

History of the Alphabet.

How many of the millions that daily use the alphabet ever stop to think of its origin and long history? In the true spirit of a student, Isaac Taylor, a well known English writer on philosophical and philological subjects, has recently written and published, in London, two stout volumes under the title: "The Alphabet, an Account of the Origin and Development of Letters." It is only by help of recent discoveries of early inscriptions and the progress in the art of reading lost languages and deciphering hitherto unknown symbols, that such a well posted history has become possible. By careful study of the learned essays and scientific investigations of the latest philologists, Taylor has set forth in language of easy comprehension the origin of the alphabet, showing that our own "Roman" letters may be followed back to their very beginning, some twenty or more centuries ago, as he asserts. We have no better letters, according to this account, than those of the Italian printers of the fifteenth century. These were imitated from the beautiful manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh centuries, the lettering of these being derived from the Roman of the Augustan age. The Roman letters, in turn, are traced to those employed at Rome in the third century B. C., and these do not differ greatly from forms used in the earliest existing specimens of Latin writing, dating from the fifth century B. C. This primitive alphabet of Rome was derived from a local form of the Greek alphabet, in use about the sixth century B. C. and that was a variety of the earliest Greek alphabet belonging to the eighth, or even the ninth century B. C. The Greeks got their letters from the Phoenicians, and theirs are clearly traceable in the most ancient known form of the Semitic.

The most ancient books, a papyrus found at Thebes, and now preserved in the French National Library, supplies the earliest forms of the letters used in the Semitic alphabet. The Stone Tables of the Law could have been possible to the Jews only because of their possession of an alphabet, and thus the Bible and modern philological science unite in ascribing a common origin to the alphabet which is in daily use throughout the world. The nineteenth century B. C. is held by Taylor to be the approximate date of the origin of alphabetic writing, and from that time it grew by slow degrees, while from Egypt, the home of the Jews during their long captivity, the knowledge of the alphabet was carried in all directions where alphabets are now found.

The Aryans are now thought to have been the first to bring the primitive alphabet to perfection, and each letter and each sound may be traced, by Taylor's careful analysis, through all the changes that have marked the growth, progress, and in some instances, the decay of different letters of various alphabets. It is an interesting fact that the oldest known "A B C" in existence is a child's alphabet, scratched on a little ink bottle of black ware, found in one of the oldest Greek settlements in Italy, attributed to the 6th century B. C. The earliest letters, and many later ones are known only by inscriptions, and it is the rapid increase, by recent discoveries, of these precious fragments that has inspired more diligent research and quickened the zeal of learned students in mastering the elements of knowledge of their origin and history throughout the world. As late as 1876 there were found in Cyprus some bronze plates inscribed with Phœnician characters, dating back to the tenth, even the eleventh century B. C.

Coins, engraved gems, inscribed statues, and, last of all, the Siloam inscription, found in 1880 at Jerusalem, on the wall of an old tunnel, have supplied new material for the history. From the common mother of many alphabets, the Phœnician, are descended the Greek and other European systems on the one side, including that which we use and have the greatest interest in; and on the other, the alphabets of Asia, from which have sprung those of the East, Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew.

A Long Time.

Fifteen years of suffering from the tortures of Dyspepsia is indeed a long time. A. Burns, blacksmith, of Cobourg, was thus afflicted, but it only required four bottles of Burdock Blood Bitters to completely cure him.

In the Tail of a Comet.

An ingenious theorizer has written a book which was published by the Appletons, to prove that many ages since the earth must have passed through the tail of a comet, and that certain disturbances observed on the surface of our planet were caused thereby. The scratches and erosions from the northeast and southwest found upon hills and mountains in the northern hemisphere were attributed to the action of the more solid matter of the comet's tail, leaving its marks, together with the boulders and detached rocks, which are found in such profusion in the Temperate and Frigid Zones. Although this theory would account for much that is mysterious, it has not been accepted by scientists, as it is not believed that tails of comets are formed of any solid material. Early in December last, some curious atmospheric phenomena were noticed in different portions of the world. At sunset and before sunrise the heavens were permeated with a glow of rosy light, such as might have been caused if a great conflagration had been raging. These strange appearances were noticed in both Europe and America. They have puzzled the scientific world. But some venturesome theorists have again put forward the hypothesis of the world being surrounded by the atmosphere of a comet's tail. It is known that about the time these phenomena occurred our planet was in the track of Bela's comet, and in a part of the heavens that was filled with meteors. It is known that comets are more numerous in the heavens than fishes are in the waters of the earth. Their numbers are so great as to be inconceivable to the human mind and it is not at all improbable that the earth in past times may have been entangled in the tails of these wonders of the sky. We live in a marvelous universe. "There are two things," said the great philosopher Kant, "which always fill me with awe and admiration, and these are the wordless heavens by which we are surrounded and the moral law within."—*Demorest's Monthly*.

The Spanish Beauty.

We in America are apt to judge of the Spaniard by the Mexican and the Cuban. Nothing can be more different. Whatever their faults or virtues, the Hispano-Americans seem to have taken nothing but the language from what of the conqueror's blood they may have. All else has come from the native. Unbroken in pride, unadorned by evil habits, self-respecting, sober in speech as in food, the Iberian needs only a leader to again take his rightful place in the family of nations. And the woman? Is she beautiful? I hardly know, but she is the most bewitching, bewildering, fascinating of all Eve's daughters. There is a magic in her step, a poise of foot, a grace of rhythmic motion, a proud tenderness in her dark eye, a something voluptuous which is yet chaste, a magic in her smile, such as no other race or clime can show. Beautiful? A man whose blood runs red in his veins may see beauty elsewhere, but he has never felt the perfect charms of woman's loveliness until he has met love looking from the melting brightness of those matchless orbs, which none but Spain's dark-glancing maidens bear. There is no neglect here. The dress may not be rich, but there is not fold ill placed. To her is paid the reverence of passionate devotion. Still is Spain the land of romance and of song, because her men are brave, her women worthy to be loved.

They Saw It All.

Taylor, the wizard, got a \$90 house in Paso del Norte, and then said that he would show the assemblage a trick that would open their eyes, termed "The Mystic Man or the Disappearance." He brought out a large box and said:—"I will now shut myself up in this box; the trick is to find me." Five minutes later everybody knew that he had escaped from the rear with the receipts of the evening, and a coat belonging to an employe of the theatre.

Get the Original.

Dr. Pierce's "Pellets"—the original "Little Liver Pills" (sugar-coated)—cure sick and bilious headache, sour stomach, and bilious attacks. By druggists.

The Romance of a Bank Note.

In the year 1740 one of the directors of the Bank of England, a man of unimpeachable honor, lost a bank note for £30,000, under peculiar circumstances. It seems he had bought an estate for that money, and for convenience sake obtained a note for that amount. As he was about to put it under lock and key, after he reached home, he was called out of the room, whereupon, as he thought, he placed it upon the mantelpiece. Upon returning, a few minutes later, the note had disappeared. It could not have been stolen, for no one had entered the room, whereupon he concluded that it had been blown into the fire and had been consumed. He laid the matter before the officers of the bank, and they reissued a note for the same amount, he giving bonds to reimburse the bank if the note should ever be presented for payment. Thirty years after, when he had long been dead and his estate distributed among his heirs, the supposed non-existent note turned up at the bank counter for payment. As the bank could not afford to dishonor the obligation, the money was paid out, and the heirs of the dead man were asked to make good the loss; this they refused to do, nor could the bank employ any legal machinery to force them to do so. The person who profited by the matter was supposed to be a builder, employed to pull down the dead man's house and build another on its site. He found the missing £30,000 note in a crevice in the chimney, in which it somehow got lodged after being laid on the mantelpiece. It must have been kept many years, and its presentation to the bank was so arranged that the builder became a rich man by a sudden stroke of blind fortune.

Feather Flowers

It requires a certain amount of patience to achieve success in making feather flowers, while satisfactory results are sure to add a smiling beauty to the adorning of an artistically appointed household. Fashionables rusticated in the country can easily procure a bunch of wild geese feathers and amuse themselves an hour or so by cutting out of these feathers leaves like the flowers that are to be copied. Make the bulbs of beeswax and rosin, mixed together in equal proportions; to this stick the leaves, the stamens and centre parts of the wire and zephyr. In painting the leaves, a nice delicate touch should be had in order to give a natural effect. Get tube paints—such as are used for oil paintings. After painting the leaves lay them aside to dry. Do not use them for ten or twelve hours at least. A tube each of chrome yellow, rose madder, clear white, and Prussian blue will be all the paints required to produce a lovely bouquet. Mix the yellow and blue to obtain green for painting the leaves. With a little practice in mixing the paints they can be made as beautiful as wax. There are several ways to use feather flowers beside clustering them. A wreath, a cross, an anchor, and birds are often made and placed in boxes with a rich velvet background and fine glass in front, bordered with a framework of velvet, or wood exquisitely covered with water-colored pictures, making an elegant parlor ornament.

More Luxury.

An enterprising Chinaman has recently opened a restaurant in Paris, and is now endeavoring to educate the Western palate to appreciate the subtle excellence of rotten eggs and bird's nest soup. In order to prepare the former luxuries in their full perfection fresh duck's eggs are covered with a mixture of cinners, chalk, lye, soda, powdered liquorice root and oil, and are then left for several months, until their yolk becomes first green and finally black. The darker the yolk the greater the delicacy. The bird's nest from which the famed soup is made are built by a species of swallow that abounds on the coasts of Java, Ceylon and Borneo, and practically consist of a gelatinous substance obtained from marine plants. The nests are boiled either in chicken broth, or in milk of almonds; and the result very much resembles vermicelli soup, save that it is far more costly. The Chinese restaurateur also offers his customers smoked sharks' fins, dried cuttle-fish, and salted rats; but whether he will make a living by the sale of such toothsome dainties as these to the Parisians is more than doubtful.

The man who at the first of the year resolved to quit smoking has compromised by ing ten instead of twelve cigars a day.

Thousands of women bless the day on which Dr. Pierce's "Favorite Prescription" was made known to them. In all those derangements causing backache, dragging-down sensations, nervous and general debility, it is a sovereign remedy. Its soothing and healing properties render it of the utmost value to ladies suffering from "intermittent fever," congestion, inflammation, or ulceration. By druggists.

Richard Neuman, of Preston, England, who recently died, left to that town his entire collection of pictures, porcelain and bronzes. It is said that the pictures alone, ten years ago, were valued at between \$300,000 and \$350,000.

Amos Hadgin, Toronto, writes: "I have been a sufferer from Dyspepsia for the past six years. All the remedies I tried proved useless, until Northrop and Lyman's Vegetable Discovery and Dyspeptic Cure was brought under my notice. I have used two bottles with the best results, and can with confidence recommend it to those afflicted in like manner."

Out west the cellar is the place to go in time of cyclones, and when a man has a barrel of cider in the cellar it's surprising how many times a day he thinks there's a cyclone coming!

What makes me laugh when others sigh?
No tears can e'er bedew mine eye
It is because I always buy—Briggs' Life Pills.

What is it makes me hale and stout,
And all my friends can't make it out.
I really could not live without—Briggs' Life Pills.

So if you're sad, or grieved, or ill,
Pray, do not pay a doctor's bill,
But take a dose of—Briggs' Life Pills.

They were about to bury a grandchild of General Turner, of Memphis, when some one insisted that it should be bathed and slapped on the back. It is now alive and doing well.

Dr. Pierce's "Favorite Prescription," for all those weaknesses peculiar to women, is an unequalled remedy. Distressing backache and "bearing-down" sensations yield to its strength-giving properties. By druggists.

Senator Saulsbury is called the Lone Star of the Senate because he is the only member of that body who has never been married.

The progress of medical enlightenment has led to the abandonment of many antiquated remedies of questionable value, and the adoption of newer and more rational ones. Prominent among the latter is Northrop and Lyman's Vegetable Discovery and Dyspeptic Cure, the justly celebrated Blood Purifier, a comprehensive family remedy for liver complaint, constipation, indigestion, loss of physical energy, and female complaints.

Thomas Nast, as the Boston Transcript learns, still "sends his sketches to the Harpers every week and they are pigeon-holed by Mr. Curtis, while Harpers pay him under contract \$10,000 a year for life."

Sick and bilious headache, and all derangements of stomach and bowels, cured by Dr. Pierce's "Pellets"—or antibilious granules. 25 cents a vial. No cheap boxes to allow waste of virtues. By druggists.

The women of England are waking up to their privileges. In Oxford, at the approach of the municipal election, the ladies summoned a meeting of the women voters. Mrs. Prof. Max Muller was the chairman, and the wife of an alderman made an able and eloquent speech. So says the Pall Mall Gazette, which approves of it too.

"Became Sound and Well."
HATCHER'S STATION, Ga., Mar. 27, '76.
R. V. PIERCE, M.D.: Dear Sir—My wife, who had been ill for over two years, and had tried many other medicines, became sound and well by using your "Favorite Prescription." My niece was also cured by its use, after several physicians had failed to do her any good.
Yours truly,
THOS. J. METHVIN.