

hero, who thus had recourse to his chairs, benches, and bedstead, for the means of perpetuating the memory of his own exploits.

The Romans, however, found out, by experience that the materials which were apparently the most durable in their nature were far from being the best adapted for the permanent preservation of records. Of this they had a signal proof. The code known as "The Laws of the Twelve Tables," were kept together with other chronicles engraved on brass in the capital. By a stroke of lightning they were instantaneously destroyed, some of the plates being melted, and the inscriptions on others rendered illegible. However, the use of thin tablets, composed of wood or prepared skins, and covered with wax, was very common amongst the Romans, and continued during a long period. Not only epistolary and literary compositions were committed to these more fragile receptacles, but what we should now call official documents, as also wills, were inscribed on them. The same kinds of tablets used to be employed in the Roman schools in the instruction of youth, each scholar having his own set of implements,—one of these being the *style*, a small cylindrical instrument of iron, sharpened at one end and flattened at the other for convenience in making erasures. It seems that the style, in the hands of an irritable or combative person, sometimes became a dangerous weapon, since a law was passed, on account of its too frequent employment as a dagger, forbidding the use of iron styles altogether; so that others made of bone, horn, reeds, and so forth, came to be substituted. We read, for instance, of a school-master, who appears to have goaded his disciples into active hostilities which had a tragical termination, for his scholars felled him with their tablets, and then massacred him with their styles.

Long after the times here alluded to, even in England, tablets and styles were in use. We read in old Chaucer's writings:

"His fellow had a staff tipped with horne,

"A paire of tables all of iverie,

"And a Pointell polished fetouslie, (whatever this may be!)

"And wrote alwaies the names, as he stood,

"Of all folke that gave hem any good."

I shall only allude, in passing, to the transition of those comparatively cumbrous modes into others more convenient for use, and even more useful in point of durability. The Egyptians made use of the bark of a plant which grew on the banks of the Nile, called *papyrus*, while the Chinese made a kind of paper with silk. In the course of time, these substances, also the prepared bark of other plants, linen, skins of quadrupeds and serpents, fashioned into parchment, came into use; and the processes of scratching or engraving on tablets gave place to the easier art of painting or writing with different coloured liquids or *inks*. Of such materials, and by such means, were composed the *manuscripts* before and during the middle ages, comprising literature, archives, and records, up to the time when the introduction of printing, and of our present papers and inks, caused the more ancient processes to be set aside for ever.

Even on the subject of ancient and modern papers and inks, it would