Malcom, in a style of writing similar to the English manner of the period. It begins, "Ego Dunecanus," &c.; at the foot of the deed are the *crosses* of ten attesting witnesses besides that of the king, to which the words "*crux Dunecani regis*" are attached. One of the other crosses is that of the writer himself, to which is appended his name and profession—Scribtor Grentonis—proving that it was not always the inability to write which caused the sign of the cross to be used instead of the name, but that after a time the sacred character of that sign was deemed necessary even in addition to it.

The next specimens given by Anderson are, a charter of Edgar, and one of Alexander, after which period such monuments become common. One of the most interesting of the specimens which follow is a charter or grant of the celebrated William Wallace, as governor of the kingdom and leader of the armies for John Baliol, dated the 8th day of March 1298, granting to one Alexander called "the Skirmisher" (Alexandro dicto Skirmishur) six marks of land in the territory of Dundee for military services. The specimen (Plate XVI. No. $9\frac{1}{2}$) reads (the abbreviations being supplied), *Willelmus Walays miles custos regni*, &c. The seal of John Baliol is appended to this charter.

The metallic inscriptions of the coinage, and also lapidary inscriptions of various kinds, are beyond the province of this work; but it may be stated that the set form of the regular semi-capitals used on the money had become settled at a somewhat earlier period, but in a style differing from that of Mss.; while the true angular and regular form of the modern Gothic letter was not attained in England till the reign of Edward III.

But before passing to the fourteenth century, we must take a summary review of the state of English writing in general in the thirteenth. The series of specimens of legal and public documents just described have afforded a sufficient general idea of that branch of the art; but a specimen of the more carefully written style, executed by calligraphers for religious and other books, has yet to be supplied. Up to the twelfth century, nearly the whole range of manuscript books was confined to copies of the Gospels and other religious works; but after that period copies of the ancient classical authors began to be much more general, as also metrical romances, chronicles, &c. As a fair example of the general manner of writing such books in the thirteenth century, I have given a specimen of that epoch from a Ms. in Lambeth Palace. (No. $9\frac{3}{8}$, Plate XVIII.) But a much larger and more decorative hand was frequently used in expensive devotional books, which were frequently much ornamented, especially Psalters; the first page in copies of the

Psalms of David being generally richly illuminated; the large B beginning the words Beatus vir, &c. of the Latin version sometimes filling the entire page, and being woven into a composition of most elaborate ornament. Of the earlier and simpler style in which these gigantic letters were decorated in this century, the page from a Ms. in the Arundel Collection (British Museum) will afford a good example. In the upper portion of this composition the figure of Christ holding the book of the Gospels occupies a central medallion, and on either side are placed the symbols of the four Evangelists. In the upper part of the B, David appears carrying his book of Psalms to the Temple; and in the lower portion, heavenly and earthly music, and that of the infernal regions, are represented; the first, by an angel playing the harp; the second, by David, who holds a kind of viol; while the third kind is symbolised by a demon playing upon a kind of tambourine.

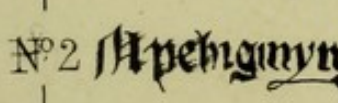
In the latter part of the thirteenth century the illuminated ornaments became more intricate, angular, and in fact *Gothic* in their character, the capital letters of ordinary pages generally terminating in a long tail-like ornament, descending sometimes to the bottom of the page, and forming a kind of border; specimens of which style may be seen in Plates XXIII., XXIV., illustrating the general progress of ornament in illuminated capital letters.

The first quarter of the fourteenth century is distinguished in the English annals by the commencement of the brilliant reign of Edward III., during which the national progress in skilful writing was not less marked than that in architecture and other branches of art. The fine bold hand in which deeds and other public documents were written in this reign is regular and beautiful as well as bold, of which the specimen No. 1, Plate XIX. is a fine example. It reads, supplying the E, which was left blank by the scribe for an illuminated letter, Edwardus Dei gratia Rex Angliæ, Dominus Hiberniæ, Dux Aquitaniæ, &c., and was given at York in the twelfth year of the reign.

The translation of the Bible by Wickliff is a fine monument of the English language in the beginning of the fourteenth century, and also affords us, through the medium of a Ms. in the Harleian library, containing the two books of Maccabees, and the New Testament, an interesting specimen of the style of book-writing at that period. Our specimen is from the Gospel of St. John, and reads, supplying the large illuminated I, "In ye beginyn was ye word;" it continues in the original, "and the word was at God, and God was ye word; yis was in ye beginyn at God; alle yingis weren maid by him, and wt outen him was maad no ying, yat ying yt was maad: in him was liif, and ye liif was ye lizt of men." The y, or h reversed, was used to signify "th" in much earlier times, and was continued at a later period. The double ii in this passage supplies the place of a final e in life, and the double aa is made to perform the same office in made, sometimes written as maid; which are curious transitional signs in the notation of our language.

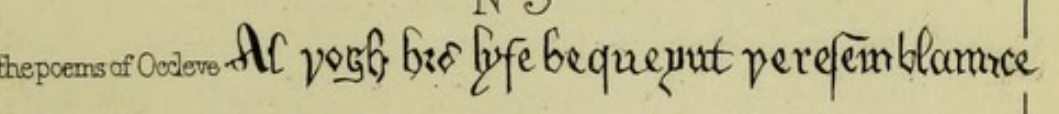
SPECIMENS OF WRITING FROM THE REIGN OF EDWARD III, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 14TH CENTURY, TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 15TH CENTURY.

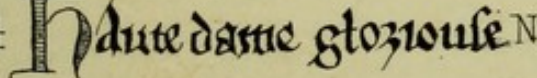
Nº 1. From a Deed of the reign of Edward III

Nº 2 

Nº 2. From a M.S. of Wickliff's translation of the Bible

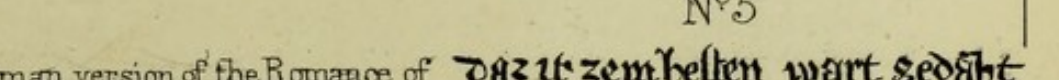
Nº 3

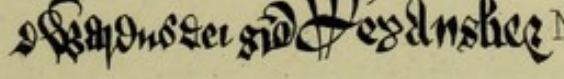
Nº 3. From a M.S. of the poems of Occleve 

Nº 4 

Nº 4. From a French poem, written in the 14th century.

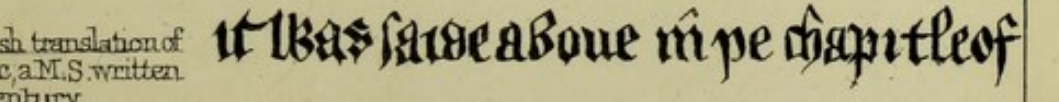
Nº 5

Nº 5. From a German version of the Romance of Lancelot written in the 14th century 

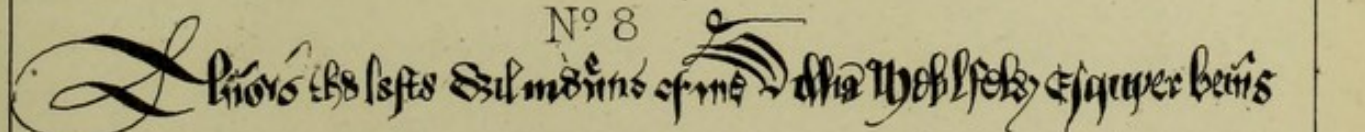
Nº 6 

Nº 6. From a Deed of the reign of Edward IV

Nº 7.

Nº 7. From an English translation of the works of Chauliac, a M.S. written in the 14th century. 

Nº 8



Nº. 8. From the Will of William Mikelfeld dated Novr 7. 1439

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The specimen from the poems of Occleve (No. 3, Plate XIX.) is an example of a very different hand of the period, and is to be read, adding the lines which follow:—

"Althogh his lyfe be queynt, the resemblaunce
Of him hay in me so fresshe lyflynesse
That to putte othir men in remembraunce."

"Although his life be quench'd, the resemblance
Of him hath in me so fresh liveliness
That to put other men in remembrance."

It is a passage from his poem "De Regimine Principis."

As a specimen of writing on the continent at this period, I cannot give a better instance than the following example (Plate XIX. No. 4), from a French poem written in the beginning of the fourteenth century, and commencing:—

"Haute dame gloriouse,
Ta joie fu merveillouse,
Al oure ĺr tu transis
De ceste vie enviose."

The next example (Plate XIX. No. 5) is a specimen of the very neat German-Gothic hand of the period.

The two continental examples just described, though from most carefully written manuscripts, are fully equalled by the following English specimen of the period (Plate XIX. No. 6), from a fine English Ms. now in the great French collection, and of which Messrs. Champollion and Sylvestre have engraved an entire page. The manuscript contains an English translation of the "Inventory of Medicine" of Gui de Chauliac.

Though the plain writing of the fourteenth century may be considered an advance on that of the thirteenth, the illuminated letters have no longer the size or importance of those of preceding epochs. Decorative ornament took another course at this time; and instead of gigantic letters (which, however, are occasionally found) rich brackets fill the margins of the pages, clipping round the text with ramifications of ornament as intricate as lace-work. To this feature was added a great profusion of illustrative miniatures, richly emblazoned with gold, and with backgrounds formed of elaborate patterns, similar to mosaic work. Some idea of this kind of decoration may be formed from the examination of the letters of this epoch, given in the plates (XXIII. and XXIV.) of illuminated capitals, in which the peculiar Italian style of the fourteenth century will be found to be very distinct.

The fifteenth century is the period of which specimens of the Ms. books of modern Europe are most abundant and most easily procured; and as the writing is more showy, and the illuminated decorations more profuse, it is also the period which is generally the first to make an impression upon the student and collector. But the earlier periods, especially the sixth and

seventh centuries, and also the eighth and twelfth, never fail eventually to assert their high interest and importance as grand epochs in the progress of the art. The Plates XXIII. and XXIV. contain a series of illuminated capitals, reduced to uniform size, and chronologically arranged, in order to exhibit at one view the whole progress of the art of illuminating the letters of Mss. in every phase of its decorative development.

In order to arrive at once at the complete character of the ordinary written documents of the fifteenth century, we may pass over the transitional epochs occupied by the reigns of Richard II. and the fourth, fifth, and sixth Henries; selecting our first specimen from a deed executed in the reign of Edward IV. (Plate XIX. No. 7), in which the kind of decorative penmanship is found which became prevalent in Mss. of every class at that period—particularly in the Rubrics, or headings written in *red* ink at the head of each chapter; from which custom our term *Rubric* is derived.

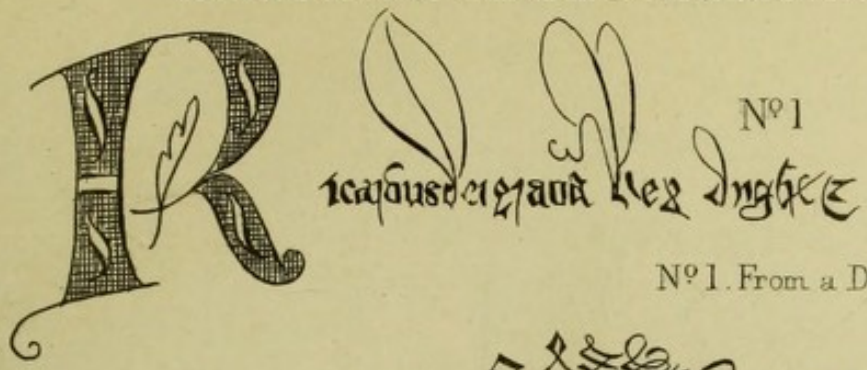
The next example (Plate XIX. No. 8) is from an interesting specimen of a private document, the will of William Mekelfeld, *Esqueyr*, dated November 7, 1439, which exhibits a similar character of decorative penmanship.

In the short reign of Richard III., as will be seen by the specimen (Plate XX. No. 1), the style of penmanship, though of the same character as that of the preceding examples, was apparently less decorative; and my example is nearly the last specimen of the long-tailed letters in the style originally founded on the Lombardic, but which had been some time abandoned in France, though still partially retained in England.

The accession of Henry VII., accompanied as he was by French and Flemish retainers, introduced a change founded on the existing style of the continent, where the arts were then far in advance of our own; and some of the deed-writing of this reign presents, consequently, very rich examples both of flourishing penmanship and also painted illuminations. The commencement of a deed (Plate XX. No. 3,) exhibits the decorative penmanship alluded to. It is of more elaborate style than any of our previous examples. The date is the fourth year of the reign, and it is signed at "Westminster."

The next example (Plate XX. No. 3), from a deed of the following reign, shews the final decline of the style just alluded to; it is of the thirteenth year of the reign of Henry VIII.

Although this kind of penmanship may be said to have declined in England as an art, it nevertheless continued to be practised in the heading of deeds, even to the eighteenth century; in some cases with greater elaboration than in the specimens shewn, as may be seen by reference to almost any old family document prior to the middle of the last century. But in Germany it not only did not decline after the commencement of the sixteenth century, but for a time developed itself with such profuseness and success, that its examples form fine studies of the harmonies of curved lines, and the variety of effect to be produced by their intricate interlacings, and contrast

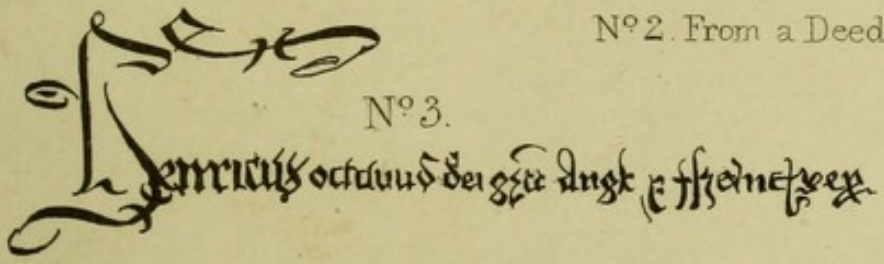


Nº 1

Nº 1. From a Deed of Richard III.

Nº 2.

Nº 2. From a Deed of Henry VII.



Nº 3.

Nº 3. From a Deed of Henry VIII.

Nº 4.

quod dicatur magister, vbi hi

Nº 4. From an English M.S. of the beginning of the 15th Century.

Nº 5.

katheyme vreyge et

Nº 5. From a Fine German M.S. of the 15th Century.

Nº 6

deutscher engel das hat gem=

zwyfling mit einander die selb

Nº 6. Specimen of the cursive Gothic hand in France in the 15th Century.

Nº 7.

fecunduatem modo celi per multra

Nº 7. From a M.S. in the rounded hand of Italy in the 15th Century.

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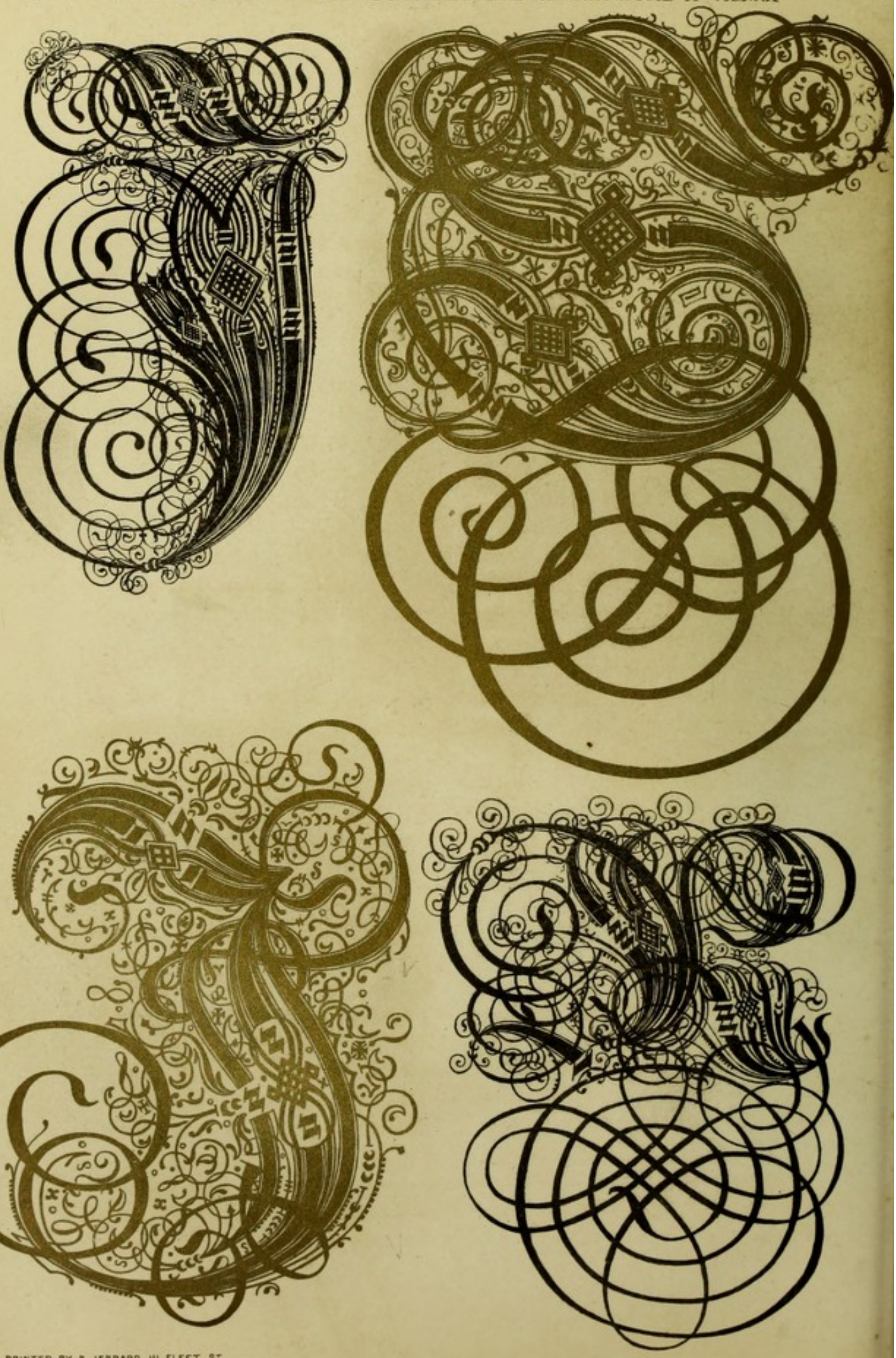
GERMAN DECORATIVE WRITING.

17TH CENTURY—FROM FAC-SIMILES EXECUTED IN THE IMPERIAL PRINTING OFFICE OF VIENNA



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of strength and slenderness. By the kindness of Mr. Trübner, who has favoured me with a sight of some noble specimens of this class of writing, I am enabled to give four examples in Plate XXI., taken from the facsimiles executed by order of the Austrian government for the imperial printing-office of Vienna. This kind of decoration was sometimes used in Germany in the later Ms. books, a fine example of which is preserved in the British Museum, in a Ms. entitled *Splendor Solis*, an alchemical work, which is also most beautifully illuminated with painted borders of flowers and animals on a gold ground.

This is the last epoch of interest in the history of writing as the sole means of producing books, and the consequent distribution of knowledge; for at the beginning of the fifteenth century printing had been some forty or fifty years established, and though written books were still executed, especially highly decorative ones, as luxuries for the rich, yet the profession of the calligrapher had received a deadly blow, and but few books, comparatively speaking, were *written*,—that is to say, as a manufacturing trade, the writing of books rapidly fell into disuse, and the beauty of the writing itself waned with the decline of the profession. Even on the continent, the guilds and companies of writers that had existed from an epoch previous to the fall of the Roman Empire, and had become so rich and busy in the middle ages, were about to disappear. The art of the illuminator was, however, still in demand, for the printed books were at first as richly illuminated as Mss., spaces being left for rich capitals to be introduced by hand; among the finest examples of which are the early printed Bibles of Gutenberg, and those of Fust and Schœffer. The life of Sforza Duke of Milan, bequeathed, with his library, to the British Museum, by Mr. Grenville, is also an example of a printed book splendidly illuminated; as are a whole series of books richly illustrated with miniatures executed for Henry VII., which are carefully preserved in the printed book department of the same national establishment.

After the reign of Henry VIII. the writing used in royal grants, and other legal instruments, soon became very like what we see in similar documents of the present day, though for a time the first letter was frequently illuminated.

The fine Gothic writing found in Ms. books of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century has been divided into three classes,—first, the deed Gothic, of which the specimens just described are fair examples; secondly, the set-cursive Gothic; and thirdly, the set-upright,—the two latter styles being only used for books; the set-cursive principally for chronicles, romances, &c.; the set-upright for books of devotion: but the two styles sometimes change places in this respect. Towards the end of the fifteenth, and beginning of the sixteenth century, the set-upright nearly disappeared, the latest Mss. being nearly all in the set-cursive manner. Of the set-upright, an example from an English Ms. preserved in the British Museum (Arundel, 109) will suffice;

it is of the first half of the fifteenth century, and written in a fine upright regular hand, with brilliantly black ink (Plate XX. No. 4).

The next specimen (Plate XX. No. 5), an example from a very splendidly written Ms., exhibits the upright set Gothic as it is found in a fine Ms. written in Flanders during the fifteenth century; and the following specimen (Plate XX. No. 6) exhibits the set-cursive manner as practised in France at the same epoch. It is from one of the finest Mss. of the Bibliothèque Nationale, containing some of the most exquisite illuminated decorations that are known, especially some beautiful miniatures in *grisaille*, as it is termed, that is, entirely executed in different shades of grey, which produces a very pleasing effect, particularly in the illuminated borders. This beautiful Ms. contains the life of S. Catherine, translated into French by John Mielot for Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, which fixes its date between 1419 and 1467.

These styles of Gothic hand, which had been perfecting themselves in western and northern Europe ever since the twelfth century, when first the rounded forms of the Roman uncial letters began to be abandoned, never attained the same degree of angularity or perfection in Italy. In that peninsula, where the ruins of ancient art strewed the ground in every direction, the preference for classical forms over medieval ones began to preponderate in the fifteenth century, and the practitioners of the new feeling then evolved have since become known as the *cinquecentisti*. In writing, as in other arts, this feeling prevailed, and the angular forms of the Gothic letters were abandoned by degrees for rounded letters, imitated from the *uncial* characters of late Roman Mss. The specimen (Plate XX. No. 7) is a fair example of this style of Italian writing, which was generally adopted in the fifteenth century. It is from a Ms. copy of the works of Columella, and is one of the Arundel Mss. (No. 61) now in the British Museum. In the earliest printed books of Italy this character is imitated as exactly as the angular Gothic was in those of the north of Europe. The style of the Italian printing-types eventually prevailed over that of its northern inventors; and the characters of our present printed books are but slight modifications of those of the specimen of Italian Mss. just described.

Although highly decorative calligraphy may be said to have ceased after the beginning of the sixteenth century, yet the subsequent history of writing is far from being devoid of interest; for about that period, and indeed for more than half a century previously, it had become a more general accomplishment among private persons. So that where we quit the falling professors of the art, whose calling was taken from them by the printing-press, with the exception of engrossing for the lawyers, a trade still active, we find the practice of the art by private and unprofessional hands commencing; and in a series of examples from letters and other private documents from the earliest examples known to the present time, I shall attempt to shew the leading modifications which the national handwriting, as an art in general use, has undergone during the last

H.N. Humphrey, lith.

Day & Son, Lith^rs to The Queen

DECORATIVE LETTER FROM AN ITALIAN MANUSCRIPT.

XV^TH CENTURY, A. D.

four centuries. For although each person (not a professed scribe), in practising the art of writing, has invariably had a style marked by certain individual characters, yet each example is stamped with the general impress of the age in which the writers lived; and thus, though different in detail, all private handwriting, of the fifteenth century, for instance, has, overlying the individual peculiarities, a general character belonging to the age; and the same may be said of the sixteenth century and subsequent periods.

But before quitting the subject of the calligraphic art and its professors in the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, I must not omit to mention the illuminators of this epoch, as they carried the art to its highest pitch of finish and elaboration.

In the early periods of the art even those portions of Ms. books which were the work of the pencil were doubtless, in most instances, executed by the same hand as those produced by the pen, and the writer and illuminator were one and the same person. But at a later period, in such works as were executed by monks, who were, up to the fourteenth century, among the chief producers of Mss., the business was no doubt distributed to the most skilful in each branch of art in each monastery — one taking the plain writing, for instance, another the decorative capitals, and another the illuminated borderings or illustrative miniatures.

This division of labour was more strictly defined when the greatly increased demand for books, in the fifteenth century, caused great trading establishments for their production to spring up, especially in Flanders, in which the principle was well carried out. Bruges became in consequence a great mart for richly illuminated books at that period; and in many Mss. executed by the "manufacturers," which have remained incomplete, spaces are found left blank, for the capitals and other illustrations to be added by the illuminator after the scribe or writer had performed his allotted task.

The style of book-decorations became much more rich during the fifteenth century, first by the great increase of elaboration in the lace-work of the enriched bracket of the preceding epoch, which had now become a continued and often magnificent border, though still of open work; and afterwards by the preparation of richly coloured grounds upon which the designs or patterns were painted; upon these richly coloured grounds, natural flowers, beautifully wrought shells, feathers, jewels, and a variety of other objects, were most exquisitely painted, the compositions being more or less homogeneous and artistically excellent, according to the skill and taste of the artist.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, such was the taste for Ms. books enriched in this manner, that great artists were employed upon them, and Flemish Mss. were illuminated throughout by such pencils as those of Hemmling, Lucas von Leyden, and others, and Italian ones by Girolamo de' Libri and Giulio Clovio. The wonderful beauty and value of some of the specimens so enriched may be easily conceived. In Italy, in the early part

of the fifteenth century, a very elegant style of white interlaced ornaments, on coloured grounds, prevailed, which is not found elsewhere (see Plate XXIV. No. 2). And in the latter part of that epoch and the beginning of the sixteenth century, some of the gigantic letters of the great Italian choral books were truly magnificent, of which the specimen, Plate XXV., is a good, though somewhat coarse example. But a small capital letter O in Plate XXIV. may serve to convey some idea of the intricacy and beauty with which works of this kind were occasionally elaborated in Italy. The beauty of Flemish illuminated letters of the same period may be estimated from one or two examples in the same plate; and to cite one or two Mss. of the most usual styles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I may mention the Prayer-Book of Henry VI. and the Chronicles of England written and illuminated for Edward IV., as examples of two styles of open work, and the Romance of the Rose, and a Missal illustrated by Hemmling, as fine examples of illuminated borders of flowers and other ornaments, on gold, or richly coloured grounds. All these, and many other magnificent specimens, are in the British Museum. The finest example of Italian art of the end of the fifteenth century in England is probably the Missal illuminated for the Duchess of Urbino, preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, which is scarcely surpassed by the Dante, illuminated by Giulio Clovio, in the library of the Vatican. Hundreds of other examples, in many variations of style, might be cited; yet as the art of illumination after that period became separated from writing, it does not strictly form part of the subject of this work. But, as before stated, the specimens chronologically arranged in Plates XXIII. and XXIV. exhibit a series of examples up to the period of its final decline.

A SERIES OF CAPITAL LETTERS
EXHIBITING THE DIFFERENT STYLES OF ORNAMENTATION EMPLOYED
FROM THE VIITH TO THE XIVTH CENTURY.

A SERIES OF CAPITAL LETTERS,

EXHIBITING THE DIFFERENT STYLES OF ORNAMENTATION EMPLOYED

FROM THE XVTH TO THE XVIITH CENTURY.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE PRESENT ROUND AND CURSIVE HAND, AND ON THE ORIGIN OF PUNCTUATION, THE USE OF CAPITALS, &c.

BEFORE proceeding to describe the manner in which the sharp Gothic writing of the fifteenth century gave place to the regular curves and symmetrical flow of the round-hand of recent times, as taught in our modern writing-schools, I must retrace my steps, for the purpose of taking a hasty general review of the former stages of the art; not only as regards the earlier forms of our own alphabetic characters, but also in relation to punctuation, to arbitrary abbreviations, and to the systematic use of capital letters under certain circumstances.

First, and with the view of dismissing the subject briefly, as not strictly within the province of this work, I must say a word on the subject of punctuation. In its present well-regulated form, this is quite a modern invention, and was, in any thing like its systematised application at the present day, unknown to the ancients. In the most ancient inscriptions the words were not even separated by a space, the letters of an entire line being equidistant, without any thing to indicate the separation of the words.

In later inscriptions the words are sometimes separated by a slight interval; but still, as no signs of punctuation occur, the end of a sentence is often difficult to detect. Latin writers endeavoured to obviate this defect, and assist the reader, by occasionally inverting the order of certain words, and placing the nominative case, or the verb, arbitrarily at the end of a sentence, in which position it not only fulfilled the office of completing the suspended sense, but also stood in place of a period or stop. In medieval times, a slight dash resembling a comma was occasionally used for separating sentences; but a complete system of punctuation, by signs representing different degrees of rest, or pause, to be observed in reading a passage, is of quite recent growth, and even now unsettled by any authoritative code of law, as almost all eminent writers pursue a method of their own, each having many peculiarities, though the general principles observed are closely similar.

Of the abbreviations to which I called attention in describing the Mss. of the middle ages, few were retained after the invention of printing; for when entire books were no longer written by hand, the necessity for abridging the labour of the writer was no longer a matter of such primary importance; the time saved by abbreviations in writing a letter of two or three pages being

comparatively unimportant; while that saved in writing volumes of 400 pages was a very serious matter. A few abbreviations, however, remained in use till within very recent date, such as y^e for the, y^r for your, &c.; but even these are now entirely abandoned, and in a modern letter would be considered antiquated barbarisms.

The use of capitals as a mode of emphasising the commencement of a sentence, or marking the importance of a special word, also forms one of the modern additions to former modes of writing. In ancient inscriptions the letters were in the full unabbreviated form which we now term capitals, and were throughout the whole inscription of the same character. In the more cursive style afterwards adopted for Mss., termed uncial, all the letters were still alike; that is to say, no special word or sentence was commenced with a letter of a different character to the bulk of the text, except in Mss. written on purple vellum in letters of *silver*, in which the names of the Saviour and the Deity, and others of a sacred character, were occasionally written in *gold*, as a distinctive mark (see Plate XIV*. No. 4). Previous to this epoch, however, it should be observed, that even in specimens of Egyptian demotic writing, the character at the beginning of a subject, such as the commencement of a royal edict of one of the Ptolemies, &c., was sometimes larger than the rest of the text, though not of different style (see No. 3, Plate IV.); that is to say, it was not a full hieroglyphic, which, in Egyptian writing, would have been to the demotic, what, in Greek, the sculptural square capitals would be to the minuscule.

Vermilion ink was occasionally used for the letters at the commencement of subjects even in Egyptian times; and Ovid mentions the luxury of minium or vermilion titles in fine Mss. But these letters were not capitals, as we understand the term, as may be seen by reference to Plate VIII., in which the names of the speakers in Virgil's third eclogue are written in vermilion, though not of different character to those of the rest of the text; while the letters at the beginning of each line do not differ from the rest, being, in fact, all capitals, as were those of all set Latin Mss. of the period.

About the fourth or fifth century, the first appearance of capitals, as we now understand the term, may be noticed. These, however, are sometimes letters in the minuscule form, made much larger than the rest of the text, but sometimes really letters in the ancient or capital form. But still such letters are only used to mark the commencement of separate great divisions of a work, such as the beginning of each of the Gospels, in which ornamental letters of less important size were employed to make the secondary subdivisions. This mode of marking the subdivisions of a work, and even paragraphs, became gradually more general, and in the fifteenth century the first letter of each line of poetry was occasionally decorated, but not constantly. At this period, in the copies of the Bible, after the text was arranged in the form now termed verses, each verse was sometimes, but not always,

marked by a large letter, generally of the form of the ancient uncial, which had given way to the minuscule in the general text.

These steps, however, towards the systematic use of a superior class of letters for certain initial purposes, had gone but little way towards their profuse application in modern writing and printing. The application of capitals, for instance, to all proper names is of quite recent adoption, as is also their use after every full period, and under certain other circumstances not as yet clearly defined. The Germans, for instance, use a capital letter both in printing and writing for every noun-substantive, while we only do so for the proper names of persons and places. In this, however, the rules are very indefinite, as we may write, "the King of Holland" with capitals in one line, and the next write "king" alone without a capital; so we might write "the dutch monarch" either with or without capitals, or, in speaking of articles "of French manufacture," use either the capital or 'lowercase' f in the word French; in addressing a friend, one person would write, "The Note I received," &c.; another, "the note," &c. without a capital, neither mode being incorrect.

In other cases also capitals are occasionally used without any fixed rule; for instance, when a word having two or more meanings is employed, like the word "station," which, when applied to railways, is generally written with a capital S. In speaking of a box or stall at the theatres, the words Box or Stall would also receive capital initial letters, to distinguish their peculiar application; while the word theatre would not require such a distinction, but if occurring in the same sentence, would probably, by one of fastidious taste in such matters, also receive the compliment of the capitals, as in reality the superior of the box or the stall; thus preserving a scriptorial balance of power in the sentence. But these points of practice in "the art of writing" are not at present formed into any fixed code, and remain at the discretion and individual taste of the writer.

Before proceeding to examine the transition from the pointed Gothic hand to the round-hand of the present day, it will be necessary to recapitulate the circumstances by which it was preceded, as well as those by which it was brought about.

At the time when the writing of books declined, and the companies and guilds of calligraphers were scattered and dispersed by the victories of the printing-press, the great increase of general civilisation caused many to study and acquire the art of writing, which even princes had rarely thought it necessary to possess before that period. Indeed, after the Norman invasion no royal sign manual occurs except the sign of a cross, till the reign of Richard II., and it is very doubtful whether the skill of this prince in the art was not confined to the mechanical execution of the characters forming his own name. The signature to the deed in the British Museum, signed by this prince, stands le Roy, R.S., the R.S. probably meaning Richard Second. The charters or deeds of Henry IV. are generally signed H.R., but the specimen in the

Museum has a note of some length appended, apparently in the king's own hand, in a stiff Gothic style; and there is a portion of a letter of Henry V. in the same collection entirely of his own writing. The few known deeds of Edward V. are generally signed R.E., and countersigned R. Gloucestre, who, after he became king, signed R.R. at the beginning, and Ricardus Rex at the foot of the document. A letter from Henry VII. to Ferdinand of Arragon is signed vre bon frere Henry R. There is also a letter in the same collection from Henry VIII. to Cardinal Wolsey entirely in the king's own hand; and the Vatican library possesses a collection of his love-letters to Anne Boleyn. In the wide margins of his richly illuminated Prayer-Book, in the British Museum, by the side of the miniatures of various female saints, are many amatory couplets, &c., in this king's handwriting, addressed to ladies who bore their names, and who had "incurred" his admiration. It may be supposed that the regal Lothario wiled away the tedium of high mass in the composition and writing of these effusions.

From about this time writing became a necessary part of the education of every person of rank; and at the court of Henry VIII. most of the principal personages could write, as well as the king himself. There are in the British Museum many interesting examples of the handwriting of both the prince and his courtiers, which were exhibited to the public during the great international Exhibition of 1851; among which was a letter from the king to Cardinal Wolsey, written about 1525; a letter from Catherine of Arragon, announcing the victory of Flodden field, to the king, who was in France; and a letter from Anne Boleyn to Wolsey, thanking him for his services in promoting her marriage. At the same time were exhibited a letter in Latin, from Edward VI. to his cousin, the Earl of Hertford; a letter from Queen Mary to Philip of Spain, announcing that the Parliament had approved of the articles of their marriage; and a letter from Mary Queen of Scots to Bess Pierpont, cousin of the conspirator Babington; also a letter from Lady Jane Grey, as queen, addressed to the Marquess of Northampton, then Lord Lieutenant of the county of Surrey, announcing her ascent of the throne, and requiring his allegiance. This letter is signed at the top "Jane the Queen." It appears to have been in possession of Lord Burghley, who endorsed it "Jana *non* Regina."

Some of these letters are much more regularly written than others; but all exhibit, more or less, a want of freedom, and the angular character of the old Gothic writing, which still lingered about the formation of the letters. None of them are, in fact, written with more fluency than a modern schoolboy writes Greek; and appear to have been the result of very laborious but laudable efforts to overcome a great difficulty. Edward VI., however, promised to write a fair hand; and a few of his contemporaries, like the learned Ascham, were already celebrated for the beauty of their handwriting.

Examples of private penmanship of this epoch are, with few exceptions, confined to eminent persons or scholars; the great mass of the people, even of the better classes, remaining, long after the reign of Henry VIII., in utter ignorance of the art of writing. As a proof of the smallness of the number of persons so instructed in the year 1516, the aldermen of London and the privy councillors were commanded to go the round of all the Wards, and examine the handwriting of "every person that could write," with the view to discover the author of a seditious paper that had been stuck up in St. Paul's; a task no doubt easily accomplished, when perhaps not half a dozen persons who could write were to be found in each Ward. It appears that at the same epoch country gentlemen were still more deficient than the citizens; for in a book addressed to them about this time on the subject of agriculture, it is suggested that those gentlemen who could not write might note down any thing they particularly wished to remember, by cutting certain notches upon a stick.

The reign of Elizabeth, however, marks an epoch not only in the improvement, but also in the extension of this important art. That princess, in her youth, was instructed in the art of writing by the accomplished Roger Ascham, who was as celebrated for his skill in penmanship as for his general learning; and it is well known that Queen Elizabeth not only possessed the then rare accomplishment of writing English, but also Greek, and that she was very fond of practising it. That she was an apt scholar is shewn by the careful pages of her "Copy-book," still preserved among the bibliographical curiosities of the Bodleian Library. A Prayer-Book, entirely written with her own hand in five languages, was sold at the sale of the Duchess of Portland for 100 guineas, and it would probably now produce a much higher price.

Immediately following Roger Ascham, we find the name of Peter Bales, who was one of the earliest professed writing-masters. He presented to Queen Elizabeth as a specimen of his skill, a copy of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Decalogue, and two short Latin prayers, &c. &c., all written within the space of a silver penny, the whole plainly and distinctly legible; a work which is said to have excited the admiration of the queen and several foreign ambassadors who were present at the exhibition of this minutely elaborate specimen of penmanship. In 1590 Bales published a work on the art of writing, called the *Writing Schoolmaster;* and in 1595 he challenged a rival in penmanship, one Daniel Johnson, to a trial of skill, the prize to be a golden pen, value 20*l.* An account of this contest, in which Bales was the victor, is still preserved in the British Museum, supposed to be written by Bales himself. John Davies of Hereford, a poet, but more celebrated for his skilful calligraphy, was a contemporary of Bales, of whose fame he appears to have been jealous, as in one of his poor but ill-natured epigrams he describes him as being compelled continually to change his resi-

dence, in order to prevent his "golden pen" from being seized by his creditors. The skill of Davies in writing was, however, fully admitted, and he became tutor in that art to Prince Henry, eldest son of James I.

Most of the specimens of holograph letters of this epoch begin to exhibit a kind of transition from the still prevailing Gothic character to a more free and running hand; and in the next century private handwriting had become much as it is now, impressed with the individual manner of each writer, as well as a certain general characteristic of the epoch. The series of examples of private letters from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, described in Chapter XII., will pretty clearly exemplify all the stages of its development. (See Plates XXV., XXVI., XXVII., and XXVIII.)

But I must not so briefly pass over the formation of the fine round-hand which we are now taught in schools, and which is the most symmetrical, flowing, and beautiful adaptation of the Roman characters ever achieved, though perhaps less picturesque than the "black letter" of the Gothic periods. For this beautiful modification we are indebted to the revival of art in Italy in the fifteenth century, as we are to the same cause and country for that general revolution of art which swept away all the other elaborations of Gothic skill; the peculiar and angular character of which was at variance with the principles of that antique art resuscitated by the *cinquecentisti* of Italy.

The angularities of Gothic writing began to be abandoned in Italy in the fourteenth century; and in the fifteenth, when the sharp Gothic letter was attaining its greatest perfection and development in the rest of Europe, it was totally abandoned in the Italian peninsula in favour of a rounded minuscule character, founded indirectly upon the late Roman style. (See Plate XX. No. 27.) The Gothic capitals of uncial derivation were at the same time superseded also by square capitals, closely copied from those of ancient Roman inscriptions. (See capitals V and K in the series of capital letters from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, Plates XXIII. and XXIV.)

The Aldi, celebrated for their skill and taste among the earliest printers established in Italy, finding this rounded style of writing prevalent in that country, copied, and greatly improved it in their types; just as Caxton copied, though badly, the Gothic writing of England; and Fust, and Schœffer, and Gutenberg, copied but improved the fine cursive Gothic of Germany. The Aldi not only copied the round-hand of Italy, as they found it existing in the finest Ms. books of the period, but also undertook to regularise and reduce to symmetrical arrangement the more cursive hand used for ordinary purposes. In effecting this, they produced eventually the beautiful leaning characters known as *Italics*, which, as easily executed with the pen, on account of their flowing lines and leaning position, soon became the model of the handwriting of France and England, and indeed of that of the greatest part of Europe. The Germans, however, in forming their modern running-hand independently, deviated so far from the Roman

or Italic ordinary forms, that their cursive hand is not intelligible to foreigners.

The fine round leaning hand thus formed in Italy, and multiplied by the new miracles of the printing-press, soon found its way to England, and immediately influenced the method of teaching writing by the professors who succeeded Peter Bales; though examples of similar style, so long as they were only in manuscript, never travelled out of Italy in sufficient numbers to influence materially the writing of those countries, except by slow degrees.

During the reign of Elizabeth the profession of writing-master first became a profitable calling; but even the most elegant form in which it was then taught, that of the fine modern *Italic* character, was no longer calligraphy in the true sense of the term; that is to say, no longer the highly decorative or "beautiful" writing of former periods, but simply a clear and legible running hand; all the letters so joined as to enable the writer to execute an entire word, however long, without lifting the pen from the paper. Nevertheless it was still beautiful, but beautiful for its simplicity and the evident ease and freedom with which it could be executed, instead of being beautiful through the medium of intricacy, and the evidently laborious efforts of profuse decoration.

To develop the principles of this fine *Italic* style, as it must still be termed, it became necessary to acquire great freedom of hand, to form each letter with precision, and at the same time to write rapidly. But the conventional method of forming the letters being once established, the act of leaning them to the right greatly facilitated the freedom of the execution; and the large scale on which pupils were taught to write, as shewn in the still-existing copy-books of the period, by degrees accustomed them to abandon the sharp angles of the old national style for the more flowing *contour* of the Italian style,—a transition which was further aided by the general fashion of the time, in which the angularities of the Gothic in every branch of art were entirely superseded by the round or square forms which distinguish the architecture and the other artistic works of the period; for in writing as in architecture, the semicircular Roman arch quite displaced the pointed Gothic one.

Such was the origin of our large round-hand, so well known to the school-boys of our day; and if this branch of the subject were of sufficient interest, a number of examples of its first appearance and subsequent modifications of character might be given in illustration, both from the British Museum and other collections, where schoolmasters' models, both English, German, and French, have been preserved from the sixteenth and seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth centuries, which shew that its progress to perfection was not rapid. Indeed, in England it was not till near our own time that it attained to all its present perfection.

In France, in the reign of Louis XIV., Jarry greatly improved the elegant proportions of the round-hand practised in that country, which has, however, since acquired much greater freedom. The beauty of his penmanship was

nevertheless so conspicuous, that he was requested to "write" a Missal for the use of the king in the Royal Chapel of Versailles, at a period when Ms. books were no longer dreamed of, except in the caprice of an almost omnipotent prince. The monument of modern penmanship thus brought into existence is as highly prized among the treasures of the Bibliothèque Nationale as any of the more elaborate Mss. of the middle ages; and it is, in fact, so beautiful a monument of exquisite calligraphic skill in the modern style, that a special application, backed by a recommendation from the Minister of the Interior, is required to enable visitors to inspect it.

In England, in the mean time, many schools had been endowed for the express purpose of teaching writing only, so all-important was a knowledge of that art beginning to be considered. Among the first so founded was that in Forster Lane, established through the liberality of Sir John Johnson; in which, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, John Seddon was the professor of writing, whose skill rivalled that of his continental contemporary, Jarry. Though not possessing the fine flowing hand of later masters, he was greatly skilled in flourished figures, for which he had a natural facility almost amounting to genius; and in which he far outshone all his English contemporaries—among whom the names of Ayres, Clarke, More, Shelly, Ollyffe and Snow, are honourably recorded. He was succeeded in his post, as Professor to the Forster-Lane School, by Champion, whose chirographic performances were greatly esteemed in his day. But Snell was one of the first of Seddon's followers to practise bold round-hand in the free, simple, and elegant manner of the modern school; and John Bland, who died in 1756, was celebrated for his reformation of the finer sort of cursive or running-hand, which he divested of the shackled formality that, up to his time, still characterised the works of even the most eminent penmen. He was followed by Tomkins, another very skilful professor of the art, to whose pure taste and expert hand we are chiefly indebted, if not for the creation, at all events for the final polish and well-balanced proportion of our present large round-hand. Such was his boldness, originality, and inexhaustible variety of design in decorative flourishing, that he held high rank as "artist;" and his headings to the chapters of a copy of Macklin's Bible, which he presented to the British Museum, are worthy of being placed by the side of similar efforts of the best medieval calligraphers; though, to the eye of the antiquary, the modern feeling in this art has neither the breadth nor crispness of the Gothic period.

The Royal Academy of British Painters availed themselves of the skill of Mr. Tomkins to write the headings of the address which they presented to the founder of the Academy, George III., with the feeling, that from a corporation of artists even written documents should exhibit the charm of art in their execution. Such was the success of the modern calligrapher in this undertaking, that Sir Joshua Reynolds determined to paint his portrait, which was the last picture he painted previous to his loss of sight, and is one of his most cha-

racteristic productions. Tomkins, at his death (as recently as 1816), bequeathed this portrait to the City of London; and it is placed in the City Chamber, surrounded by specimens of his calligraphic skill. Chantrey* executed the tomb of this brother artist, which is placed in Chiswick Church, and is tastefully adorned with emblems of the art he so successfully cultivated. One of Tomkins's finest pieces of ornamental penmanship was the composition which he executed in honour of Nelson's victory of the Nile. It was engraved by the celebrated writing engraver, Ashby, and illustrated with a fine subject engraving by Bartolozzi. Compositions of this kind call to mind the "Christmas pieces" which it was customary for schoolboys to bring home at the holidays as specimens of their skill in writing,—a custom which was continued in some schools up to the beginning of the present century, and perhaps lingers in remote places even at the present day. The "Christmas pieces" are evidences of the great importance which, till recently, attached to writing, even above other studies, after its powers were once thoroughly appreciated. The sheet of paper upon which this annual exhibition of skill was executed had generally some large religious subject engraved at the top, and smaller ones, either religious or illustrating some moral precept, forming borders at the side, the centre being filled with suitable maxims, written in all the most usual kinds of writing, from the large round to the smallest running-hand—the performance being signed by the name of the author and the date of its execution.

But the acquirement of the art of writing has now become so much a matter of course, even in the most humble kinds of education, that its culture as an art has been, to a great extent, abandoned, and, except in a strictly commercial education, the handwriting is left to take its chance. The consequence of this neglect is, that the writing of many of our most eminent men is all but illegible; yet at the same time, the general national "hand" is more esteemed than any other in Europe. It is, however, more to the careful culture of its professors than to the aid of its daily practitioners that this excellence is owing; and I have therefore deemed the names of some of our most eminent writing-masters well worthy of record, both as the creators of the national modern hand, and the preservers of its present superiority.

Among the recent professors of writing in France, M. Sylvestre, writing-master to the family of Louis Philippe, was greatly distinguished, not only by his executive skill, but for his knowledge of the history of his art, his work on general paleography being entitled to a high place in the archives of the history of writing.

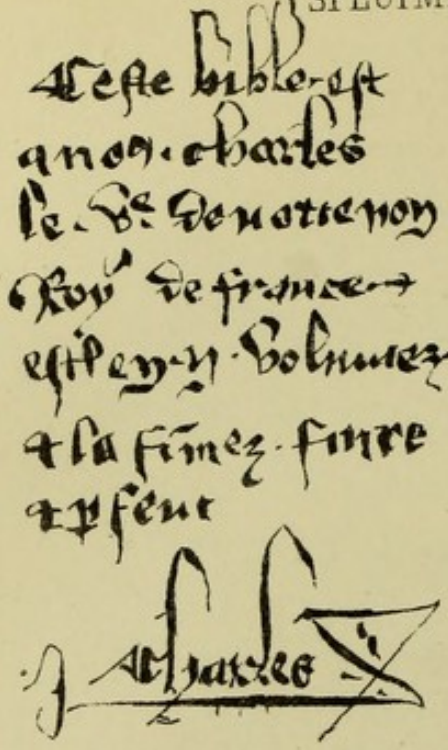
Some of the English professors of writing of the present day have exhibited chirographic dexterity as great as that of Seddon, or the other early masters of the art in its modern phase; but by attempting too much, they have

* His bust, by Chantrey, was presented to the British Museum along with his copy of Macklin's Bible.

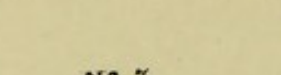
effected less. In seeking to produce representations of animals, and even to execute portraits, by flourishes of the pen, they have approached subjects which strictly belong to the province of the pencil, and have only produced grotesqueness without beauty. Such *tours de force* are not within the range of legitimate writing; and the works of that class, of Minasi, Grant, and others, do not, therefore, call for notice in this place. The ancient calligraphers, when they desired such decoration as could not be effectively executed by the pen, at once called to their aid the pencil and the paint-brush; and thus were evolved the exquisite "illuminations" of the Mss. of the middle ages—works worthy of all admiration; while the unmeaning and unrealised attempts alluded to are but evidences of misdirected skill.

In order to illustrate the progress of our modern handwriting from the period when the invention of the printing-press swept away the race of professional scribes up to the present time, I have not thought it necessary to engrave a series of examples from the copy-books of the race of writing-masters who succeeded the professional and often hereditary scribes in the curatorship of the art, the more recent course of which is too familiar to require illustration; but have preferred giving examples of the handwriting of private individuals, both as more interesting, and as forming a better index to the general progress of the art among all classes of society. With this view, a series of letters and other authentic documents, from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, will be found described in the next chapter, accompanied by engraved facsimiles.

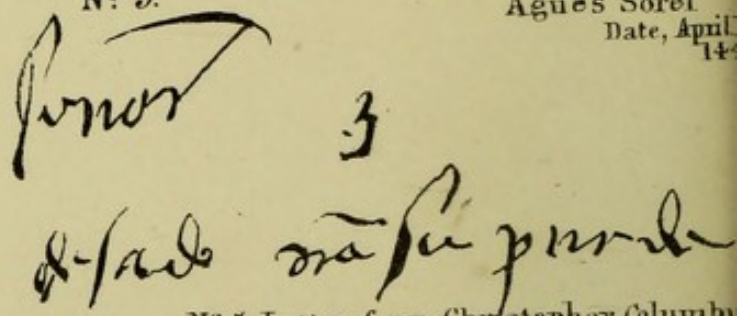
SPECIMENS FROM AUTOGRAPH LETTERS &c
of the 14th 15th & 16th Centuries



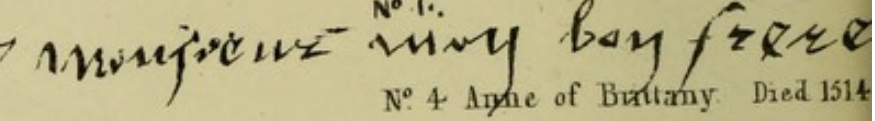
Nº 1. Written by Charles V of France, in a folio Bible now in the Bibque Natle Paris. Died 1380.



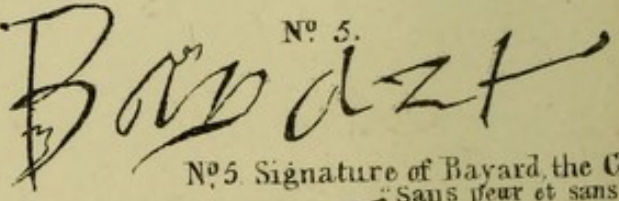
Nº 2 Signature of Agnes Sorel. Date, April 14



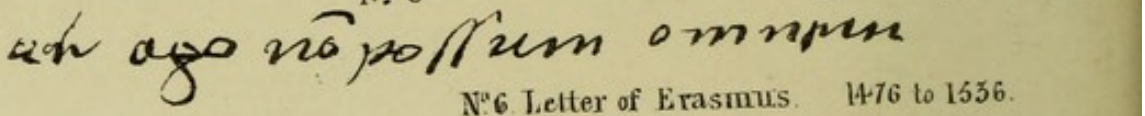
Nº 3 Letter from Christopher Columbus to the Viceroy of Castille. 1441 to 1516



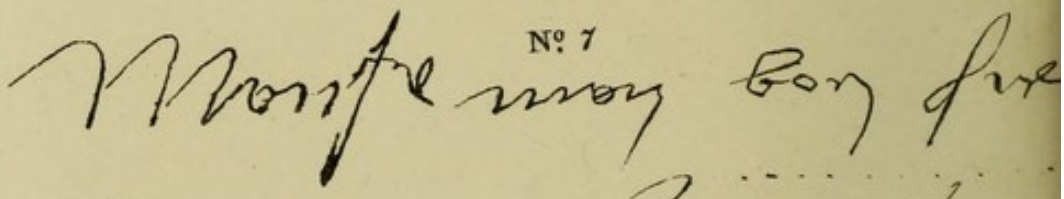
Nº 4 Anne of Brittany. Died 1514

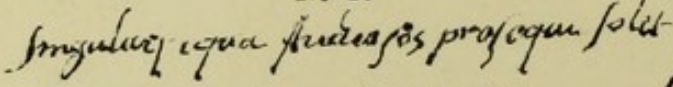


Nº 5 Signature of Bayard, the Chev "Sans peur et sans repr

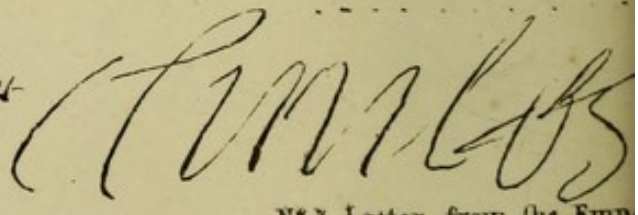


Nº 6 Letter of Erasmus. 1476 to 1536.

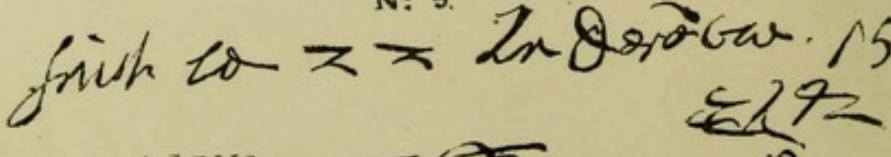




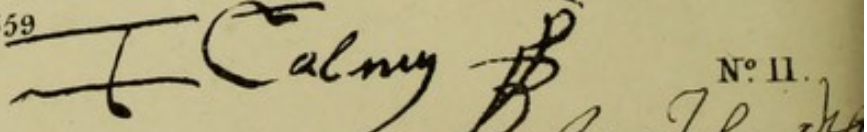
Nº 8 Letter of Copernicus. 1473 to 1543

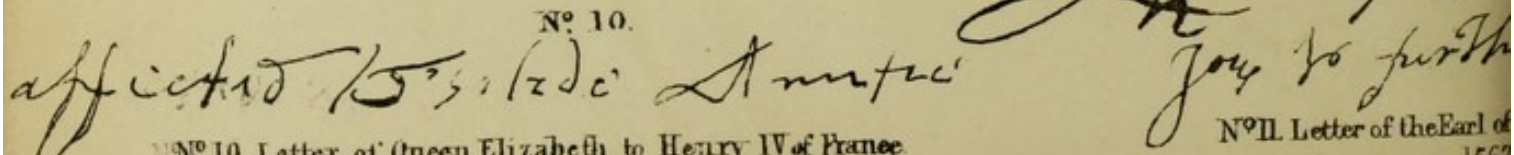


Nº 7 Letter from the Emp Charles V of to Francis I.



Nº 9 Letter of Calvin, Dated 1559





Nº 10 Letter of Queen Elizabeth to Henry IV of France. 1553 to 1603.

Nº 11. Letter of the Earl of 1567

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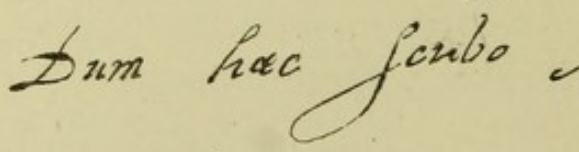
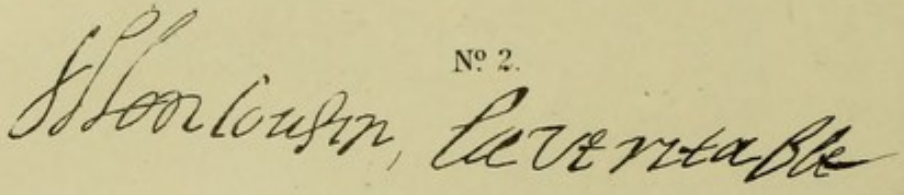
FROM AUTOGRAPH LETTERS.
of the 17th Century.

Nº 1



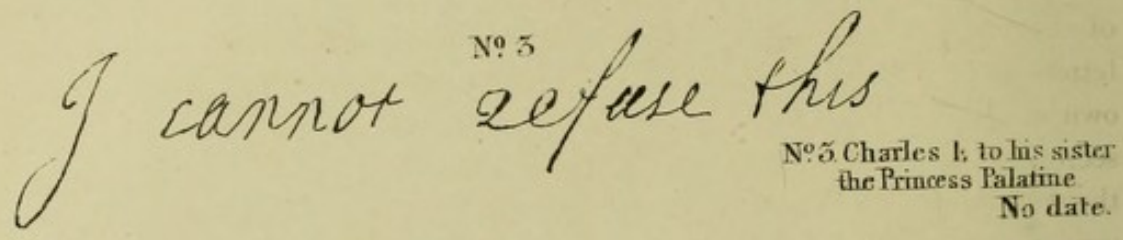
Nº1. Cambden. Dated
12th Janr. 1619.

Nº 2.



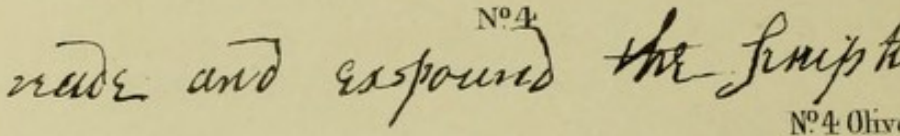
Nº 2 Anne of Austria,
Dated 27th Febr 1638.

Nº 3



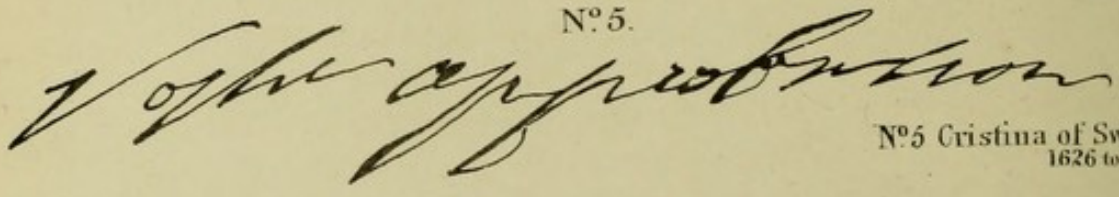
Nº 3 Charles I. to his sister
the Princess Palatine
No date.

Nº 4



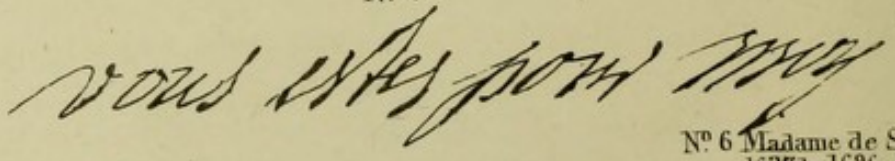
Nº 4 Oliver Cromwell
written in 1645 to the
Revd H Hick.
(From Congreve Collection)

Nº 5.



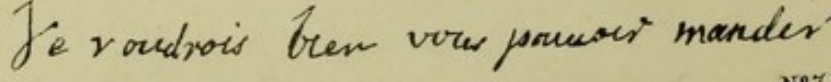
Nº 5 Cristina of Sweden
1626 to 1689

Nº 6



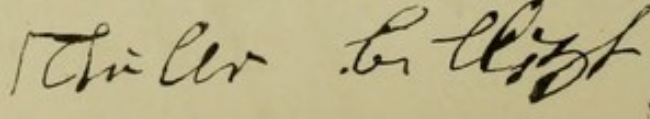
Nº 6 Madame de Sevigné
1623 to 1696. Dated
Angers, 29th Sept.

Nº 7.



Nº 7 Letter from Boileau
to Racine. Dated
May 19th 1687

Nº 8.



Nº 8 Letter of Charles XII.
of Sweden.

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CHAPTER XV.

SPECIMENS OF PRIVATE HANDWRITING FROM HOLOGRAPH LETTERS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS OF THE FOURTEENTH, FIFTEENTH, SIXTEENTH, SEVENTEENTH, EIGHTEENTH, AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES.

IT is not earlier than the fourteenth century that we find examples of private holograph letters, that is, letters entirely written by the hand of the person whose signature they bear; for most, indeed nearly all, of the letters of eminent persons of earlier periods, preserved in the archives of our own country and in those of neighbouring nations, were written by private secretaries or public scribes, the signature alone (often merely a cross) being the work of the supposed writer. The first and only specimen of private handwriting in the fourteenth century which I shall give is that of Charles V.* of France, contemporary of our Edward III. and Richard II. This specimen (Plate XXV. No. 1) is taken from a Bible probably written and illuminated expressly for him, as he was a great patron of calligraphers, and the founder of the national French library. The inscription in question reads, "Ceste Bible est a moy Charles le V^e^ (cinquième) de notre nom." It is in a strongly marked Gothic hand of the period, and scarcely, if any, more cursive in style than the writing found in Ms. books of the same period.

Our earliest specimen of the fifteenth century is a facsimile of the signature of Agnes Sorel, the beautiful, and, for the age, accomplished mistress of Charles VII. It exhibits all the angular character of the general Gothic calligraphy of the period. The signature is simply "Agnes," and is attached to a receipt for 275 *livres tournois*, being dated 18th April, 1448. In the fifteenth century nearly all private letters, like the above signature, still exhibit a strong and angular Gothic character. The specimen (Plate XXV. No. 3) is taken from a letter of Christopher Columbus† to the viceroy of Castille, preserved in the royal archives of Saxony; which, though of a later period, exhibits the same sharp character as the previous example; but there is a bold freedom about it highly characteristic of the writer. Another specimen of this period is from a letter of Anne of Brittany,‡ probably to Charles VIII. of France before her marriage, as the style of the commencement, "Mon bon frere," is that in which sovereigns generally addressed each other. The next specimen illustrative of letters of the fifteenth century is from one of the celebrated Erasmus§

* Ascended the throne 1364; died 1380.

† Born 1441; died 1516.

‡ Born 1448; died 1514.

§ Born 1467; died 1536.

to Boniface Amerback, which is now preserved in the public library of Basle (Plate XXV. No. 6). The writing in this instance, though possibly as early as that of some of the specimens just described, yet shews a marked advance in free and cursive character, the angularity and stiffness of the Gothic manner having to a great extent disappeared. These characteristics of the ancient manner are, however, still remarkable in the signature of Bayard* (Plate XXV. No. 5), the celebrated "chevalier sans peur et sans reproche:" it was probably written about the close of the fifteenth century.†

In the first half of the sixteenth century the sharp character of the Gothic hand still lingered, as will be noticed in the next specimen (Plate XXV. No. 7), a portion of a letter from the Emperor Charles V.‡ to Francis I. of France. The signature, Charles, however, is very bold and free in its style. In more formal documents he generally signed in Spanish, Jo el Rey. The small example of the writing of the ascetic reformer Calvin (Plate XXV. No. 9), dated 1559, recalls the style of Erasmus; it is bold and rapid, and shews but little angularity; the original letter is in the Château-Giron collection.

The letter of Queen Elizabeth§ to Henry IV. of France (Plate XXV. No. 10) exhibits much more strongly the remaining features of the old Gothic letters; while the example (Plate XXV. No. 11) from a letter of the unfortunate Earl of Essex,‖ dated 15th July, 1588, shews an exact midway transition between the sharp, upright manner that was disappearing, and the round and flowing manner that was beginning to develop itself; and it seems to symbolise well the known indecision of his character. The last specimen of private handwriting of the sixteenth century that I have room for is a fragment from a letter of the great philosopher Copernicus, the founder of the modern system of astronomy. It probably belongs to the beginning of the century, and is strongly marked with characteristics of the Italian Ms. books of the period, though somewhat more cursive. But the letters are so carefully formed, that the style of the earliest Italian printing types may be traced in each of them. This careful and set manner remained partially in use in Italy even to the close of the eighteenth century, as we shall see on examination of a fragment by the poet Alfieri (Plate XXVIII.), written in 1782.

In the first half of the seventeenth century the foundation of the style of

* Born 1475; died 1524.

† It is not pretended that the regular gradations of style alluded to were invariable in their chronological order; very far from it, as letters of Henry V. of England perhaps shew less Gothic character, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, than those of Charles V. in the beginning of the sixteenth; and many other similar discrepancies might be cited; yet the majority of examples tend to illustrate the kind of gradual advance I have attempted to exemplify; and certainly that view, as a general one, is much more consistent with the invariable principles of progress, than one involving retrograde contradictions.

‡ Born 1500; died 1558.

§ Born 1533; died 1603.

‖ Born 1569; died 1601.

the present free kind of running-hand began to appear. The first specimen is from a letter of our excellent historian and antiquary, Camden (Plate XXVI. No. 1). The letter is written in Latin, and addressed to Peirese, in which he incidentally states in the passage, part of which is selected as a specimen, that while he is writing (Dum hæc scribo, &c.) the large and splendid *Camera convenalis* in the royal palace at Westminster was in flames, and would soon be totally destroyed, " to the great loss and detriment of his majesty the king, &c. &c." The writing might be assigned to a much more recent date, but for one or two unmistakable marks of the period, evident at once to those skilled in paleography.

The next three specimens illustrate the state of the art as exhibited in female correspondence on the Continent at this time; each example shewing an evident approach to the long, and leaning, zig-zag manner, so usual in feminine epistles of the present day.

The first is from a letter of Anne of Austria, dated St. Germains, Feb. 27, 1638, signed Anne, and now in the Bibliothèque Nationale (see Plate XXVI. No. 2). The second is from Christina, the eccentric Queen of Sweden, dated from Bruxelles, in the year 1656; it is a very dashing, free hand, though far from what would now be termed elegant (Plate XXVI. No. 5). The third is from a letter of the queen of letter-writers, Madame de Sevigné;* the example from which it is taken is not one of those witty and entertaining compositions which have rendered her name as celebrated as that of Horace Walpole in epistolary composition, but merely an affectionate effusion to her daughter Madame de Grignan, abounding in such phrases as " vous etes pour moi toutes choses;" and "jamais on n'a été aimé comme je vous aime," &c. &c. It is without date, except Sept. 27; but is probably later by perhaps twenty years than that of Christina of Sweden; but the hand is in a similar long, dashing, leaning style, though perhaps written with less firmness.

To retrace our steps from this brief digression on feminine penmanship. The next specimen, following in chronological order after that of Camden, is a portion of a letter of Cromwell, which has more of the ancient Gothic character about it than is usual at this period; suggesting perhaps that kind of puritanic or dogmatic firmness which was of the age and of the man. The passage is a characteristic one, and stands thus: " Reade and expound the Scriptures." It is from a letter dated Jan. 10, 1643, from the Congreve Collection (see Plate XXVI. No. 4).

The following example is from a letter of the unfortunate Charles I.† to his sister, the Princess Palatine, written in a free, open style, which does not at all shadow forth the vacillating and undefined character of its author. It is dated Theobalds, Jan. 18, and no other date (Plate XXVI. No. 3).

The handwriting of Boileau, the celebrated French satiric poet, forms a striking contrast to that of his contemporary and compatriot, Madame de

* Died 1696.

† Born 1600; executed 1649.

Sevigné. It exhibits the close, neat manner adopted by many careful authors of that and subsequent periods, probably from the habit of writing for the press. The specimen is from a letter addressed to his friend Racine, but not on literary matters; and merely relates to the loss of voice from which he had been suffering (Plate XXVI. No. 7).

Our last specimen of the writing of the seventeenth century is a line from a letter of Charles XII. of Sweden to the Duchess of Holstein, which appears to have been written towards its close. The style of writing is as impetuous as the character of its author, and the result nearly as unsuccessful as that of the battle of Pultowa; for it is blotted, dashed, and corrected all over; but in most parts remains illegible notwithstanding.

LETTERS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Our first example of the writing of this epoch is from a letter of Marlborough, dated Ronsselaer, June $\frac{11}{21}$, 1706, thanking Lord —— for his congratulations on the success of the campaign (Plate XXVII. No. 1). The hand is remarkably bold and clear; in comparison to which that of his distinguished contemporary Addison, the author of the *Spectator*, &c. appears mean and indistinct, and it is seldom better than the specimen given (Plate XXVII. No. 2), which is from a note on a trivial matter, dated April 25, 1710.

A passage from a letter of Bolingbroke of the same epoch (Plate XXVII. No. 3) is a contrast to both, being much more free, and in a larger manner than that of Addison, but less marked and determined than that of Marlborough. The letter is in French, and addressed to the Abbé Dubois.

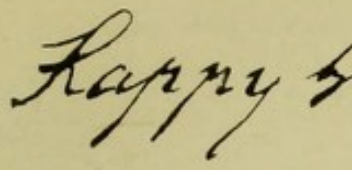
It will be interesting to pass from these specimens of the handwriting of eminent Englishmen to that of a no less eminent Frenchman; and a passage from a letter of the celebrated naturalist Buffon will furnish an example (Plate XXVII. No. 4). It is from a letter dated January 4, 1730, on the subject of the vacancy of the office of keeper of the Jardin du Roi, and refers to Buffon's pretensions to the appointment, which, in fact, he soon after received. It is quite a French hand, and not unlike the more ordinary French writing of the present day.

As an example of the handwriting of an English literary man near the middle of the eighteenth century, I have selected a passage from a note written by Alexander Pope at Twickenham, towards the close of his career, in 1744 (Plate XXVII. No. 5).

The two next specimens are from letters of somewhat later date, both written in the same year by the two great rivals in French literature, Rousseau and Voltaire, during the latter half of the eighteenth century. The letter of Rousseau from which the specimen (Plate XXVII. No. 6) is taken is addressed to Madame d'Houdetot, and dated L'Ermitage, 14 November 1757. It is full of passionate and poetic writing. The passage selected, when complete, reads " La sérénité ne

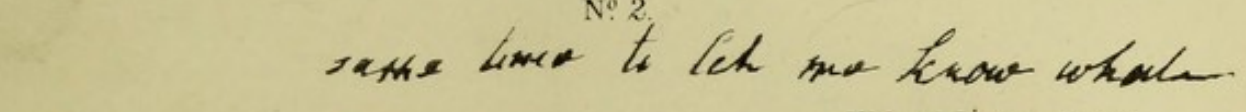
FROM AUTOGRAPH LETTERS.

of the 18th Century.



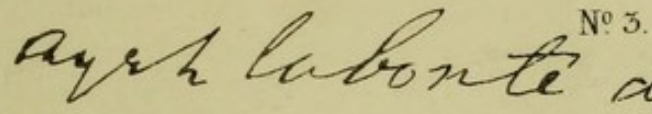
Nº 1

Nº 1 Marlborough Dated Rousselaer June 17th 1706



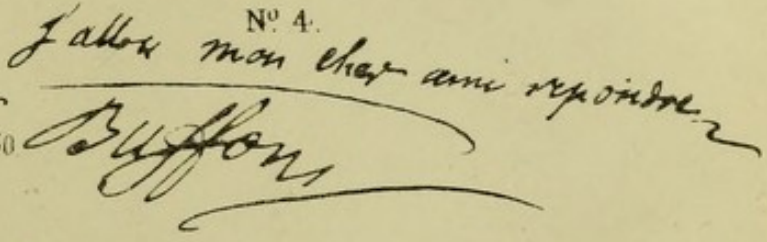
Nº 2.

Nº 2 Addison. Dated April 25th 1710.



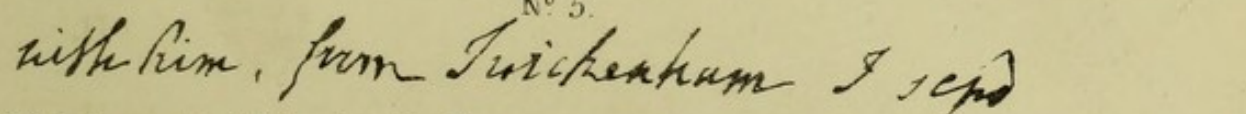
Nº 3.

Nº 3 Lord Bolingbroke to the Abbé Dubois. Dated Thursday 2 o Clock



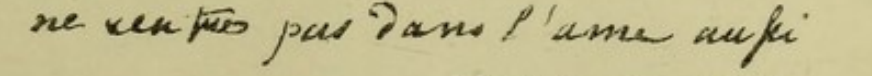
Nº 4.

Nº 4. Buffon. Dated Janv 23rd 1730

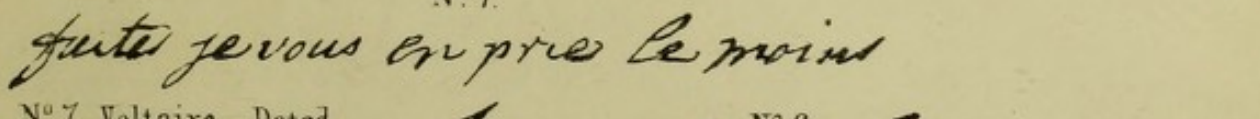


Nº 5.

Nº 5 Pope. to J. Brinsden Esqre No date.

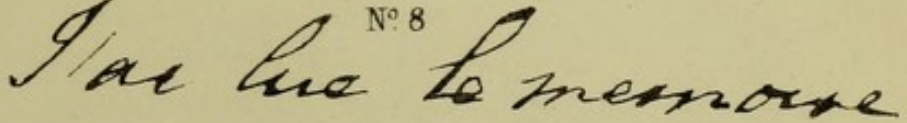


Nº 6 Rosseau. Dated l'Ermitage 14th Novr 1757.



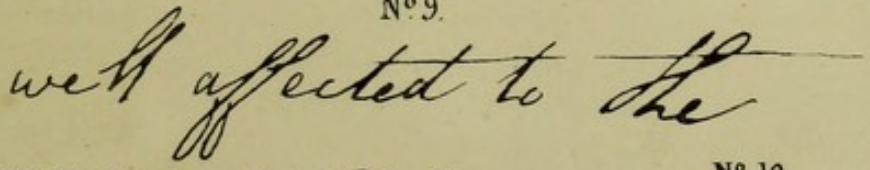
Nº 7.

Nº 7 Voltaire. Dated July 29th 1757.



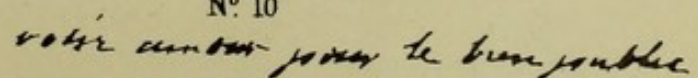
Nº 8

Nº 8 The Empress Catherine II of Russia. Dated 23rd July. 1773



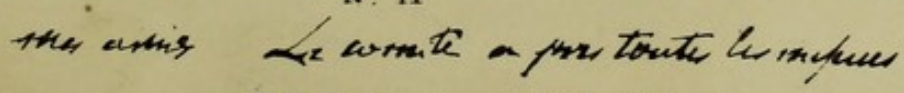
Nº 9.

Nº 9 Washington. Dated 6th Septr 1788.



Nº 10

Nº 10 Louis XVI. Dated Versailles June 30th 1775.



Nº 11

Nº 11. Robespierre. Dated 13 Floreal 2nd year of the Republic.

rentre pas dans l'âme aussitôt que la douleur," in reference to an explanation by Madame d'Houdetot, which failed to remove a painful impression that he had received from a former communication. The letter of Voltaire, from which my example is taken, is addressed to the Duc de Richelieu, whom he begs, should he enter Gotha with his army of 30,000 men, to commit "le moins de mal possible" for the sake of "his adored Duchess of Gotha."

The bold handwriting of the next specimen (Plate XXVII. No. 8) is from a note of Catherine of Russia, dated Calexowna, July 23, 1773, referring to a scientific work by Carbonier, which she had been reading, and which she is criticising in a letter to Lieut.-General de Bauer.

A characteristic letter of Washington, the founder of American freedom, furnishes our next specimen; it is dated, "Head Quarters, September 6, 1788." Though written in English, it is addressed to M. Dumat, Aide-de-camp to the Count Rochambeau. The passage refers to a person "well affected to the cause of America."

The specimens 10 and 11 in this Plate (XXVII.) afford examples of French running-hand towards the close of the eighteenth century. The first is from a note written by the weak but amiable Louis XVI., and addressed to Malesherbes, requesting him, as a personal favour, to accept an appointment which he had declined when offered to him by the minister Turgot. The second example is from a letter of one of the most remarkable of the revolutionary leaders—Robespierre. The letter from which it is taken is dated 13 *Floréal, an 2 de la République.* It is addressed to Lebas and St. Just, informing them that the "Comité" had taken every measure to assist their "zeal." The hand is not unlike that of the king, but somewhat heavier.

The specimen, No. 1, Plate XXVIII., is from a letter also referring to the events of the French revolution; but by an Englishman, who denounces their danger and tendency — the eloquent Edmund Burke. The passage selected for extract is a characteristic one—"You have," says he, "an armed tyranny to deal with, and nothing but arms can pull it down." The letter is dated "Beaconsfield, Jan. 25, 1791."

The last two examples are of the Italian running-hand of this period, from persons of very opposite characters—the clever charlatan Count Cagliostro and the tragic poet Alfieri. The writing of Cagliostro has a much bolder character than that of Alfieri; but, at the same time, it conveys the idea of being an unsettled hand, or rather that of a person who had not acquired the art in childhood. The letter contains nothing about magic or mesmerism, and is merely an affectionate communication to his wife (Plate XXVIII. No. 3). The writing of Alfieri is small and neat, and suggests the idea of the labour and painstaking by which, rather than genius, even his greatest works were achieved. It is occasionally, however, notwithstanding its neatness, very indistinct; but the passage selected is perfectly legible. On the whole, we have seen the writing of the cursive hand of the seventeenth century make a steady

advance towards the style of the present day, of which several specimens are engraved in the next Plate, which will close this series of examples.

LETTERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

The first example of the common cursive hand of the nineteenth century (Plate XXVIII. No. 4) is from a letter written by the celebrated English statesman William Pitt to Mr. Huskisson; which, though on mere routine official business, serves to shew the clear, bold hand of the writer, as well as an example from a more important document. It is dated "Walmer Castle, March 27, 1803." A letter from Sir Joseph Banks, one of the chief co-adjutors in the foundation of our national Museum, to Lacépède, the great French naturalist, thanking him for some preserved specimens, furnishes the next example. It is dated June 26, 1802, and is remarkably clear and distinct (Plate XXVIII. No. 5).

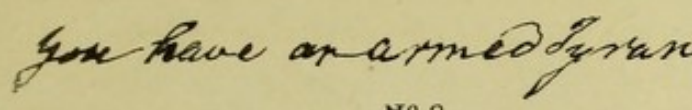
The careless, hasty hand of the example, No. 6, Plate XXVIII., is that of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, one of the most eloquent but useless members of the first British Parliament of the nineteenth century; and also the author of the brilliant comedies, *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal.* The letter, or rather note, from which the example is taken, is characteristic enough of the irregularity in pecuniary matters which destroyed the career of this man of genius, and eventually created those anxieties which brought his life prematurely to a miserable close. It relates to getting "the enclosed"—a promissory note—*renewed.*

Two specimens of French writing, written at the zenith and at the close of the career of Napoleon, will illustrate the state of French running-hand in the early part of the present century. The first (Plate XXVIII. No. 7) is from a note written by Napoleon himself, as First Consul, to General Soult, then commanding "the army of invasion," as it was termed, stationed at Boulogne. This writing is remarkably cramped and bad, indeed all but illegible, as though written impatiently, and by one who felt this mode of communicating ideas irksome, and longed to issue the command *viva voce*, with the rapidity for which he was well known. The following specimen is from a letter of his adopted son, Prince Eugene Beauharnais, who commanded the troops in Italy after the fatal campaign of Russia had paled the star of Napoleon. It was written to his sister, the Queen Hortense, and describes his refusal of offers made to him by the allies, to secure to him the kingdom of Italy on his desertion of the fallen fortunes of Napoleon; which he indignantly refused (Plate XXVIII. No. 8).

A few English specimens of a still more recent period must close this series. The first (Plate XXVIII. No. 9) is a characteristic passage from a letter of Lord Byron to Mr. Douglas, in which he speaks of the reception of his *Cain;* which he maintains to be "as Catholic as the Thirty-nine Articles."

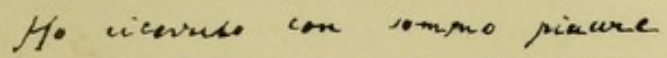
FROM AUTOGRAPH LETTERS,
of the 18th & beginning of 19th Century

Nº 1



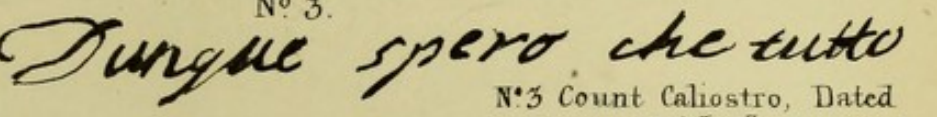
Nº 1 Edmund Burke.

Nº 2.



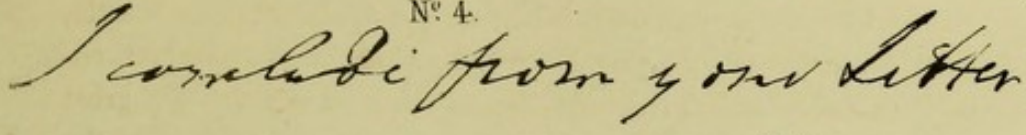
Nº 2 The Poet Alfieri
Dated Decr 28th 1782

Nº 3.



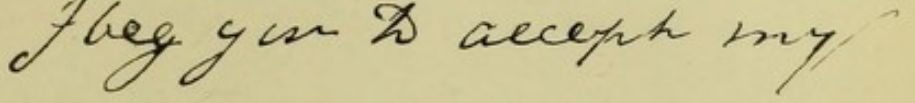
Nº 3 Count Caliostro, Dated
Febr 4th .....

Nº 4.



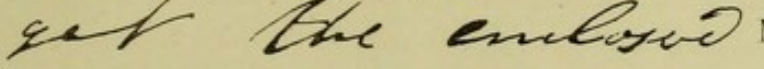
Nº 4 William Pitt,
Dated Walmer Castle
March 27th 1803

Nº 5.



Nº 5 Sir J. Banks, Dated
Soho Square, Janr 26th
1802

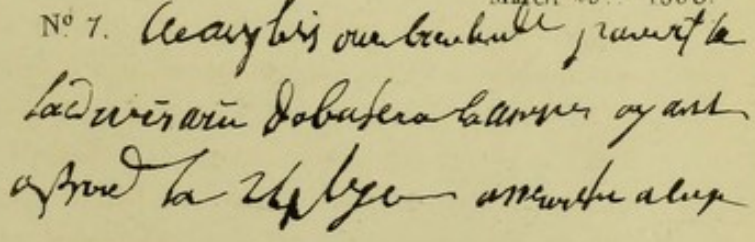
Nº 6



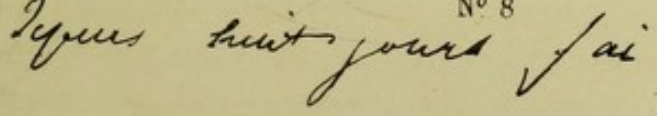
Nº 6 Richard Brinsley
Sheridan. Dated
March 29th 1808.

Nº 7 Napoleon Bonaparte as first
Consul addressed to Soult when
in Command of the Army
collected at Boulogne for the
invasion of England.

Nº 7.

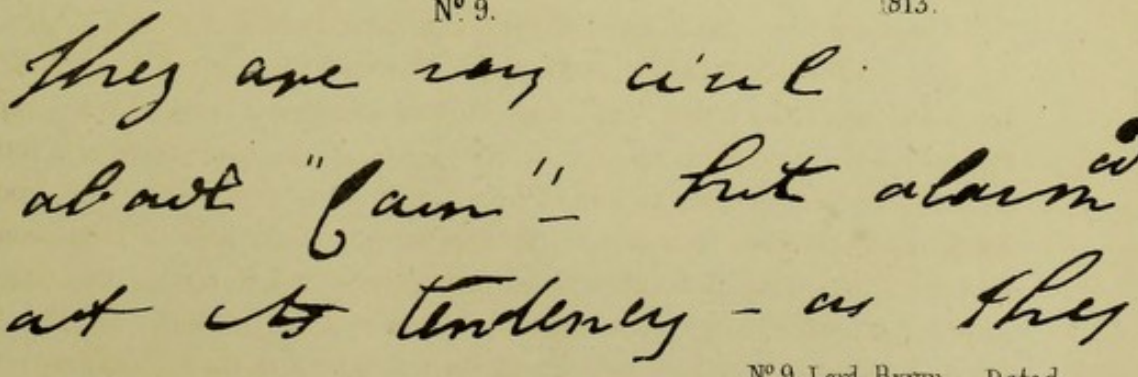


Nº 8



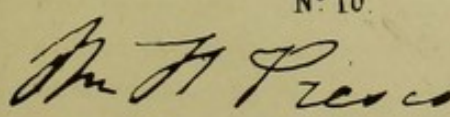
Nº 8. The Prince Eugene Beauharnais
Dated March 15th
1813.

Nº 9.



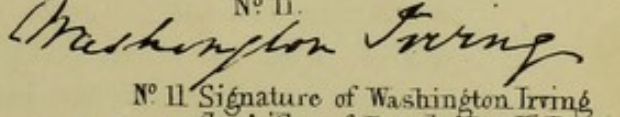
Nº 9 Lord Byron. Dated
Pisa Novr 4th 1821.

Nº 10.



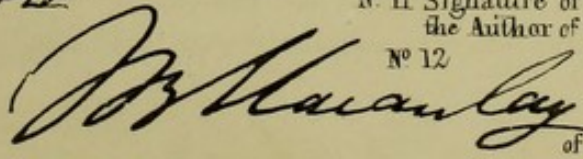
Nº 10. Signature of W. H. Prescot,
the Historian of Mexico.

Nº 11.



Nº 11 Signature of Washington Irving
the Author of Bracebridge Hall &c

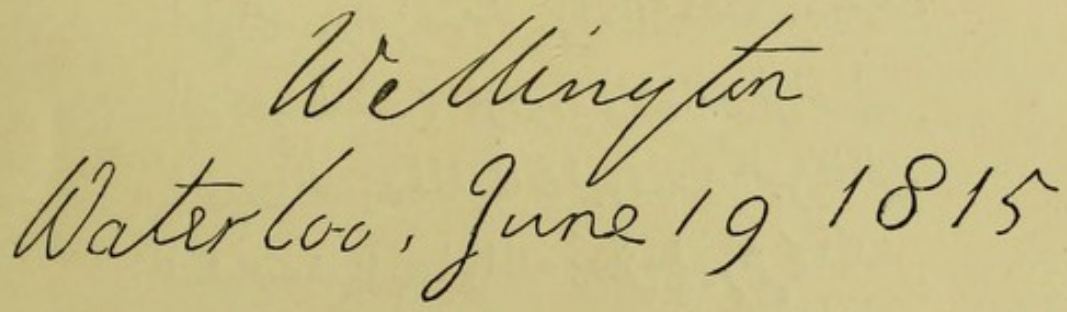
Nº 12



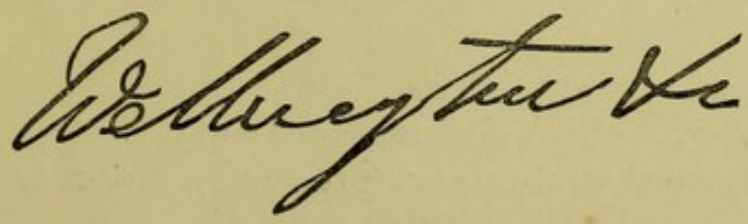
Nº 12 Signature of
T. B. Macaulay. Author
of a History of England.

PRINTED BY J. HARPER, 311 PEARL ST.

As a specimen of the handwriting of living authors, I have engraved the signature (Plate XXVIII. No. 10) of the celebrated author of the most recent *History of England,* Mr. T. B. Macaulay; and the signatures of two eminent Americans, Mr. Prescott (Plate XXXI. No. 8), the author of the *History of Mexico* and of *Ferdinand and Isabella,* &c.; and that of Washington Irving (Plate XXVIII. No. 11), the author of the charming *Sketch-Book, Bracebridge Hall,* and other works. I must close my list with the two appended autographs of the late Duke of Wellington, written at two epochs of his career, and a note in Arabic from the Emir Abd-el-Kader to the Marquis of Londonderry, on his liberation by the Emperor of the French. The earliest signatures are A. Wesley, before the name of Wellesley was assumed; but I have no room for a specimen previous to that of the 19th of June, 1815, the day after the decisive battle of Waterloo.

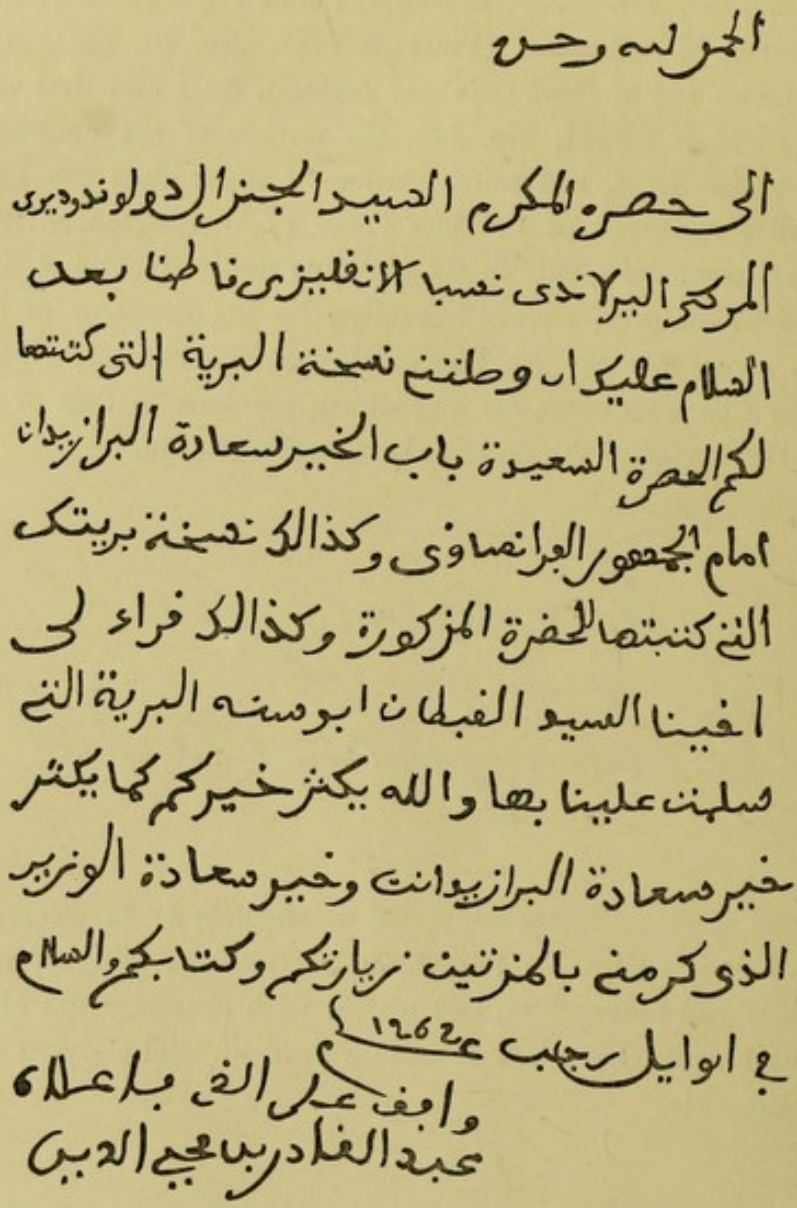


The second is from a note addressed to Madame de St. Elme, dated 21st April, 1834. It is written in French, and refers to a copy of her Memoirs which that lady had sent to him, but which, with characteristic bluntness, he states that he has not had time to read a word of. The signature exhibits his more recent style.



Of late, however, his notes, even with the signatures, are said to have been written by his private secretary, Mr. Greville, his own hand being sometimes scarcely legible, a note to the Home Office remaining to this day undeciphered. The writing of Mr. Greville resembles in a striking manner that of the Duke himself, except in being much more legible than that of the illustrious chief. It is, in fact, so closely similar that many connoisseurs in autographs have been deceived by it; and in forming a collection the greatest precautions must be taken in order to secure an undoubted original.

The note of Abd-el-Kader is to be read, like nearly all Oriental writing, from right to left; and a translation will be found below.



[TRANSLATION.]

PRAISE TO THE ONLY GOD!

To his Lordship the Cid, General Marquis of Londonderry, Irishman by birth, dwelling in England, greeting.

I have received a copy of the letter written to you by his happy Lordship, the source of good, his Lordship the President, Chief of the French Republic, and also a copy of that which you formerly wrote to him.

Our brother, the Cid, Captain Boissonnet, has also communicated to me the letter which transmitted your greetings. May God reward you! and also his happy Lordship, the President of the Republic, and his Lordship the Minister of War, whose generosity procured me the honour of your visit and the favour of your letter.

Beginning of Redjib, year 1267.

This is written according to my intentions,

ABD-EL-KADER BEN MAKHI EDDIN.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE WRITING-MATERIALS OF ALL AGES.

THE materials used in the art of writing belong to two distant epochs. The first is that in which the characters were engraved with a sharp instrument on hard substances,—such as metal or stone; the second that when they were "written" with different liquids, or inks, on such substances as linen, papyrus, vellum, &c.

The most remarkable examples of the first epoch are the engraved records of the Egyptian temples, for which a fine steel point must have been used, as no softer substance would have served to cut the granitic and basaltic inscriptions with the sharpness they still exhibit; and this fact proves that the art of hardening steel, long thought a comparatively modern invention, was known to this ancient people. The engraving (p. 173) represents an Egyptian scribe in the act of engraving hieroglyphics with such an instrument; he is symbolically represented with the head of the ibis, which was sacred to the god Thoth, the reputed inventor of the Egyptian system of writing. It has been engraved by Mr. Forster, in his interesting treatise on the interpretation of the hieroglyphic system; who, by his newly modified method of deciphering these characters, reads the accompanying inscription, as, "Writes the scribe with the sharp point." Similar instruments were used, but probably with the assistance of a mallet or hammer for engraving the great rock inscriptions and other records of Assyria and Persia. The Greeks termed an instrument of this kind a *graphion*, with which they wrote upon tablets of lead prepared with wax, or ivory, bronze, glass, chalk, plaster, and other materials, for private purposes, and on marble or stone for public records.

Calmet states that tablets of wood or stone are the most ancient writing surfaces used for ordinary purposes; and that in the time of Moses tablets of wood were probably the most usual, as there is no word in the Pentateuch which appears to refer to scrolls of any pliable material, such as leather, linen, or papyrus. Indeed, the term *sepher* (ספר), which in our English translation is rendered "book," means literally a small bundle of written tablets. Nearly all the passages in the Bible in which writing is mentioned refer to tablets of lead or wood, sometimes described as coated with wax; nevertheless other materials are occasionally named, to be referred to hereafter.

Before the use of papyrus, or any analogous substance was known as a material for writing on, thin bricks were frequently used in Central Asia; and

the Chinese wrote on slips of the bamboo, and on metal. Examples of this mode of writing on wood are still preserved in China, the characters of which are of the earliest kind. The Chinese bamboo tablets were prepared for writing by being scraped smooth with a sharp tool, and then submitted to great heat, which so hardened them that they could be engraved upon almost like a soft metal, which was done with a sharp graver, like that of the Egyptian scribe. These slips were then joined together by means of bark thread, and when folded formed a "book," similar in form to the Indian manuscripts of the present day, or the sepher, so often translated as "book" in the Bible.

In Greece, similar though not identical methods of writing prevailed; and it is stated by Plutarch, Aulus Gellius, and Diogenes Laërtius, that the laws of Solon were engraved on wood. The Greeks called the tables on which they engraved their laws κύρβεις and ἄξονες. Such tablets as these were similar to those of Cyrene, on which the genealogies of the citizens were recorded; among which, Synesius tells us that his own was preserved from father to son, in direct descent from Hercules. The first name applies, it is thought, to triangular tablets formed of stone, and the last to square tablets of wood; though some reverse them. The wood was sometimes whitened with a preparation of chalk, &c. to make the engraved letters more distinct. In Rome also wooden records are mentioned, and their early statues of the gods were of that material; but the laws of the "twelve tables" were engraved on twelve plates of brass, as were the "letters" of the Romans and Lacedæmonians to Jews; and Livy states that the treaty between the Latins and Romans was engraved on a "pillar" of brass. In the reign of Vespasian 3000 such tablets, containing many of the most ancient laws and records of the state, were destroyed by fire.

Dion Cassius states that when the consul Hirtius was besieged in Modena, he caused a letter written on lead to be conveyed to Decius Brutus, and received from that personage a reply written on the same material. Pausanias mentions a copy of the books of Hesiod written on lead; and Pliny alludes to *rolls* of the same material used for writing. The laws of the Cretans were engraved on bronze; and a speech of the Emperor Claudius engraved on that metal is still preserved at Lyons, the ancient Lugdunum, to the municipality of which it was originally addressed.

In the early period of the history of writing, the shepherds wrote their songs with thorns or awls on straps of leather, which they wound round their crooks; and in more recent times the Icelanders scratched their *runes* on the walls of their dwellings; their chairs and bedsteads being often covered with elaborate details of the exploits of their heroes. In comparatively modern times some Arab tribes scratched their chronicles on the blade-bones of sheep.

The custom of engraving records, and even private letters, on metal, is still practised in the East, and our national Museum contains several, comparatively speaking, recent specimens; among others are the following: a Cingalese

manuscript, written on fifty-three leaves of copper gilt, containing the *Sant-patthâna-sutta*, or Rules for Meditations in Solitude, according to the Buddhistic doctrine; a Pali manuscript, in the Cingalese character, written on twenty-five laminæ, or plates of silver, and enclosed in solid silver covers, containing the treatises entitled *Dham-macakka ppavattana-sutta* and *Carlak-amma vebhangsutta;* a thin plate of gold, inscribed on both sides in the Javanese character, being probably a letter from one of the native princes.

Huygen, in his work entitled *De Limitibus constituendis*, informs us that the plans and boundaries of private property in Rome were also engraved on plates of brass (*libros æris*), which were deposited for security along with the archives of the state; and as late as the time of Theodosius the ancient method of promulgating new laws in the provinces by means of engraved tablets of brass, or wood steeped in wax, was still practised, though they were sometimes written on sheets of linen, *lenteis mappis scripta*. Cardinal Quirini, in his account of the discoveries at Herculaneum, mentions four little plates of brass, covered with writing, which was found to relate to the honourable discharge of certain soldiers from active duty. These leaves or tablets were joined at the corners by means of a piece of wire, and thus formed a kind of bronze book. Maffei has engraved a "book" of this description, containing grants by the Emperor Galba to certain veterans.

Such books, when only containing two leaves, were called by the Greeks diptychs, as being composed of *two* plates folded together. The Romans called them diploma, for the same reason. It was in this form that the document conferring a public office was conveyed to the person appointed, from whence we have our modern term diploma. The term *codex* was also given to wooden tablets, and has since been frequently applied to ancient copies of the Gospels, and indeed other ancient Mss. of early date; the originals of which were probably written on a bundle of such slips of wood. This name is derived from the Latin term *codex*, the trunk of a tree, in allusion to the material of which the tablets in most common use were made. When important appointments were conferred on eminent persons, the diplomas or diptychs were frequently richly gilt, and in the lower empire they were formed of ivory, the outsides being richly carved. A diptych or diploma of this kind is still in existence, which was sent by the eastern emperor Anastasius to Clovis, king of the Francs, conferring upon him the then nominal rank of Roman consul. Such tablets were also made of box-wood, citron-wood, and slate. These *diptychs*, from διπτυχος (twofold), were occasionally triple, in which case they were termed *triptychs;* and with five or more tablets they received the name *polyptych*, or many-folded. A polyptych of six leaves is engraved in the *Nouveau Traité de Diplomatique*. When wooden diptychs were not prepared with wax, they were called *schedæ*. Eventually, such tablets consisted only of prepared skin, or vellum, or thin slips of bark, in which case the outside leaves were painted or stained of some rich colour, the most usual being green, yellow, or purple.

Pliny, following Varro, says that such tablets were to private acts what tables of lead or bronze were to public ones. Copies of a *Senatus consultum* were sometimes written on ivory tablets; and Vopiscus mentions one countersigned by the emperor Tacitus, which in his time existed in one of the public libraries of Rome. The practice of using diptychs and polyptychs of wood or ivory continued long after the introduction of vellum, and even paper; for in the fourteenth century we find the travelling expenses of the French king Philippe le Bel kept on waxed tablets of this kind, which are still preserved in the French National Library; and similar examples, of equally recent date, are preserved in the archives of Germany and Italy. It was undoubtedly from polyptychs of this kind that the modern form of books was derived; and the earliest books were termed *codices*, from the Latin *codex*, as before explained, to distinguish them from the *volumina* or *volumes*, which were rolled Mss., and which in their turn have given us the modern term volume.

Rolled records were composed of a material on which characters could be inscribed with a liquid ink, and belong to the second period; but though last introduced, they were the first to be discontinued. The earliest examples are those rolls of Egyptian papyrus, on which a form of funereal rites was inscribed, to be buried with the dead in their mummy-cases. These curious relics of antiquity have been found of as early a date as fifteen centuries before the Christian era. But though the Egyptians were thus early in possession of a writing-material closely analogous to our modern paper, its use appears to have been unknown in other countries till many centuries later; and we consequently find other and simpler materials in use among less advanced nations.

Diodorus Siculus states, that the ancient Persians used the skins of animals to write the annals of their nation; and the authors of the *Nouveau Traité de Diplomatique* describe a curious Ms. of the two books of Esdras, preserved in the convent of St. Dominic, which is formed of skins of leather rudely sewn together, and which the learned author of the *Vatican Library* considered to be the original Ms. written by the hand of Esdras. It is difficult to impugn such high authority; but the monkish frauds of the middle ages in the manufacture of relics likely to excite the veneration of the people are so well known—of which the forged charter of Westminster Abbey may be cited as an example—that this especial monument of the ancient mode of writing on leather is of suspicious character. It may, it is true, have been written in some remote part of Syria in medieval times; but its claim to the date above referred to requires much verification. It is most probable, however, that such records were, in the time of Esdras, written in a similar manner; for Herodotus tells us that the Ionians, when unable to procure papyrus from Egypt, used the skins of goats and sheep, and that in his time many barbarous nations employed no other substance for writing on. At a much later period the Jews still used leather as a writing-material; but they became eventually so skilful in joining the pieces together for their religious records, which were

written in letters of gold, that Josephus has especially alluded to the admiration of Ptolemy Philadelphus, when the seventy elders sent to him by the high priest unrolled before him the sacred scrolls, the pieces of which were so artistically joined that no seam could be detected even on the closest examination.

Varro says, that before the invention of papyrus, the large leaves of some kinds of plants were prepared for writing purposes; and that this custom was common in the East, and is, indeed, still practised, is well known; hence originates our term "leaves" for the pieces of paper forming a modern book, which in the Latin form, *folium*, has given us the modern term folio, now confined, inappropriately enough, to books of unusual size.

As a proof how deeply western civilisation had penetrated into the East in the time of the Greek and Roman conquests, it may be mentioned here, that the lives of Alexander and Cæsar, taken from those of Plutarch, are found at the present day as favourite romances, written in the native manner upon the leaves and bark of trees. Indeed, among Asiatic nations, where every phase of art always remains so long stationary, and where innovation is so slow, that centuries pass away without working any material change in the mode of practising the arts of daily use, the leaves of plants are still employed for writing on, as the following examples, which were exhibited to the public, in 1852, in the library of the British Museum will serve to illustrate.

A Pali manuscript in the Siamese character, containing the treatise entitled *Patthanappakaranatthakatha*, written on 162 leaves of the talipot palm-tree.

A manuscript written in the Karnata character on strips of the palm-leaf rolled up in the form of rings, and linked together so as to form a chain.

A small roll written on the inner bark of the birch-tree in very minute Sanscrit characters, containing the *Tri* Baghavat Ghita.

A manuscript in the Batta character, used in the island of Sumatra, written on a long piece of bark folded so as to resemble a book. It contains, first, directions how to apply to the good spirits for assistance in case of sickness or distress; secondly, how to guess from the *Unte* (or divination by a small globe or table) what will befal any person, of good or evil; thirdly, charms to be uttered in order to conciliate the favour of the good spirits.

A manuscript written on twelve leaves of the palmyra in the square or ancient Pali character, on a richly lacquered gold ground, containing the first and third books of *Kammavaca* or Buddhist catechism. A manuscript in the Kawi, or ancient Javanese language, entitled *Cimtara Manawa Sastra*, a paraphrase of the institutes of Menu, written on sixty-three narrow palm-leaves and enclosed within carved wooden covers.

In the East, as well as in the West, various kinds of woven cloth were also used for writing upon; and in Greece it was customary to write the names of those who fell in battle on the veil of the statue of Minerva, which, like the statues of other deities, was clothed on state occasions with real draperies,—a custom still practised in the Romish Church.

Grecian laws were also promulgated by means of Mss. on linen, as they were also in Rome; and in addition to linen cloth, silk was occasionally used previous to the introduction of papyrus; of which Livy cites examples from Licinius Macer, and Tuberon, who consulted records and annals written on linen cloth, while Vopiscus speaks of linen Mss. existing in his time at Athens.

The sap of some species of plants also formed a writing-material, as well as the skins of various kinds of fish, and even the "intestines of serpents," for according to Zonaras, the fire which took place at Constantinople in the reign of the Emperor *Basiliscus*, consumed among other valuable remains of antiquity a copy of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and some other ancient poems, written in letters of gold upon a material formed of the intestines of a serpent.

Purcelli informs us that monuments of a much more modern date, the charters of Hugo and Lothaire, kings of Italy, preserved in the archives of Milan, are written upon fish-skin.

But bark, and also a kind of paper make of bark, appear to have formed the most common writing-material at one period in the West; for Varro, as quoted by Pliny, says that palm-*leaves* (or perhaps mallow-leaves) were at first used for writing on, from whence the Latin word *folium* began to signify the leaf of a book as well as of a tree; and also states that *bark* was used for writing purposes, whence the term *liber*, bark, came to be given to a book; from which the French word *livre*, and our terms library, librarian, &c. are derived. The term *philyra*, which literally means the inner bark of the linden-tree, was given by the Romans to a sheet of any substance commonly used for writing; a sufficient proof that bark in some form had once been the most usual material for that purpose.

But the introduction of the use of papyrus to nations beyond the limits of Egypt was the great event in the ancient history of writing-materials. The Greeks probably did not know the use of this material till after the reign of the first Macedonian sovereign of Egypt, Ptolemy Lagus, when, in return for Greek literature, Egypt gave back her papyrus; before which the Greeks, as I have stated, generally wrote their books on linen, wax, bark, and the leaves of trees; and their public records on stone, brass, or lead. The introduction of papyrus to Greece was like the invention of printing in modern times; for books were then known by many for the first time. After this epoch papyrus was long the only substance employed for literary purposes; for though vellum was adopted as a writing-material about two centuries later, it was too costly to be used so long as papyrus was within reach. When the use of this ancient *paper* was firmly established in Greece, all the Mss. assumed the form of rolls, and were called *αποκυλινδρον*, or cylinders, from their form, being rolled on cylinders of wood, ivory, bronze, glass, and other substances, decorated sometimes at the end by small globes, points, and various ornaments. Most frequently only one side of the material was written upon, even in ordinary legal acts; as some have thought in consequence of the transparency of very fine papyrus, but more evidently from the inconvenience of

turning a large continuous piece of writing on papyrus, frequently many yards long; the reading even of one side being facilitated, in rolls often read, by a terminal roller, round which the read portion was rolled as fast as it was read off.

The rolled Mss. were sometimes termed by the Romans *rolles*, from *rotulus*, a little wheel, as being rolled round in the manner of a wheel; but more commonly *volumina*, from *volvere*, to roll over, as they were over the cylinder to which they were attached, and from which is derived our modern term volume. Ovid refers to this as the usual form of Mss. in his time, in the line,

"Sunt quoque mutatæ ter quinque volumina formæ."

The rolled form of manuscripts executed on pliable materials probably arose at a much earlier period than is generally supposed, though it did not at first supersede the tablet form of records inscribed on wood or metal; for when, in the Psalms of David, the "pen of a ready writer" is referred to, it could scarcely be the sharp point, or stylus, by means of which characters were engraved upon wood or metal, but rather the calamus, or juncus, used for "writing" with a dark fluid upon bark or linen; for, notwithstanding the assertion of Calmet to the contrary, the word *volume* also occurs in Psalm xxxix., and in other parts of the holy Scriptures, even in the book of Job. These volumina, or volumes, must have been either rolls of leaves, or bark, or Egyptian papyrus. Varro states that papyrus was first known about the time of Alexander; he should have said first introduced to Greece and Italy in any quantity at that period; and his assertion is contradicted by Pliny the historian, who states that "books of papyrus were found in the tomb of Numa;" and he might have added in Egyptian tombs a thousand years more ancient.

Pliny, in the same place, informs us that papyrus was known among the Romans by the name of *charta*, so often spoken of as the usual writing-material of his day, and that it was made from the Egyptian reed called *papyrus;* which proves that he made no mistake as to the material called *charta*. This Latin name of the substance upon which all deeds were written in the south of Europe, and even Gaul, from its first introduction, to the sixth or seventh century, has given us the term *charter*, so familiar to English ears since the signature of the great bulwark of English liberty was wrung from the unwilling hand of the tyrant John.

Though we have thus adopted both the Greek and Latin names by which papyrus was known in Europe, having preserved the Greek name in our modern term "paper," which is the legitimate successor of papyrus, and the Roman name *charta* in our public deeds and in maps and other plans executed on large surfaces; yet papyrus itself was apparently never introduced either to England or Germany; the earliest charters of both countries being invariably written on vellum.

The manufacture of papyrus was carried on in Egypt so systematically,

and upon such an extensive scale, that every kind had its proper designation, some of the later improvements in its fabrication being named after Roman emperors; while each kind formed a distinct branch of manufacture, the particulars of which have been preserved by contemporary writers. It will be sufficient, however, to state here that the fabric attained to as great perfection as our much-boasted modern paper; and the finer kinds are said to have been as white as snow. But the gradual introduction of vellum, to be spoken of hereafter, and the invention of cotton paper, eventually put an end to the production of this beautiful fabric. In the north of Europe its use ceased after the eighth century; but though abandoned in France after that epoch, its use was continued in Italy till the eleventh, and Muratori cites a Bull of Pope Benoit XI. written on papyrus in 1043. Even in Egypt, however, it was unknown after the thirteenth century, where the Arabs had introduced the cotton paper of the East at a much earlier period.

VELLUM.

The usually received account of the introduction of vellum is to the effect that Ptolemy Philadelphus, jealous of the celebrity enjoyed by Eumenes, king of Pergamus, on account of his protection of learned men, and his formation of public libraries, &c., issued an edict to prevent the exportation of papyrus, with a view to prevent the further execution and accumulation of Mss. by his active rival in the patronage of literature. The edict of Ptolemy, however, is said to have failed in its effect by the invention of parchment, which Eumenes caused to be prepared for writing, as a substitute for papyrus; and which, as being first used at Pergamus, received its ancient name of *pergamena*.

It is most probable, however, as the use of skins for writing on had long been known, that this "invention" was only a great improvement in their preparation, brought about by the sudden stoppage in the supply of papyrus. Parchment, which is a corruption of the ancient term *pergamena*, only differs from vellum as being the skin of sheep, while the latter is made from that of calves. At first parchment and vellum were always of a yellow tone; but at Rome a method was discovered of making them quite white; an improvement which was at first not liked, as fatiguing to the sight.

From the introduction of parchment we may date the first step towards the modern form of books. We have seen that the polyptychs were eventually formed of leaves of vellum instead of wood or ivory—a use to which papyrus could not have been put on account of its brittleness—and as more and more leaves were gradually added to the polyptych, it became evident that entire Mss. could be written in that convenient form on vellum.

The earliest known Mss. on vellum of the third or fourth centuries of the Christian era are indeed in the form of modern books, while the latest known Mss. on papyrus are in the older rolled form. The *volumina* of papyrus, and

the *codices* of wood or parchment, may be considered as marking the two principal forms of Ms. books, namely, the rolled Mss., and those in the form of books of separate leaves sewn together at the back.

Towards the close of the Roman Empire, both these methods of forming Mss. were in use, as well as both materials, and some still more ancient, for by the code of Justinian it was expressly permitted to write a will either upon charta, that is papyrus, upon tablets, upon leather, or upon *membrane* or parchment, all these being then in common use.

Parchment, however, gradually superseded all other substances, in Europe, as a general material for writing upon, after the third or fourth century; from which epoch all extensive Mss. are written on that substance, though state-deeds—courts and lawyers being always a few centuries behind the mass of the people—still continued to be written on the old papyrus till the eighth century; and in Italy, the great centre of ecclesiastical supremacy, even till the eleventh.

The introduction of cotton paper, and eventually linen-rag paper, did not materially interfere with the use of vellum till after the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, and even then the use of paper was so rare, that copies of the earliest printed books are much more prized by collectors when printed on paper, the use of that material being even then of very rare occurrence, the vast extent of its capabilities being as yet unknown.

But the wonderful manner in which books were multiplied as the powers of printing became known, soon proved the impossibility of supplying the demands of the press with the skins of animals, even if the whole human race had been skinned in addition to the less privileged quadrupeds; so that a material to the production of which there was no limit was then imperatively called for, and "paper" answered the call.

MODERN PAPERS.

A kind of bark paper is thought by some to have been manufactured in Europe previous to the introduction of the cotton paper of the East, and a Ms. supposed to be written on a paper of this kind is preserved in the library of St. Germain des Pres, which is evidently as old as the sixth century, and most probably earlier. The ancient copy of the Gospels at St. Mark's at Venice is also apparently written on paper made from bark, though some have considered it to be cotton paper, which, however, is not known to have been made even in the East earlier than the ninth century, while this Ms. is evidently of the third or fourth; and some have asserted it to be contemporary with the Evangelists themselves.

In parts of India paper is still made from the inner bark of a tree which they call *avo*, and in China from the inner integument of the bamboo.

The cotton paper of the East was introduced in Europe about the ninth century, and became known as charta bombycina, charta cottunea, or charta

Damascena, from the chief seat perhaps of its manufacture. This cotton paper soon became common in Greece and other countries where the Greek language was spoken; and from Sicily, which was still a Greek dependency, it passed into Italy; but it was little known beyond that country till a much later period. Examples of the use of this cotton paper are found in the diplomas of the Roman princes of Sicily, and in Venetian and Neapolitan documents from the ninth to the twelfth century.

Cotton paper is still made in China, and frequently imported as an article of commerce, being used for fine impressions of engravings, under the name of India paper. The Chinese also made silk paper, rice paper, and also paper of straw and other substances. They possessed the art of making different kinds of paper at a very ancient period, and have a method of producing pieces of thirty or forty feet in length, which neither the Egyptians in their papyrus, nor our modern paper-makers, till recently, ever succeeded in doing. The Chinese record called "Sou kien tchi pou," states that a kind of paper was made of hemp; and another authority states that old pieces of woven hemp were first made into paper in that country about the year 95 of our era, by a great mandarin of the palace. Linen rags were afterwards used by the Chinese, and papers of this kind first found the way to Europe about the time of the Crusades.

The Abbé de Cluni, in his treatise against the toleration of the Jews, states, that in his time there were books written on parchment, and also on a substance *ex rasuris veterum pannorum*. This was certainly paper, in the modern sense of the word, shewing that paper books existed in Western Europe as early as the twelfth century; but none are now in existence of that early date, and its use was certainly very rare till the fourteenth century, and infrequent even then.

The first notice of a manufactory of paper in Europe is that mentioned by Ednisi, who, writing in 1150, tells us that excellent paper was made at Xatira in Valencia, and that it was exported both to the East and West. At the commencement of the fourteenth century there were several paper-mills in Tuscany, moved by water; and the manufacture is still continued with success in that part of Italy.

At Nuremberg, in Germany, a paper-mill was established in 1390; and paper was made in France at an earlier period in that century. There was, however, a great prejudice in Germany against the use of paper, as less durable than vellum; and the German emperors, in their diplomas conferring the title of Count, which conceded also the power of creating notaries, made it a condition that those so created should not use in the deeds they executed either old scraped parchment, or *paper*—a regulation which has been followed without the assistance of similar edicts in all parts of Europe; for law-deeds, though paper has superseded parchment for all other purposes, are still written on that material.

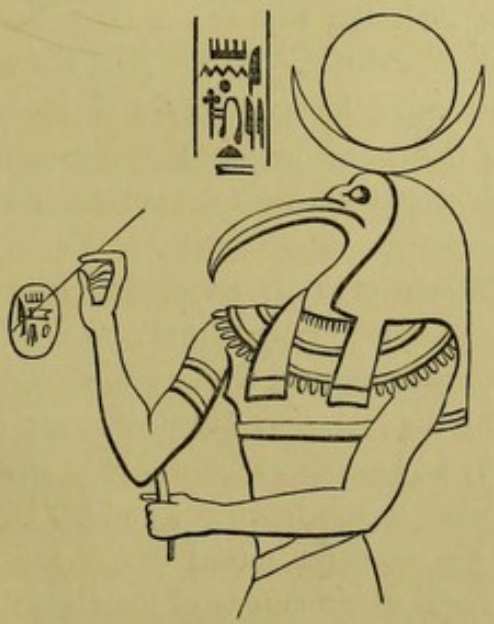
England was much later in the field in the production of paper, and its manufacture was even at last imported from France. In 1496, however, one John Tate had established a mill at Stevenage in Hertfordshire, where he made the paper for Wynkyn de Worde's book, entitled *Bartolomæus de proprietatibus rerum;* and in 1558 Queen Elizabeth granted to her jeweller, John Spelman, the privilege of erecting a paper-mill at Dartford. But none except very common paper was made in England till Baskerville, in 1750, to obviate the roughness of the papers then manufactured, caused some to be made on wove moulds, on which he printed his beautiful edition of Virgil from silver types. Ambroise Didot introduced this kind of paper in France as *papier velin*, or vellum paper, a name still used in France for drawing paper.

In 1770 the first eminent English paper-manufacturer appeared. This was John Whatman, who, after working as journeyman in many of the first paper-mills on the continent, established a mill at Maidstone; and his name still appears in the mark of many of the best papers still in general use.

The subsequent improvement by the Didots in France, and Gambles, Dickensons, and Cromptons in England, are matters too recent to require recapitulation in this place.

WRITING INSTRUMENTS.

The "sharp point" of the Egyptian scribes who wrote on stone, the stilus of the Romans made of iron, the graphium of the Greeks, the cælum, and the graver, γλυφεῖον, were the instruments used for writing before ink was employed. The calamus, arundo, juncus, or reed-pen, were afterwards used



Egyptian Scribe.

for writing with a dark-coloured liquid or ink. David, in the Psalms, compares his tongue to the instrument of a writer, translated as "pen," and in the Vulgate *calamus;* but which Aquila translates *juncus*.

The Greeks, and also the Romans, used the stilus not only for engraving the characters on lead, citron-wood, or other suitable material, but also for tracing writing in wax, a thin layer of which sometimes covered the metal tablets of the diptych, the edges of which, being raised, allowed of its being shut without injuring the writing. One end of the stilus was always flattened for the purpose of erasing the writing when required, by smoothing the wax over the written parts; but on diptychs without wax a hair-pencil was sometimes used with a kind of ink. The iron stilus was a formidable instrument of attack or defence in case of need, from the name of which the modern Italian term *stiletto*, a small dagger, is derived. It is well known that Julius Cæsar fell beneath the repeated stabs of the stili of the conspirators; and at a later period, a Roman knight, who had beaten his son so severely as to cause his death, is said to have been dispatched by the enraged populace by stabs from this kind of writing instrument.

Orientals still continue to use the stilus; and the British Museum possesses an interesting example; it is a Cingalese stilus of brass, for writing on palm-leaves, with the wooden case in which it was usually enclosed.

As writing with a dark-coloured fluid, on papyrus, came into practice, the calamus or reed-pen, or a hair-pencil were used; or the *juncus*, a pen formed of a kind of cane. In the time of Pliny, the calamus, as manufactured in Egypt, or Cnidus, or those from the lake Anais, in Asia, were most prized; but the linen books of the Romans, and other ancient nations, it is thought, were written with the hair-pencil, and not the calamus.

In the Roman Empire strict regulations existed as to the manner of writing wills; but Constantine, by a special edict, authorised soldiers dying on the field of battle, to write their last will and testament with the point of their sword, on its sheath or on a shield. In the East the calamus and juncus are still used, the most celebrated being gathered in the month of March, near Aurac, on the Persian Gulf, and prepared by six months immersion in fermenting manure, which coats them with the yellow or black varnish for which they are prized.

The use of the feathers of birds as writing instruments, of which the modern pen is formed—a name derived from *penna*, a feather—did not commence earlier than the fourth century of our era, though some have supposed it to have been used by the Romans; but no distinct mention is made of it by classical authors. It is, however, known that in the seventh century both the pen and calamus were in use together; and St. Brovverus states that in his time the calamus was used for uncial letters and capitals, and the pen for small letters. In some illuminations of the Gospels executed about the eighth century, the Evangelists are represented holding *pens*, but in some still later cases with the calamus.

Hair-pencils were also early in use, and the Chinese use them at the present day, as might be inferred from the style of their characters, which

are rather painted than written. The invention of metal pens, of which the gold pen of Peter Bales, if really made for use, is the first modern example; and the recent extraordinary extension of the manufacture of steel pens by Mr. Gillott, and other ingenious and enterprising manufacturers, is too well known to require a detailed description here; but the fact is too important and too closely connected with the future history of writing, to be passed over in silence.

WRITING INKS.

Dark-coloured liquids were used to stain letters, previously engraved on some hard substance, long before it was made to flow in the calamus or pen for forming them on a smooth surface; and the Chinese made their "Indian ink" in the same manner as now, 1120 years before the Christian era; but only used it at that time to blacken incised characters. Ink was termed by ancient Latin authors *atramentum scriborium* or *librarium*, to distinguish it from *atramentum sutorium* or *calchantum*. It was made of the soot of resin, or pounded charcoal, and other substances, mixed with gum, and not like ours, of vitriol, gall-nuts, alum, &c. The earliest positive mention of ink is perhaps the passage in Jeremiah, in the Vulgate, *Ego scribebam in volumine atramento*.

Gold liquids, and also silver, purple, red, green, and blue inks were eventually used in Mss. after the fourth century; red and gold having been employed much earlier. St. Jerome speaks of rich decorations, which must have been executed with coloured inks; but, before his time, Ovid alludes, not only to the purple *charta* made use of for fine books, which were also tinged with an oil drawn from cedar wood, to preserve them, but also to titles written in red ink, which were the first kind of illuminations. The passage occurs in his first Elegy, "Ad Librum,"

> "Nec te purpureo velent vaccinia succo :
> Non est conveniens luctibus ille color.
> Nec titulus minio, nec cedro charta notetur :
> Candida nec nigra cornua fronte geras."

The last line proving, as Casley observes, that Ovid wrote upon a roll.

Diplomas were seldom written in gold or coloured inks; but some charters of the German emperors are known, not only in gold, but on purple vellum; and Leukfeld mentions one of the year 972, ornamented also with figures; while several early English Charters have gold initial letters, crosses, &c. The black ink that has kept its colour best in medieval Mss. is that used from the tenth to the thirteenth century. The signatures of the Eastern emperors is frequently in red ink.

Coloured inks were common in medieval Mss.; the red, being most usual for titles, which has given it the term *Rubric*. The writers of books, that is, the copyists, often appended their names to the end of the work, generally

in ink of a different colour to that of the body of the work, stating the time and place in which the work was executed.

CONCLUSION.

In the preceding pages it has been shewn how writing, as an art, originated, not in an attempt to note by marks or signs the sounds of language, but by pictorial imitations to represent objects, and by their modifications, to express abstract ideas. It has been shewn also, that this direct and obvious system was carried to great perfection before any attempt was made to invest it with the capacity of representation of sound. It is evident that the adaptation of such a series of iconic characters to the purpose of representing the sounds of language, must of necessity produce a cumbrous and arbitrary system, altogether unworthy to rank as an art founded upon scientific principles; yet even at the present hour such a system is the only one we employ for the notation of our language. In the present age, however, it would be strange if no attempt had been made to create a more severe and scientific method, truly and originally founded upon a classification of all the sounds which the human voice is capable of enunciating; and, in fact, several such systems have been put forth, all having more or less claim to the realisation of a truly philosophic solution of the question. None have, however, so completely fulfilled the required conditions as the system of *phonography* brought to perfection by Mr. Pitman.

This system of phonography, in its most complete form, is so perfect, that it is being rapidly adopted as the most convenient short-hand, infinitely superior to all the old and arbitrary systems of stenography, which varied in the hands of each practitioner; while Mr. Pitman's system never varies, and can be used by every compositor in a printing-office who has once learnt its principles. Such is the ease with which this character can be written, that the most rapid speaker can be easily followed *verbatim* by the transcriber.

That such a system, or some modification of it, may eventually supersede the one now in use, consisting merely of modified hieroglyphics, appears not only possible but exceedingly probable. If such should be the case, a curious question will arise, as to what may be the fate of our great existing libraries, and whether the most valuable books will be reprinted in the more scientific method of phonographic notation, or whether professorships may be established in our colleges for the study of the ancient pseudo-hieroglyphic character, in which books were printed and letters written so late as the nineteenth century.

THE END.

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