

THE BEGINNING OF PRINTING.

These two pictures will give you some idea of the beginning of printing. The first one shows Lawrence Coster cutting a letter from the bark of a tree outside the walls of the old city of Haarlem in Holland. He had the idea on his mind for some time, and now it began to grow into shape. He cut letter after letter, and carried them home. Then he fastened the letters together with a piece of string, and rubbed their faces with some ink he had made thick for the purpose. Pressing a sheet of paper then on the letters he had a copy of them in a moment. That was the first attempt at printing, at least in Europe, and it was about the year 1428.

The other picture shows that in a few years some progress had been made. Guttenberg and Faust, in the German city of Mentz, on the Rhine, thought of a better way of making letters than by cutting them on blocks of wood. They made each letter of a separate piece of metal—a type, it was called. And they invented a machine for taking impressions from those types. Coster, or Koster as his name is sometimes spelled, ought to have the credit, I suppose, of thinking of the way of using letter-blocks instead of the pen, to make books, and Guttenberg and Faust ought to have the credit of making movable types and of inventing the printing press, even if it was a very clumsy and rude affair. But let me tell you that some of the work that was done in those early days was very fine indeed. I have seen books, not quite as old as Guttenberg's time, to be sure, but books three hundred years old, in which the letters stand out just as sharp and clear and black as ever. There is, for example, in the library of the Tract Society, a collection of Luther's writings printed in 1564, during the lifetime of the great Reformer, and while the paper is discolored by age, the ink has not faded a particle.

Our printers to-day cannot beat the old books in this respect, though they can in doing work fast and well at the same time. The first volume that was ever printed was a Latin Bible, and it took nearly eight years to complete the printing of it.

The world owes a great deal to Coster and Guttenberg and Faust, do you not think so?

BLIND ABUNA.

BY MRS. ANNA B. PARK.

In an eastern country there lived a poor blind man, named Abuna. He had no friends and no home, and like Bartimeus, he sat by the wayside begging. The passers-by, thinking to gain merit to themselves, frequently threw small coins to him, with which he bought himself food, and sometimes a sleeping-place; but it was a hard life he led; there was no one to speak kindly to him, no one cared for him; his only comfort was the long staff which he always carried with him, and with which he groped his way about, in his utter darkness; so much did his soul crave a friend, that he used to talk to that staff as if it were a live being. While sitting there by the wayside under the shade of a banyan-tree, he had

ample time to think, and he did think of his cruel, hard-hearted wife and children, for long ago he had had a wife and children, but they kicked and scolded him so that there was not a moment's peace for him at home, and he had left them and come far away. He

had no pleasant things to think of. The past had been a long, dark, dreary waste, and the future loomed up very much the same, while its horizon was closed in with the blackest clouds of uncertainty and dread.

One day, as he sat sorrowfully thinking his small sphere of thoughts through, the very same he had thought over and over again, he felt a hand laid on his shoulder, and a kind voice addressing him said,

"Abuna, there are three things I can do for you; choose one of them, and you shall have it."

"What!" said the blind man; "who are you?" looking half afraid.

"I am a stranger to you, but you are not to me," said the other; "and of three things I wish you to say which you would like to have me do for you. I can either make you a rich man, or I can give you sight, or you may have a loving friend; but there are conditions connected with all these three. If, in the first place, you would like to become a rich man, you must remain blind; if, secondly, you would like to have your sight, you must remain a friendless beggar; and in the third case, if you would have a loving friend, you must remain blind and poor as you now are."

"Pray tell me," said Abuna, wholly unused to having any one appear to care for him, "who you are; are you a man or a spirit? are you making fun of me, or what are you trying to do?"

"I am not making fun of you," said the stranger; "I mean what I say. Tell me which of these things you would like best." "I don't know what all this means," said Abuna; "but please say the three things over again."

The stranger repeated them slowly, so that he might com-

prehend them, and Abuna, after saying them over after him two or three times, laughed a little hysterical laugh, and said, "Well, this is funny. I will think it over, and tell you tomorrow morning, sir, if you will be good enough to come then."

"Certainly, I am very willing to give you time to think," said the stranger, and so saying went away. After he had gone, the blind man experienced such a sensation of excitement as he had never felt before; one moment he would laugh aloud and talk to his staff, and the next he would stand up, and perform various gymnastic exercises. Finally, he calmed himself down to decide the momentous subject,

and then he found himself not a little perplexed and puzzled over it.

To be a great rich man, thought he, and have a fine house and soft beds, and plenty of food and servants, and horses and carriages, and everything he knew of, what could be more blissful! and he chuckled to himself as he thought how it would feel to be dressed in fine clothes, and go riding round the city, and have people bowing to him!—but just then came up the bitter drop in that cup, that he should still remain blind. He shook his head slowly and sadly: sight was better than all the riches of Ind, and he turned to think of the next condition, which was to have his sight and still remain a friendless beggar. To have his sight, that would be joy unspeakable, he thought. "I shouldn't need you any more, old staff," said he. Ah, but to remain a beggar, that was pretty bad. No, he would rather be a blind beggar, than a beggar that could see, for now people did take pity on him, because of his blindness, and gave him money, but they would not be likely to do that if he could see. "But," thought he, "if I could see, I could work and earn money."

Still he remembered that that was not the condition; he was to remain a beggar and friendless. That word "friendless" just turned the scale in his mind, and he thought of the third condition: to remain blind but have a great friend. Wouldn't that be queer, he thought! but it would be pleasant, especially if he was sure to be a true friend, one who would never forsake him; and if he should take him to his house, and take care of him and talk kindly to him, and lead him about, and not be ashamed of him, that would be nice, better even than having the riches to take care of himself; but then there was the same condition here as in the first case, he was to remain blind; still that friend would be eyes for him, he thought. He revolved these three conditions over and over again in his mind, all day and all night long, till he was half distracted. At one time he had decided to take the riches, then objections presented themselves, and he longed for sight, but the thought of possessing one great kind friend was one which had the most satisfaction in it.

When morning came he was at his post very early, and in a state of great excitement.



COSTER CUTTING LETTERS OUT OF BARK.