

used in the case of proposed constitutional changes, and in all other matters on demand of a certain number of citizens. An inherent defect of the plebiscite is that in many cases so much depends upon the form in which the general principle or policy to be affirmed or denied is wrought out, that, in the absence of a definite bill, one may scarcely know whether to approve or condemn. Obviously, in a question like that of prohibition, in which the decision may affect the property, the comfort, or the well-being, personal, domestic, or social, of every man and woman in the land, and in many cases that of women even more profoundly than that of men, any restriction of the ballot on grounds of property, class, or sex, is so far an obvious falling short of an ideal standard of justice.

BOOKS.

Who among us has not been overwhelmed with a feeling of awe as he has been ushered into some great library and finds himself surrounded by a wilderness of books? Tier beyond tier in endless line they stretch—books, some of them unknown to the world even by name; others whose title is a household word in every age and land; some whose influence has been but a bubble on the wave, others which, like a mighty ocean-current, have changed the whole course of history. The very air is redolent of the memories of the past. We stand with hushed voice and reverent mien as if in some great minster thickly strewn with the ashes of the dead. But from these urns has sprung a spirit that can never die, and which, an angel of light, ever beckons us on to higher and better things. For, as the great Blind Poet says: "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose for a life beyond life."

The word itself "book" is derived from the A.S. "boc" connected with the word "beech," because books were at first among these rude people made from the inner bark of the beech tree.

But thousands of years before our A.S. ancestors recorded their thoughts in books, the Assyrians stamped their thoughts in cuneiform, or wedge-shaped characters upon clay tablets; so many thousands of which have been found in the mounds of the Tigris and Euphrates, and placed in the great museums of Europe.

The books of the Romans consisted chiefly of papyrus rolls, the papyrus growing upon the reedy margin of the Nile. These leaves, or strips, of papyrus were specially prepared for the writing; and the author, if he wished, as we should now say, to have his book published, sent his original to the copyist, instructing him to have so many copies made by the writers, or scribes. These copies were then sent to the decorators, who ornamented the margins and the initial words of chapters, and who passed the roll on to those who mounted it upon a round stick or cylinder, of from one to two feet in length and adorned at the ends with metal or ivory tips. The scroll so prepared was sent to the case-maker, who made the cedar box to protect it from moisture and especially from moths. The pens employed were chiefly from the Nile, and the ink

was extremely durable, many rolls having been disinterred after the lapse of 1800 years. From the casemaker the rolls were sent to the librarian or stationer, whose wares were arranged about his shop very much as rolled-up maps are arranged in a modern school-room. It is scarcely necessary to say that, besides papyrus, the ancients used parchment, vellum, thinly-beaten leaden sheets, and waxen tablets, for their literary work.

Notwithstanding, then, the great expense (we must never forget that the employment of slave labor wonderfully lessened this expense), the ancients collected vast libraries. With them, as with us, "of the making of books there was no end." The oldest of these libraries with manuscript writings was the First Library of Egypt, the accounts of the marvellous size of which seem almost fabulous. This was followed, ages afterwards, by another great Egyptian library, that of Alexandria, founded by Ptolemy Soter, and containing, according to one account, 400,000, and according to another, 700,000 volumes. Its stores were increased by the addition of the books of the library of Pergamos (the city whose name gives us the word "parchment") containing 200,000 volumes. This Alexandrian library was the wonder of the world; but in 391 A.D. it was almost entirely destroyed by a rabble of Christian monks led by a fanatical Archbishop; and the Moors, centuries afterwards, completed its destruction.

Not only had the Romans great public libraries, as we have, but the private libraries were, in many instances, thrown open to the public. Many—in fact, most—of these great libraries were destroyed by the barbarians who overran the Empire from the 3rd to the 7th century. The precious remains were preserved chiefly in convents and monasteries, some of which possessed from 1,000 to 2,000 volumes, while others considered themselves fortunate in possessing 10 or 20 volumes. Of these conventual collections many remain to this day: e.g., the collection of Christ Church, Oxford, and that of Canterbury. Although the inauguration of the era of the universities in the 12th century gave a great impetus to the multiplication of books for the students, yet the excesses of the religious reformers in the 15th century and their zeal against Roman Catholicism led to the destruction of many valuable libraries.

The most celebrated libraries in the world at present are probably: the National (formerly the Royal) Library of Paris, with almost 2,000,000 printed books and 150,000 MSS.; the Vatican Library at Rome with the best collection of ancient MSS. in existence; and the Library of the British Museum with its million volumes.

But until the invention of printing there could be no circulation of books as we understand that expression. For the labor of multiplying copies was so excessive that only the rich could afford to have a library. So precious were the manuscripts that they were chained to the desks in church and hall; and so great was the work of making, copies that Alcuin, the Anglo-Saxon monk, toiled 22 years at transcribing a version of the Scriptures.

The history of printing is full of interest, but time permits only a glance at it. From the most remote age the Chinese had the system which they still use; the stamping upon paper of the impression from a block engraved as a whole. This was, in fact, more-

ly the Assyrian principle as exemplified in the clay tablets. But it was not until 1428 that there occurred the idea of movable type—which might, therefore, be arranged in any combinations, and which could be used again and again. This principle, the application of which revolutionized the world, was put into effect by two men apparently at the same time. These men were Laurence Coster, of Haarlem, Holland, and Gutenberg, of Mayence, Germany. From these cities, Haarlem and Mayence, the new art rapidly spread throughout Europe—indeed Strasburg contests with the two the honor of having been the birthplace of the art. The first printed book appeared in about 1440; the earliest one printed by Gutenberg being a copy of the Bible; and about thirty years thereafter Caxton set up his press at Westminster.

With printing, newspapers became possible. Without it the Fourth Estate could never have sprung into being. The Romans had, it is true, their "Acta Diurna" and "Acta Publica" written bulletins, or notices, put up day by day in the forum or the market-place. These were prepared by the clerks under the authority of the magistrates, and contained notices of deaths, births, the amount of revenue required or collected, new edicts, and other like information. They were, in fact, much like the Government or official gazette of our own day—furnishing, in addition, however a certain amount of public news. To Venice and Germany it is that we owe the origin of the newspaper proper: "Die Neue Zeitung" and "Die Relationen," of Augsburg, appearing in the latter part of the 15th century, and containing an account of the discovery of America, of the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, of the burning of witches, of earthquakes, and many other items of public interest.

In the 16th century, there appeared at Venice, at first in writing and afterwards in print, "Le Notizie Schritte," which might be seen and read for a small coin called a *seen*: hence our word "Gazette." In England the honor of precedence belongs to "The News out of Holland," of the time of James I., "The English Mercurie" of Elizabeth's reign being now considered unauthentic.

Did space permit it would be interesting to study more in detail the history of the Press—its emancipation from obnoxious governmental restrictions: in a word, the struggles through which it has passed from the day when a few dozen copies of a tiny sheet were struck off from the primitive hand-press to the present, when the sheets fall from the whirling cylinders like leaves from the wind-swept forest.

We live to-day, then, in a world flooded with printed matter. Of the present century it is true that "of the making of books there is no end," while from the small number of books that ever succeed many an author has been tempted to utter the Scriptural wish: "Oh, that mine enemy might write a book!"

We can scarcely put ourselves into the position of the men of the past, when so large a part of the population could neither read nor write. But still this universal multiplication of reading matter is not an unmixed good. It leads to superficiality of knowledge. We cannot read everything, and yet we feel that we must have a conversational acquaintanceship with the thousand and one events happening