

Roman Stationery.

Do the boys and girls of to-day, who use "Irish linen," smooth white paper, tablets, pens of the finest make, and jet-black ink, know what kind of paper and pens were in vogue nearly two thousand years ago?

At this time, when the youth of our land are forming clubs and circles for the purpose of studying the events of the present, when "current topics" are becoming a feature in school life, it may not be amiss to ask the readers of this paper to look for a little while into the far-off past, to compare the writing materials of the ancient Romans with the elegant stationery of our time, to learn on what *Cæsar* wrote his eloquent speeches and charming letters, and Virgil his story of the trials of *Æneas*.

The materials used as paper were of three kinds: the rind of a plant or tree called *papyrus*, parchment made of skins, and wooden tablet covered with wax.

The *papyrus* plant grew in swampy places, and was especially common in the valley of the Nile. The Romans called the inner rind or coat of the stem of this plant *liber*, "book." Pieces of the thin rind were wetted and then joined together; a layer of the pieces was placed on a board and a cross layer put over it; these layers were pressed together and afterwards exposed to the hot Egyptian sun. The paper was then ready for use, but when a finer style was desired, the sheet was rubbed with the tooth of some animal, which rendered it smooth and glossy.

Their sheets were about ten inches long and from three to twelve inches wide. At first an author or scribe of any kind wrote upon the sheets and pasted them together at the sides in regular order, but after a time long rolls of sheets already pasted together were sold. Sometimes a book occupied sheets pasted together which stretched fifty yards. Some rolls of *papyrus* sheets nearly fifty yards in length are now preserved in one or two museums in Europe.

When a book was finished, a stick was fastened to the last sheet and all the sheets were rolled together in a way similar to that in which we roll our maps. The name of the book was written in red ink on a piece of *papyrus* which was attached to the roll. Sometimes the author's portrait was placed on the first sheet.

To give some idea of the antiquity of this kind of paper, it may be added that it was in use long before the year 484 B. C.

Belonging to a period quite as ancient was the second kind of paper, that made from the skins of sheep and goats and called *membrane*, parchment. The hair was taken off and the skin was made smooth by the use of pumice. A remarkable fact in connection with writing on parchment was that the ancients often used the same piece twice or even three times. They did this by rubbing or washing the writing off. Such parchment was called *palimpsest*, which means "scraped again."

In 1816, a famous scholar, Niebuhr, found a manuscript containing the writings of St. Jerome. His practised eye detected evidences of an older writing, and by the use of some chemical preparation, he brought out the work of a celebrated Roman author. Writings of well-known ancient authors were found under portions of the Old Testament.

The third kind of writing material was the waxen tablet, which the Romans used for almost any purpose, but chiefly in writing letters and making notes, and by school-boys for writing exercises or working out problems. The writer once saw a photograph of a terra-cotta figure representing a Roman lad with a tablet in hand, looking mournfully upward, as if appealing to his gods to help him with his knotty "sum."

The tablets were made of wood, generally beech or fir, sometimes citron-wood covered with wax. There were several sizes, none of them very large, one kind, called *pugillares*, small enough to be held in partly-closed hand.

The Romans took the wood, cut and polished it a little and then smeared wax on one side. In order to prevent the wax of one piece from rubbing against that of the other when they fastened two pieces together with wire, they left a rim around the wood. The wire fastening the backs of the tablets served as a hinge.

When a writer had finished his letter, he placed the tablets together, bound with a strong string, tied this into a knot, placed wax upon the knot and stamped it with his signet ring. Here a curious fact may be mentioned. Many of the Romans were either too lazy or else too industriously occupied in war or speech-making to write their own letters: so their secretaries, who were nearly always slaves or freedmen wrote for them, and as it was not the custom to sign names

to letters, the only signature that letters had was this stamp of the signet ring.

Letters began in this way: "M. Tullius C. Julius Cæsar, greeting." The shortest letter perhaps of ancient times was the one written by Cæsar to his lieutenant Cicero, brother of the orator, when Cicero was besieged by the Gauls. It was written in Greek, and the translation is, "Cæsar to Cicero: Expect help."

Now, as you have learned what the Romans used as paper, the next matter is to tell you what kind of ink they had. When they used paper made from *papyrus*, they wrote with ink composed of lampblack and gum. With parchment, they used a mixture of gum and oak-galls. Sometimes they made an ink by boiling and straining the dregs of wine. It is said that occasionally they used as ink the black fluid emitted by the cuttle-fish.

That the ink was of excellent quality and very lasting we know from the fact that even to this day on certain fragments of ancient Egyptian *papyrus* the writing is legible. In addition to the commonly used black ink, the Romans had red, green and purple ink, the emperors wrote their names with a costly red ink which all others were forbidden to use. There was only invisible or sympathetic ink which would appear only when heat was applied or some chemical preparation was poured upon the paper.

A Roman author (Ovid) tells us that people occasionally wrote with fresh milk, and that the characters could be seen only when coal-dust was sprinkled upon the paper. Single and double inkstands, the latter for ink of two kinds, some round in shape, others hexagonal, with covers, were found at Pompeii.

All the stationery needed by a writer has now been mentioned except the pen and pencil. With the *papyrus* and with parchment the pen used was called *calamus*, a reed nearly the same shape as our old-time quill pen. It was split like our pens, and so had the name "cloven-footed." Certain Asiatic peoples use this reed even now.

With the waxen tablets a sharp iron instrument called *stilus* was in use. One end was sharpened for scratching on the wax; the other end was flat, and was used as an eraser. Erasing was performed by smoothing the wax and thus rendering it capable of receiving new impressions.

When a writer desired to draw lines on parchment, he used a leaden plummet, made out of a small round plate. This served as a pencil and ruler.

It may be interesting next to consider how the ancients sent their letters and other mail-matter. There were no post-officers or post-roads. Under the Empire there was a system of couriers, but they carried only state despatches. When a person wrote to a friend, he had to send his letter by a special messenger or by some friend who happened to be going in the desired direction. In the former case, when a man in Rome wished to write to a friend in Greece, he had of course to pay his messenger's expenses. Naturally, therefore, only the well-to-do could afford the luxury of letter-writing. Poor people wrote no letters at all if they had to be sent to a distance.

On the walls of a house in Pompeii, Doctor Rich tells us, was found the picture of a letter folded and sealed, with the directions. Near this picture were representations of the pens and pencils of the old times. These pictures and others found there have thrown a wonderful light upon the subject of Roman stationery.

Rev. Osborne Troop, of Montreal, has come out as a champion of free seats in churches. The pew is certainly giving way to the bench; but the process must necessarily be slow, for the people are not so ready as they should be to supplement their contributions in order to make up the revenue which is sacrificed by the abolition of pews. Everybody is ready to economize in their church contributions, but few are anxious to give. Still the experiments in Toronto are proving satisfactory. They produce large congregations and give Gospel advantages to a more extended population.

Lately landed—the newly engaged young man.

Caught in a Shaft.

A frequent source of accident is found in shafting. Great care should be used and a supply of Hagyard's Oil kept on hand in case of wounds, bruises, sprains, burns, or scalds. It is the promptest pain reliever obtainable.

The subscription list for the Meissonier memorial has reached the sum of 25,000 francs.

Commissioners Adam Brown and W. D. Dimock have arrived from the West Indies.

"German Syrup"

A Cough and Croup Medicine. For children a medicine should be absolutely reliable. A mother must be able to pin her faith to it as to her Bible. It must contain nothing violent, uncertain, or dangerous. It must be standard in material and manufacture. It must be plain and simple to administer; easy and pleasant to take. The child must like it. It must be prompt in action, giving immediate relief, as children's troubles come quick, grow fast, and end fatally or otherwise in a very short time. It must not only relieve quick but bring them around quick, as children chafe and fret and spoil their constitutions under long confinement. It must do its work in moderate doses. A large quantity of medicine in a child is not desirable. It must not interfere with the child's spirits, appetite or general health. These things suit old as well as young folks, and make Boschee's German Syrup the favorite family medicine.

Rattlesnake Jim.

The oddity of his name struck me. After supper I ventured to inquire how he came to be called Rattlesnake Jim.

"Why," he cried, "didn't you ever hear how I got that name? I thought everybody knew about that."

He evidently felt chagrined. I hastened to explain that I was a stranger in the State, and had just come up to this little mountain valley on a fishing expedition. This at once mollified him, and after a "whiskey straight and no water," at my expense, he explained the origin of his name as follows:

"Bob McGill and I were down on the Middle Reach one summer, prospecting and hunting. We killed a little game, caught plenty of fish, had lots of hard climbing, but did not find a claim that was worth a cent."

"The river canon is very deep, and the sides are almost solid rock. It is the hottest place in all California."

"One day we came to a queer spot and stopped to examine it. It looked like a big stone cup turned upside down in a stone saucer. The rock was lava and full of cracks and fissures. On three sides the cup was pretty steep, but on the fourth was a little narrow place to walk up. We crossed the stone saucer and climbed the knob or cup."

"Just as we got to the top, Bob says, 'Look thar,' and p'inted right down on the other side. Three big rattlesnakes were coiled up in the sun. I always did hate a rattler, so I poked my gun over the edge of the rock and let drive. Right thar I made a mistake. We ought to have skipped out and left them snakes asleep. The moment I fired, two of them, for I only killed one, twisted, and rattled, and coiled up ready to fight. If they had been the only ones we would have laughed, but you see that old rock basin was plum full of the pizen critters. We were right in the middle of a rattlesnakes' den. Those two made their rattles fairly whiz, till every snake in the place was crawling out of the cracks in the rock. If you hear me tell it, we were in a fix. We could not run, and thar were too many snakes to fight. It were lucky for us that the little trail was the only place whar they could reach the top of the rock."

"We kept still a minute, thinking maybe they would go back, but it was no use. They were spilin' for a fight, and seemed to know they had us in a box. They could see us right above 'em, and thar riled 'em madder than yeller jackets."

"They didn't wait more than a minute or two till they started up that little trail. Just how many of the blamed snakes thar were I have no idea. I reckoned about a thousand, but Bob always stuck to it thar were a round million."

"Our guns were double-barrelled breech-loaders, and most of our cartridges were filled with buckshot. The snakes were so thick that we killed from one to half a dozen

at each fire. We managed for a time to keep the little trail clear, but they kept a coming faster and faster. We killed 'em by the bushel, and if we could have made the pizen things into ole and sold it at five cents a gallon, we could have made a pile of money."

"We were mightily scared for fear they would find a way up through the big rock itself, and kept a sharp watch all the time. If our cartridges held out long enough we could stand 'em off, but we had to shoot lively, and they would soon run short. The whole rocky bottom was plum full of them d— wriggling, rattling, squirming snakes. We didn't have a drop of anti-snake bite with us. Had drank it all up long before. What was worse, it was good five miles up the mountain to the nearest place whar any could be got."

"We were shaky in our knees, for the smell of them snakes made us sick. I reckon you think we were scared. Bob was no slouch at fighting anything in the woods; and, stranger, I never turned back from the biggest grizzly in the mountains; but right then we would have been mighty glad to have got away."

"Our cartridges were running low. We made up our minds that we would have to take chances of running right across that lot of pizen rattlers. It was a desperate case, but we had big, thick boots on, and might get through."

"Bob give a groan when the last shot went. 'We've got to chance it now,' said he."

We grabbed our guns so as to use them as clubs. Then we walked down the rock a little bit, and looked down among the snakes. I tell you, stranger, it were like going right down into hell. The snakes wriggled and twisted, coiled up and rattled till the air fairly whizzed."


"Thar is many a thing in the woods that sounds like the rattle of a snake. Sometimes it's a weed, sometimes it's a leaf, it may be a little stick, or somedry seeds in a small pool. You jump for a minute, and then laugh to think how easy you got sold. But when you hear a genuine rattle from a snake that is mad, you will never mistake it. It will come nearer waking a deaf man than a shock of bottled lightning. Thar is not a beast nor a bird but what will get out of the way as quick as a man."

"Just as we slung our teet' and gripped our guns for a start, Bob caught me by the arm and cried, 'Wait a bit.' Then he run to the top of the rock and yelled, 'Come here.' 'Give me a hint,' says he, as I reached him. 'I think I can reach that oak limb.'"

"The limb of a big oak came down over the top of the rock, and this Bob could just reach by my holding him up as high as I could. He grabbed the limb and climbed up a little, and thar brought it down so I could get holt on it."

"We were none too quick, for the blamed snakes were crawling up mighty lively, and I had to kick one of 'em away from me as I swung off on the limb. We climbed that limb and got down the tree in less than no time, and struck off up the mountain. We never stopped till we reached the Mountain Spring House, whar we got a drink or two of old rye, for fear we might have been bit."

"I reckon them guns and blankets are down thar yet, for we never went back for 'em. It were a mighty close call for us stranger: and thar was how they come to call me Rattlesnake Jim."

EASY TO TAKE	SAFE	INFALLIBLE
	BRISTOL'S SUGAR-COATED	
		
	VEGETABLE PILLS	
	PROMPT	