

WHO INVENTED THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH?

A TRAVEL PAPER.

IF it be ever your good fortune to visit the town of Greenock you may spend a pleasant hour in the Watt Library. As you enter, there rises before you a fine statue, by Chantrey, of James Watt, to whose memory his son erected these buildings. "The inhabitants of Greenock have erected this statue of James Watt, not to extend a fame already identified with the miracles of steam but to testify the pride and reverence with which he is remembered in the place of his nativity and their deep sense of the great benefits his genius has conferred on mankind." So reads the inscription before you, written by Lord Jeffrey.

Upon some of the bookcases are brass plates from which may be learned the date of the nucleus of this noble collection of books and the times at which additions were made to it, in not a few cases by the public spirit and liberality of Greenock men. It now contains some twenty-five thousand volumes. But one subscription library in Scotland is older than the Greenock Library—that of Kelso. The Glasgow Library dates eight years later, and that of Edinburgh eleven years later. "The Greenock Library was instituted 1st January, 1783. The contents of this case show its extent in 1787, according to the first catalogue, published in that year." And you may see, too, a reprint of that first catalogue produced by Mr. William Hutchison of Greenock in the year 1883, which is a beautiful specimen of the modern printer's art, being a faithful fac-simile of the original—even to the fine old style paper and the type.

One of the most valuable things in the Library is a collection of rare and ancient books to be found in a case by themselves, open for the inspection of visitors. Here is a copy of Ruskin's first printed article (1834) and here, too, is the first Greek book ever printed in Glasgow (1743), closely followed by the first book printed in Aberdeen (1644), bearing the pleasant title of "A Godly Dream." Did you know that William Ged, a goldsmith in Edinburgh, was the inventor of stereotyping? There you may see his first book.

Right below it is a treasure the like of which you may not easily find in the wide world. It is a copy of North's Plutarch (1612 edition). Whose copy, think you? Shakspeare's. There, on the margin are notes and initials believed to be in his own handwriting, and as you stand and look at the old letters and the ancient leaves, brown with their years, think to yourself that this is something worth seeing and other thoughts that perhaps are hard to put on paper or to tell to people so that they will understand what you mean.

You feel as if you did not care to look at any other book for a little, yet as you turn the corner of the case, perhaps some books which have crossed the sea that you have crossed will catch your eye. They are old, old volumes of American sermons collected by the grandfather of Principal Caird of Glasgow University, and presented to the library on the death of Miss Caird of Greenock. There is one "occasioned by the death of General George Washington, who deceased December 14th, 1799."