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Poetry.

Thank God for All.

BY CHARLES SWAIN.

Beside you oak a rustic appears,
A cottage garden leads unto the door,
A few wild plants the lovely casement cheer,
And all around looks neat though all is poor.
There Philip dwells and takes a neighbor's part,
Though little he means his help to best;
Yet still, though poor, he says, with grateful heart,
'Tis well to labor—and that God knows best!
The hare sits by him but he darts away,
A bit of heart he quits his cottage gate,
The golden village lane with dew is sweet,
And Philip's content, though low his state;
For labor unto him can joy impart,
'Tis independence his honest breast;
And still, though poor, he says, with grateful heart,
'Tis well to labor—and that God knows best!
His wife beside the door waits his return,
His children's voices meet him all the way,
And while the sun shines west the both are true,
And bird and bee sing sweet the close of day,
Philip forgets his toil, his hair to find,
By little arms and little lips cared,
And gazing round, exclaims with grateful mind,
'Thank God for all—thank God, who knows best!

The Study of Bibliography.

A Lecture delivered before the Halifax Young Men's Christian Association, in Temperance Hall, on Tuesday Evening, Feb. 16.

BY THE REV. EDMUND MATURIN, A. M.

I propose to direct your attention this evening to the "Study of Bibliography;" and for this purpose I shall first explain what I mean, and then proceed to the subject itself. The word "Bibliography" literally signifies the study of books; but in a more extended sense, it denotes the general knowledge of books, considered in a scientific or literary point of view, both with reference to their external history and their internal contents, including the materials of which they are composed, the authors by whom they were written, and the subjects to which they relate; together with their respective titles, dates, and different editions;—their degrees of rarity, curiosity, and real value, and the proper place to be assigned to them in the system of classification adopted for the arrangement of a Library. You will perceive at once that this is a very wide and comprehensive subject, and that the great difficulty is to select such information as may be most useful to the nature of a popular lecture, without entering into the discussion of particulars, which, however interesting to Bibliographers, would be scarcely intelligible to those who have but a slight and superficial acquaintance with this important branch of literature.

I must confine myself, then, to a general view of the subject; and I would begin by observing that there are two great faculties which the Almighty Creator has bestowed upon the human race in a greater or less degree for the communication of knowledge. One is the use of language; the other is the expression of ideas by means of articulate sounds, and the other is the art of writing for the diffusion of information by means of alphabetical characters. Now, it is an opinion very generally held by Divines, that the gift of language was imparted to Adam by immediate revelation from God; and there are strong reasons for tracing the origin of alphabetical writing to the same source of direct instruction from the "Father of lights." It is scarcely possible, indeed, to ascertain the exact period when mankind first began to give existence to their thoughts and to transmit their ideas to posterity by some mode of writing or visible representation. The most ancient mode was that called Hieroglyphic, which was divided into two kinds, pictorial and phonetic, the one consisting of figures or pictures of external visible objects, and the other of arbitrary marks or the writing of sounds, which is supposed to have succeeded the former. Both these modes of writing appear to have been in use long before the communication of the alphabet was communicated to the world. Now, it is perfectly clear that if alphabetical writing had not been an invention of man, it must have been a miraculous gift to him from God. That it was not a human invention, has been argued from the silence of Scripture as to the use of letters before the time of Moses, as well as from the record of the great transactions which took place on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law, from which it has been inferred that the inspired author of the Pentateuch was himself the first who made use of this mode of writing; and further, that he derived his knowledge of it from the direct teaching of the Almighty on that occasion when the two tables were delivered to him, "written with the finger of God."

But it may be objected to this opinion, that the art of writing appears to be alluded to at an earlier period than the time of Moses, and that, in fact, it is expressly referred to by the patriarch Job in that memorable passage which contains his ever-living Redeemer. You will remember that he introduced those words with this striking exclamation, "Oh that they were now written!" Oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!" Now, whatever the difference of opinion may be with regard to the time when the Book of Job was written, there can be little doubt that Job himself must have lived before the time of Moses, and therefore some kind of writing must have been known to mankind before that time. There is good reason to believe that the book of Job is the oldest record in the world, and it is the opinion of the learned Dr. Wall, that it was originally composed in hieroglyphical characters, and afterwards transcribed by Moses into alphabetical writing. But it is evident that this passage does not at all decide the question as to the particular mode of writing in use in the time of Job; the words are equally applicable to hieroglyphical and to alphabetical characters; and as far as any inference can be drawn from these expressions, it is clear that the materials of writing must have been of a very rude and primitive kind.

We must not be misled by the sound of words to which we attach very different ideas in modern times. It is evident from the passage itself, that the pen to which Job refers was an iron one, and the writing material consisted of sheets of lead, or of the solid rock; there is no allusion to the use of paper or ink, which were utterly unknown at that time. It is scarcely necessary to remark that the word "printed" has no reference to the modern art of printing books, which was not discovered till upwards of two thousand years afterwards. The original word means properly "imprinted or sculptured with a graving tool," and consequently the book itself must have been, according to our ideas, of a very clumsy nature, being probably composed of lead or stone, referred to in the latter part of the passage.

It is generally agreed that stone and wood, together with lead and brass, were the first substances on which, in the earliest ages, figures, and afterwards letters, were engraved, before the invention of manufactured materials. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the Ten Commandments, written on tables of stone, and we have abundant proof of it from the very ancient monuments of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, and especially from the obelisks of the Egyptians, covered with hieroglyphics, which have subsisted to the present age, unimpaired by the ravages of time. It is certain that the Laws of the Twelve Tables were engraved on brass, and most probably perished in the fire which in the reign of the Emperor Nero the Capitol and destroyed three thousand tables of brass, containing the laws, treaties, and other important documents of the Roman Empire. Several ancient nations made use of the leaves of trees for the transmission of their ideas, and the practice of writing on paper, which is still continued in all different parts of the East. The bark of trees has been employed as a material for writing in every age and quarter of the globe; linen was also occasionally used by the old Egyptians as well as the Romans; while in some ages and places the skins of animals have been prepared and adapted for this purpose, and this last practice probably led to the introduction of parchment and vellum, which were afterwards so extensively employed. The use of parchment is certainly very ancient: it has been well known for more than two thousand years past; its durability has caused it to be adopted in every age, and especially for all public documents, and for all ordinary purposes the common paper was generally used.

After the 7th century, indeed, parchment appears to have been almost the only material employed for writing in European countries for several ages, as the exportation of the Egyptian papyrus soon came to an end after the conquest of Egypt by the Saracens. The material of which the parchment is made is a species of rind which grows on the banks of the river Nile, from whence it has been called Egyptian paper. The time of its discovery is not exactly known, but it is at least as ancient as the 4th century before Christ, and it is said to have continued in use for more than one thousand years afterwards. It is to this kind of paper the Apostle John alludes in his 21st Epistle, in which he speaks of "paper and ink" as a common expression for denoting the writings of the principal Reformers, that so extraordinary a revolution has chiefly taken place—a result which could never have been effected by the slow dispersion of MS. copies among those who could neither read nor understand them.

I shall not, however, enter minutely into the examination of the evidence which has been raised with respect to the claims of different places and individuals to the merits of this discovery, as I think it sufficient to state the conclusions which have been generally received by those who have investigated the subject with the most laborious research. It may be admitted, however, that the discovery of this material, though it is likely to be always a considerable degree of obscurity connected with some important details in the history of this wonderful art, it is still a goodly and useful discovery. Of course all ancient books have been transmitted to us by means of MSS. successively derived from earlier copies up to the present autographs of the Authors; and from these MSS. the printed editions have been derived, and consequently the correctness of the printed text depends chiefly on the correctness of the MSS. employed for that purpose. Hence arises the importance of a collection of the best and most ancient MSS., and the application of critical learning, in deciding between various readings, in order to obtain the genuine text of the author; and, therefore, where the MSS. are few and modern, the printed text is generally corrupt and inaccurate. Owing to the loss of ancient MSS. some of the most important parts of our literature have never been irreversibly lost; and among Christian and heathen authors, while various fragments of other writers have come down to our times in an imperfect state of preservation. You are of course aware that all original MSS. of printed days, compared with the most valuable present-day copies; they are the most valuable treasures of the great libraries of Europe, and are justly considered as the brightest and most precious jewels in the crown of any private collection in which they may be found; and yet, when we consider the immense destruction of them which has taken place from various causes, the wonder is, not so few, but that so many of them have been preserved to the present age. It is well known that the great nations of the world possess enormous collections of MSS., most of which were transcribed in the monasteries during the Middle Ages; and yet these numbers are but a small portion, a mere relic, of the intellectual productions of a past and obscure age. The barbarians, who so frequently

convulsed the more civilized portions of Europe, found a morbid pleasure in destroying those works which bore evidence to the mental superiority of their enemies. In England, the Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans, were each successful in the destruction of literary productions. But it had been well if the destruction of ancient MSS. had been confined to these foreign enemies. It must be confessed that a more extensive injury was inflicted at a much later period—at the dissolution of monasteries in England during the reign of Henry VIII. The careless grants of this licentious monarch conferred a monastery on a court favorite or a political partisan, without one thought for the preservation of its contents. It is true that a few years afterwards the industrious antiquarian, John Leland, was appointed to examine the libraries of those institutions, and to preserve any relic worthy of such an honor; but the number of learned hands had rifled those parchment collections long ago—mutilated their finest volumes by cutting out, with childish pleasure, the illuminations with which they were adorned—tearing off the rich bindings for the golden chains which protected them, and chopping up huge piles as fuel for their blazing hearths, while vast quantities of these valuable MSS. were sold by their original owners as so much waste paper.—Bishop Bale, who lived in those times, and a strenuous opponent of the monks, thus quaintly deplores the loss of their books: "Never had we been offered for the loss of our libraries, being so many in number, and in so desolate places for the most part, if the chief monuments and most notable works of our excellent writers had been reserved. If there had been in every Shire of England but one solemn library to the preservation of these noble works, and preference of good learning, it would not have been somewhat. But to destroy all without consideration, is, and will be unto England for ever, most horrible infamy among the grave seniors of other nations." A great number of them which purchased these superstitious mansions reserved their library books some to stock the candlesticks, and some to bar their boots, some they sold to the grocers and soap-sellers, and some they sent over sea to the book-binders, not in small number, but at times whole ships full. I know a merchantman, which shall at this time be nameless, that bought the contents of a noble library for a few shillings price—a shame it is to be spoken. This stuff had been occupied in the stead of gray paper for more than these ten years, and yet hath store enough for as many years to come. A prodigious example is this, and to be abhorred of all men who love their nation as they should do.

So much, then, for the state of MSS. in the olden time, and now I must pass on to give a brief account of the origin and progress of the Art of Printing in modern times. There is no branch of Bibliography more important than this, as, in fact, an acquaintance with its history and progress, as well as with those arts which have contributed to its perfection, is an indispensable qualification for obtaining a correct knowledge of books. It is impossible fully to estimate the benefits of this wonderful invention in promoting the progress of education, and of religion, throughout the world, that it owes the great Reformation of Christianity from the corruptions of the Church of Rome, as it was by the wide diffusion of the Bible, translated, printed, and circulated through the various countries of Europe, together with the writings of the principal Reformers, that so extraordinary a revolution has chiefly taken place—a result which could never have been effected by the slow dispersion of MS. copies among those who could neither read nor understand them.

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So much, then, for the state of MSS. in the olden time, and now I must pass on to give a brief account of the origin and progress of the Art of Printing in modern times. There is no branch of Bibliography more important than this, as, in fact, an acquaintance with its history and progress, as well as with those arts which have contributed to its perfection, is an indispensable qualification for obtaining a correct knowledge of books. It is impossible fully to estimate the benefits of this wonderful invention in promoting the progress of education, and of religion, throughout the world, that it owes the great Reformation of Christianity from the corruptions of the Church of Rome, as it was by the wide diffusion of the Bible, translated, printed, and circulated through the various countries of Europe, together with the writings of the principal Reformers, that so extraordinary a revolution has chiefly taken place—a result which could never have been effected by the slow dispersion of MS. copies among those who could neither read nor understand them.

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