

announced, without preparation, not absolutely unquestioned, but apparently overawing at once all doubt, a new Code, which to the former authentic documents added fifty-nine letters and decrees of the twenty oldest Popes from Clement to Melchisedech, and the donation of Constantine, and in the third part, among the decrees of the Popes and of the Councils from Sylvester to Gregory II., thirty-nine false decrees, and the acts of several unauthentic Councils." "The whole is composed," Milman adds, "with an air of profound piety and reverence." "The False Decretals" naturally assert the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. "They are full and minute on Church Property" (they were sure to be that); in fact, they remind one of another forgery, pious and Aryan, "The Institutes of Vishnu." "Let him not levy any tax upon Brahmans," says the Brahman forger of the Institutes, which "came from the mouths of Vishnu," as he sat "clad in a yellow robe, imperturbable, decorated with all kinds of gems, while Lakshmi was stroking his feet with her soft palms." The Institutes took excellent care of Brahmans and cows, as the Decretals did of the Pope and the clergy, and the earliest Popes had about as much hand in the Decretals as Vishnu had in his Institutes. Hommenay, in "Pantagruel," did well to have the praise of the Decretals sung by *filles belles, blondelettes, doucelettes et de bonne grace*. And then Hommenay drank to the Decretals and their very good health. "O dives Décretales, tant par vous est le vin bon trouvé"—"Oh divine Decretals, how good you make good wine taste!" "The miracle would be greater," said Pantagruel, "if they made bad wine taste good." The most that can now be done by the devout for the Decretals is "to palliate the guilt of their forger," whose name, like that of the Greek Macpherson, is unknown.

Among literary forgers, or passers of false literary coin, at the time of the Renaissance, Annius is the most notorious. Annius (his real vernacular name was Nanni) was born at Viterbo, in 1432. He became a Dominican, and (after publishing his forged classics) rose to the position of Maître du Palais, to the Pope Alexander Borgia. With Cæsar Borgia, it is said that Annius was never on good terms. He persisted in preaching "the sacred truth" to his highness, and this (according to the detractors of Annius, was the only use he had for the sacred truth. There is a legend that Cæsar Borgia poisoned the preacher (1502), but people usually brought that charge against Cæsar when any one in any way connected with him happened to die. Among the other discoveries of Annius were treatises by Berosus, Manetho, Cato, and poems by Archilochus. Opinion has been divided as to whether Annius was wholly a knave, or whether he was himself imposed upon. Or, again, whether he had some genuine fragments, and eked them out with his own inventions.

Socrates said that he "would never lift his hand against his father Parmenides." The fathers of the Church have not been so respectfully treated by literary forgers during the Renaissance. The "Flowers of Theology" of St. Bernard, which were to be a primrose path *ad gaudia Paradisi* (Strasburg, 1478), were really, it seems, the production of Jean de Garlande. Athanasius, his "Eleven Bookes concerning the Trinity," are attributed to Vigilius, a colonial Bishop in Northern Africa. Among false classics are two comic Latin fragments with which Muretus beguiled Scaliger. Meursius has suffered, posthumously, from the attribution to him of a very disreputable volume indeed. In 1853, a book on "Consolations," by Cicero, was published at Venice, containing the reflections with which Cicero consoled himself for the death of Tullia. It might as well have been attributed to Mrs. Blimber, and described as replete with the thoughts with which that lady supported herself under the affliction of never having seen Cicero or his Tusculan villa. The real author was Charles Sigonius, of Modena.

The most famous forgeries of the eighteenth century were those of Macpherson, Chatterton, and Ireland. Space (fortunately) does not permit a discussion of the Ossianic question. That fragments of Ossianic legend (if not of Ossianic poetry) survive in oral Gaelic traditions, seems certain. How much Macpherson knew of these, and how little he used them in the bombastic prose which Napoleon loved (and spelled "Ocean") it is next to impossible to discover. The case of Chatterton is too well known to need much more than mention. The most extraordinary poet for his years who ever lived, began with the forgery of a sham feudal pedigree for Mr. Bergum, a pewterer. Ireland started on his career in much the same way, unless Ireland's "Confessions" be themselves a fraud, based on what he knew about Chatterton. Once launched in his career, Chatterton drew endless stores of poetry from "Rowley's MS.," and the muniment chest in St. Mary Redcliff's. Jacob Bryant believed in them and wrote an "Apology" for the credulous. Bryant, who readily believed in his own system of mythology, might have believed in anything. When Chatterton sent his "discoveries" to Walpole (himself somewhat of a mediæval imitator), Gray and Mason detected the imposture, and Walpole, his feelings as an antiquary injured, took no more notice of the boy. Chatterton's death was due to his precocity. Had genius come to him later, it would have found him wiser, and better able to command the fatal demon of intellect, for which he had to find work, like Michael Scott in the legend.

The end of the eighteenth century, which had been puzzled or diverted by the Chatterton and Macpherson frauds, witnessed also the great and famous Shakspearian forgeries. We shall never know the exact truth about the fabrication of the Shakspearian documents, and Vortigern and other plays. We have, indeed, the confession of the culprit; *habemus confitentem reum*, but Mr. W. H. Ireland was a liar and a solicitor's clerk, so versatile and accomplished that we cannot always believe him, even when he is narrating the tale of his own iniquities. The temporary but wide and turbulent success of the Ireland forgeries suggests the disagreeable reflection that criticism and learning are (or, a hundred years ago, were) worth very little as literary touchstones. A polished and learned society, a society devoted to Shakspeare and to the stage, was taken in by a boy of eighteen. Young Ireland not only palmed off his sham documents, most makeshift imitations of the antique, but even his ridiculous verse on the experts. James Boswell went down on his knees and thanked Heaven for the sight of them, and feeling thirsty after these devotions, drank hot brandy and water. Dr. Parr was as readily gulled, and probably the experts, like Malone, who held aloof, were as much influenced by jealousy as by science. The whole story of young Ireland's forgeries is not only too long to be told here, but forms the topic of a novel ("The Talk of the Town") on which Mr. James Payn is at present engaged. The frauds are not likely in his hands to lose either their humour or their complicated interest of plot. To be brief, then, Mr. Samuel Ireland was a gentleman extremely fond of old literature and old books. If we may trust the Confessions (1805) of his candid son, Mr. W. H. Ireland, a more harmless and confiding old person than Samuel never collected early English tracts. Living in his learned society, his son, Mr. W. H. Ireland, acquired not only a passion for black letters, but a desire to emulate Chatterton. His first step in guilt was the forgery of an autograph on an old pamphlet, with which he gratified Samuel Ireland. He also wrote a sham inscription on a modern bust of Cromwell, which he represented as an authentic antique. Finding that the critics were taken in, and attributed this new bust to the old sculptor Simon, Ireland conceived a very low and not unjustifiable opinion of critical tact. Critics would find merit in anything which seemed old enough. Ireland's next achievement was the forgery of some legal documents concerning Shakspeare. Just as the bad man who deceived the guileless Mr. Shapira, forged his Deuteronomy on the blank spaces of old synagogue rolls, so young Ireland used the cut-off ends of old rent rolls. He next bought up quantities of old fly-leaves of books, and on this ancient paper he indited a sham confession of faith, which he attributed to Shakspeare. Being a strong "evangelical," young Mr. Ireland gave a very Protestant complexion to this edifying document. And still the critics gaped and wondered and believed. Ireland's method was to write in an ink made by blending various liquids used in the marbling of paper for bookbinding. This stuff was supplied to him by a bookbinder's apprentice. When the people asked questions as to whence all the new Shakspeare manuscripts came, he said they were presented to him by a gentleman who wished to remain anonymous. Finally the impossibility of producing this gentleman was one of the causes of the detection of the fraud. According to himself, Ireland performed prodigies of acuteness. Once he had forged, at random, the name of a contemporary of Shakspeare. He was confronted with a genuine signature, which, of course, was quite different. He obtained leave to consult his "anonymous gentleman," rushed home, forged the name on the model of what had been shown him, and returned with this signature as a new gift from his benefactor. That nameless friend had informed

him that there were two persons of the name, and that both signatures were genuine. Ireland's impudence went the length of introducing an ancestor of his own, with the same name as himself, among the companions of Shakspeare. If Vortigern had succeeded (and it was actually put on the stage with all possible pomp), Ireland meant to have produced a series of pseudo-Shakspearian plays from William the Conqueror to Queen Elizabeth. When busy with Vortigern, he was detected by a friend of his own age, who pounced upon him while he was at work, as Lasus pounced on Onomacritus. The discoverer, however, consented to "stand in" with Ireland, and did not divulge his secret. At last, after the fiasco of Vortigern, suspicion waxed so strong, and disagreeable inquiries for the anonymous benefactor were so numerous, that Ireland fled from his father's house. He confessed all, and, according to his own account, fell under the undying wrath of Samuel Ireland. Any reader of Ireland's confessions will be likely to sympathize with old Samuel as the dupe of his son. The whole story is told with a curious mixture of impudence and humour, and with great plausibility. Young Ireland admits that his "desire for laughter" was almost irresistible, when people—learned, pompous, sagacious people—listened attentively to the papers. One feels half inclined to forgive the rogue for the sake of his youth, his cleverness, his humour. But the confessions are, not improbably, almost as apocryphal as the original documents. They were written for the sake of money, and it is impossible to say how far the same mercenary motive actuated Ireland in his forgeries. Dr. Ingleby, in his "Shakspeare Fabrications," takes a very rigid view of the conduct, not only of William, but of old Samuel Ireland. Sam, according to Dr. Ingleby, was a partner in the whole imposture, and the "Confession" was only one element in the scheme of fraud. Old Samuel was the Fagan of a band of young literary Dodgers. He "positively trained his whole family to trade in forgery," and as for Mr. W. H. Ireland, he was "the most accomplished liar that ever lived," which is certainly a distinction in its way. The point of the joke is that, after the whole conspiracy exploded, people were anxious to buy examples of the forgeries. Mr. W. H. Ireland was equal to the occasion. He actually forged his own, or (according to Dr. Ingleby) his father's forgeries, and, by thus increasing the supply, he deluged the market with sham shams, with imitations of imitations. If this accusation be correct, it is impossible not to admire the colossal impudence of Mr. W. H. Ireland. Dr. Ingleby, in the ardour of his honest indignation, pursues William into his private life, which, it appears, was far from exemplary. But literary criticism should be content with a man's works, his domestic life is matter, as Aristotle often says, "for a separate kind of investigation." Old Ritson used to say that "every literary impostor deserved hanging as much as a common thief." W. H. Ireland's merits were never recognized by the law.

BOOK NOTICES.

THE ALPHABET; AN ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF LETTERS. By Isaac Taylor, M.A., LL.D. Two vols. Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1883.

The readers of THE WEEK may perhaps fancy their study of the Alphabet so entirely a thing of the past, that we might fitly leave any discussion on the subject to the editors of the rival Royal and Canadian Primers, which demand the first attention of our new Minister of Education. Yet, here is a work by an able and learned philologist, the first sentence in the preface of which says: "This represents the labour of many years." It embraces enquiries of profound interest, affecting the whole question of the origin of civilization; and of scarcely less value to the historian than to the comparative philologist. The problem of the origin of the various Alphabets is by no means a simple one; and it has already been the theme of many scholarly treatises; but Mr. Taylor has embodied here the essence of his predecessors' labours; and added to them important contributions of his own.

We are led back once more, in these volumes, to the Nile Valley, as the cradle land of our civilization. There the primitive picture-writing, akin to that of our own rude Indians, gradually developed into hieroglyphic ideography. From its formal carving on granite and limestone, it passed into the Hieratic, a true cursive handwriting; and from this were derived the old Phœnician characters; the Semitic Alphabet; the letters of Cadmus; the Latin, and ultimately our own English Alphabet.

The Alphabet, however, in use by all English-speaking people for centuries, is not the true English one. That is still to be seen graven on King Alfred's beautiful jewel in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford; and on the more ancient runic cross at Ruthwell in Dumfriesshire. One of the most original and important of Mr. Taylor's results is the determination of the source of the Futhorc, or ancient Gothic Alphabet, including all the later runic variations. The old theory that the runes originated out of a Semitic Alphabet transmitted by Phœnician merchants, is at best a mere guess; and leaves untouched the riddle of the novel arrangement of the order of the letters in all the runic alphabets. Mr. Taylor shows good reason for ascribing their origin to the direct intercourse of the Goths with Greek traders on the Euxine, probably not later than the sixth century, B.C. Along with this he also discusses the mysterious Ogham characters of Celtic Wales, Ireland, and Scotland; and determines their derivation from the Scandinavian runes.

In discussing the picture writing of savage tribes, Mr. Taylor deals with some of the questions most interesting to ourselves. He shows that, at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, the Mexican picture-writing was just reaching the stage of the phonographic expression of the names of persons and places, as in Itzcoatli, or Knife-Snake, the fourth Mexican monarch. The process is still mere picture-writing, yet the result is phonetic. To this department of the inquiry, however, he has given less attention than to the attractive researches based on such important dis-