

children of Corinth in the streets. It was in the market-place of Rome near the meat stalls that the school was held which Virginia was attending in the time of the decemvirs, and the most luxurious establishment was at the best a naked room open at all sides. The scholars sat around the master, very often on the ground, holding a tablet on their knees, upon which they first copied the characters of the alphabet, after which they passed on to syllables, then to words and finally to passages drawn from the poets. Arithmetical studies were mainly confined to learning to count by the aid of their fingers, or with little pebbles, or by making figures in the sand—the *abacus* (a counting machine very much like that which the Chinese use), being employed for complicated calculations. Such, with singing or the chanting recitation of, say, Homer's poems, constituted the whole system of elementary education. The children of rich parents occasionally followed this by engaging special teachers, who demanded a high price for their services, while there and then, as now and here, the schoolmaster was poorly paid and but little considered. He received his small salary, but there being four months of vacation, a day of rest in each week and a number of fete days, for all of which idle time he was not paid, the old Roman and Athenian pedagogue was not insensible to the presents which some parents occasionally made him at New Year's feast and birthday. Up to the days of the Empire corporal punishment in the most rigorous forms was practiced in the Roman schools; then some slight modifications were made in the modes of chastisement, but to mount an offending scholar on another's back, that his own might be in better position for the receipt of the schoolmaster's rattan, is a method of education which has come down from antiquity through the middle ages to our own day. After the wane of the

great Latin and Hellenic powers Europe paid but little attention to mental culture, until, as Guizot remarks. "the seventh century marks the lowest point to which the human spirit of modern Europe has descended." There were, however, a few country schools scattered sparsely throughout the land, in which the priests taught reading and writing, the latter being confined to that of manuscripts, and the first to characters traced upon the bark of trees or waxen tablets. The gloom continued until the close of the eighth century, when the priesthood, headed by one Theodulf, a Bishop of Orleans, made a strong effort to lighten the darkness by establishing a system of free schools. By it the gentlemen of the cassock were to hold schools in the burgs and fields, and to instruct all children who came in reading, writing and chanting, free of charge, receiving only the "voluntary contributions" of the parents in payment. The noble plan did not succeed; one by one the schools died out, and the people, provided they had bread enough to eat, cared for nothing else. There are arid wastes of time to pass over until the invention of printing in the fifteenth century. Thence, slowly but surely, the spread of schools advanced. Germany stood in the van, her schools became numerous and useful, the Government took the matter of public instruction in hand, and to-day the educational institutions of the Kaiserdom stand among the foremost in the world. In Great Britain, although much attention was paid to the scholastic improvement of the wealthy, the masses remained in ignorance, and it is only within the last twenty-five years that Parliament, struck by the wide-spread ignorance of the people, established the School Boards and rendered education compulsory. The work of the Irish hedge-schools was feeble and insignificant, and the Green Islander had need of all his mother wit to keep him to the front.