

I now take up the Bible and in which I find that the Hebrews were a distinct and distinguished people, by the designation promise and appointment of God; yet there is nothing in sacred writ of the recording of an event by means of writing until the time of the tables of the law and testimony, which I find to be in Exodus Chap. xxiv. In that chapter, it states "Moses writes the law;" in Exodus, Chapter xxxi, verse 18, I find these words "and the Lord when he had ended these words on Mount Sinai gave to Moses, two stone tables of testimony written with the finger of God." In the following Chapter, verse 19, the people fall into idolatry, the tables are broken by Moses, after coming down from the mount, in his anger at the idolatry of the people:—and in Exodus, Chap. xxxiv, verse 1, "God commands Moses to hew two others in order that he might write upon them all that was written upon the first.

Again in Deut: Chapter xxvii, verses 2, 3, Moses commands the people that when they have crossed the Jordan and entered the land of promise which God assigned them, they are to set up monuments in the mountain of Equal, upon which they are to write all the words of the law. It would appear then, from the tenor of Sacred Scripture, that the Hebrews derived the art of writing from the Lord himself, for the art, from the completion of the first tables appears to be progressive. Thus while we admit that with the Phœnicians, and perhaps the Egyptians and Chinese also, the art of writing originated and matured in the ingenuity of the human mind, impelled by the wants and necessities of mechanical and commercial interests, we claim its divine origin as vouchsafed to God's peculiar people the Hebrews.

Having now presented to you the opinions concerning the origin of writing, the birth place of which has been claimed and contended for by ancient sovereignties, as an event conferring the highest national honor, but which is dimly traced amid the twilight of antiquity and involved in doubt by the contested claims of rival nations, it still remains a question unsolved and unsolvable.

I will now proceed with the progress of the art from the period of its origination. Astel, the English Antiquarian gives it as his opinion that the Britons were not acquainted with written characters until the time of St. Augustine who visited England in the fifth century for the purpose of converting the natives, and at that time the Roman text was introduced though it was but slightly disseminated, for he states that from the fifth to the eleventh century very few persons could write.

Now Spencer differs from Astel, in as much as he allows that it was from the Irish that the Saxons first received the Alphabet, from which admission we may infer that the Saxons had no knowledge at all of letters until they were taught by the Irish, and it is even said that several of the finest fac-similes given by Astel himself are taken from Irish manuscripts.

Mr. President and Gentlemen for the chieftains of the ancient Irish, amidst all their fierce feuds amongst themselves and their sanguinary conflicts of centuries with foreign foes, were still a religious race, true and firm in their faith and imbued with a great love of literature; and their kings, princes and chiefs founded and amply endowed vast numbers of Ecclesiastical and literary establishments, Abbeys, Colleges and Schools; as those of Armagh Downpatrick, Derry Donegal, Clogher, Clonon Devenish, Fenagh, Boyle, Cong, Mayo, Clonfert Louth, Monasterboice, Millefont, Slaine, Kells Arbraccan, Trim, Clonenagh, Tallaght Glenderlough, Leighlin, Ferns, Lismone, Cashel Holycross, Ross, Roscrea, Iniscatay, Anan of the saints and several others.—Here then we may deduce that from the above which were scattered over the whole island, that the knowledge of penmanship

was well known and disseminated throughout the land in the days of Erin's early freedom, and to make this assertion more forcible, the earliest authenticated specimens now extant is said to be the book of Kells.—This venerable and splendid volume is now preserved among the manuscripts of the university of Dublin. It is a copy of the Gospels traditionally ascribed to have belonged to Columba, and it is said unquestionably to be the best executed manuscript of early art now in existence, in its ornamental details, in the number of its decorations, fineness of the writing, and the endless variety of Initial Capital letters with which every page is ornamented.

It is also an acknowledged fact that the Empire of learning prevailed so widely in Ireland, that swarms of her learned sons were sent forth therefrom to France, Italy, Germany, Flanders, England and Scotland to teach the natives of those countries: Oh! yes thoo land of learning, of Poet and Orators, be our lot ever so happy in the land of our adoption, still, still it can never be to us like the land of our birth, when the days of our youth lie smiling behind us in that spring time freshness, where every scene around our childhood's home is a precious picture hung up withing the picture gallery of the mind called memory.—Yet other and more tender ties there are to bind us to our native land:

The green grass that is growing o'er our father's graves
Full many a thought endears;
There's a spell in the humblest shrub that waves,
Near the home of our infant years;
Yea the simplest leaf doth our fondness share,
If its parent bud expanded there,
Oh! thus tho' far on this land;
My lot is cast,
Still, still for thee my own green land,
The pulse of this heart beats fast,
While many a vision soft and bland,
Bears me often back to thy shores my fatherland.

I have diverged a little, but to my subject;—In the thirteenth century copyists of manuscripts were attached to the principal universities, and every monastery of note had its place set apart called the scriptorium which was reserved for the business of copying; but the art of printing invented by Costor in the fifteenth century effected a complete revolution in literature, and the art of writing without abating its importance has since been applied more widely than before to the practical and every day business of life.

Look at it for the purpose of commerce for epistolary correspondence, for putting down our thoughts as they occur to us, and wasting these across the broad Atlantic to friends and relatives, besides does it not mature the mind, and therefore is of the greatest benefit to mankind, But its history and progress might be continued much longer if time would admit, suffice it to say that men of genius, taste and science have again and again been directed to the subject in order to produce uniformity ease and rapidity while not unknown to fame are such men as Columba, Astel, Beauchesne, Bales, Brayley, Brown, Butterworth, Coaker, Comiers, Carsley Carstairs Casley, Champion, D'Alembert, Hodgkins, Hugo, King, King, Kearney, Massey, Mason, Milns, Porta, Peety, Robert, Scott, Smith, Thompson, Tomkins, Wingate and Spencer as the depositaries of the varied taste of this useful art at different periods.

With regard to the Spenceian system, about which I am going to speak, and as to its simplicity, elegance, and beauty it draws (as Spencer himself has said) from nature's own peculiar model, life and action. The seed, bud, flower the fruit all take the same oval form, the tree in stem, leaf-branch and root, and even the pebbles washed on shore by the waves of the sea maintain the