The Victoria Warder

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1887.

Progress of Education.

From the pen of James Boyer, Bracebridge.
(Continued from last week.)

To the Romans is due the credit of publishing

THE FIRST NEWSPAPER.

It was known as the "Acta Diurna" or proceedings of the day, and it not only occupied the position but also served some of the purposes of a modern newspaper. It was in fact the Daily News of old Rome and was published both under the Republic and the Empire. Seneca informs us that it contained abstracts of the proceedings in courts of law and public assemblies, accounts of public works or buildings in progress, recitals of punishments inflicted upon offenders, a list of births, marriages and deaths, reports of trials for divorce, which in that day were too frequent, accounts of floods and earthquakes, price current, etc., all supplied, as are the newspapers of the present day, by reporters who were termed *actuarii*. It would have been interesting if Seneca had also informed us the amount charged for each copy of this written newspaper, but probably the circulation was confined to posting up copies in a few of the most public places in the city.

Some system of shorthand was in use among the Romans and was used to report the burning and eloquent speeches of their orators. Cicero employed stenographers, as we may now term them, to report the speech of Cato, in the celebrated debate of the Roman Senate upon the Catoline conspiracy.

Julius Cæsar is said to be the first ruler who allowed all the proceedings of the Senate to be published, and who in fact was the publisher of the first "Hansard," but it was a liberty which his despotic successors rarely allowed, and which was not allowed, until comparatively modern times, in the most enlightened nations of Europe. In the year 1771 the Commons of England by an attempt to arrest, by authority of the House, a citizen of London who had printed a report of the debates brought on a dispute with the civic authorities of the city, and the Lord Mayor and one of the aldermen were sent to the Tower, but in a short time the Commons were wise enough to let the matter drop and the printers of the debates were no longer molested.

The excavations at Pompeii shed some light upon the education and manners and customs of the Romans about A.D. 79. It is said that the late King Bomba objected to the unrolling of some *papyri* found there on the ground that "there might something turn up to disprove the Bible, and then I should be excommunicated." Poor man! he little thought that a worse disaster than excommunication would so soon overtake him, and that he would have to fly before the victorious legions of Garabaldi.

In many of the houses of Pompeii the excavators came upon a number of customers' accounts scored upon the walls, a similar mode of keeping accounts lately existed, if it does not still exist in alehouses or inns in England, and perhaps in some parts of this country, when the customers often requested the landlord to "chalk it up." The saying, "mind your P's and Qs" arose from this circumstance, the letter P or Q being placed at the head of the score to denominate pints or quarts, and a very bibulous individual was often reminded by his more prudent companions to remember his Ps and Qs. A Pompeian inn was unearthed with an elephant for a signboard and the words, "*Sittius has established the Elephant-Osteria Triclinium* (or dining chamber) *with three beds—every comfort.*" In one of the houses a slit was found in the door which may have been the prototype of our modern letter boxes. Seneca in his writings speaks of a Pythagorean, who finding the shop of his bootmaker closed because the man was dead, pushed the four *denarii* that he owed for repairing boots through the *clausterum* or aperture in the door, so that he would not be in debt to a dead man.

Politics appear to have played an important part in Pompeian life. The elections in the city seem to have been as keenly contested as those of modern times. The mysteries of the polling booth and all the paraphernalia of touting for votes had place there, whilst every eligible place in the streets is scribbled over with the claims of the candidates. Every class had its special favorite. There was a fisherman's candidate, a pastry-cook's candidate—gardeners, laborers, muleteers and theatre-goers each had their candidate. One inscription reads, "O Proculus, vote for Sabinus, and he will do the same for thee," a *quid pro quo* sometimes practised at our municipal elections. The electoral bill stickers seem to have been as great a nuisance as they are with us, and many are the warnings against bill posting. One reads "Please inscribe nothing here," while another in language more forcible than polite says, "Cursed be the candidate who puffs himself here. May he never succeed," a prayer which doubtless had the effect of keeping the writer's walls clear of the offensive placards. Pliny, the writer on natural history, who probably resided in Pompeii, was killed by the great eruption from Vesuvius which overwhelmed the city.

Space will only permit a glance at that proud era in the history of Greece (about 430 years B. C.) when a sense of national greatness caused Grecian genius to put forth its richest blossoms of literature and art. It was an age of grand dramatic composition, and of the greatest works of sculpture and architecture. Oratory, a powerful instrument in a free state, was cultivated assiduously, and the Athenians became accustomed to hearing the purest lessons of patriotism put forth in the loftiest forms of eloquence, yet with all this polish and culture we find that some 500 years afterwards—when, as we are informed by St. Paul, "All the Athenians and strangers who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing"—they had an alter inscribed "To the unknown God"

If we for a moment consider that all this education and knowledge of the arts and sciences possessed by the ancient Egyptians, Romans and Greeians were for so many centuries lost to the world that the civilization of Europe and part of Asia during the first few centuries of the Christian era relapsed into the barbarism of the middle ages, that many of the arts and sciences then lost have only recently been re-discovered, and that others as yet have not been discovered, we are tempted to exclaim with Solomon, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new."

It was during the long wars and the state of society consequent upon the breaking up of the Roman empire that much of this knowledge was lost, and indeed had it not been for the Church of Rome, whose bishop—as the first personage in what had been before the overthrow of the western empire, the capital of the world, and who was looked up to, not only in religious, but also in political matters—the very use of letters, as well as of books, would have been forgotten. What little knowledge of books and letters existed was in the keeping of the clergy, and this was far from extensive. It is true that there were schools during this period, but they were confined to cathedrals and monasteries, and designed solely for religious instruction, so that the people in general had no opportunity of learning. It was very rare for a layman, of whatever rank, to know how to sign his name, and even charters and laws were inscribed with a X. One of the causes of this ignorance was the scarcity of books. Paper made from cotton rags was not introduced till the close of the 11th century. Papyrus ceased to be imported into Europe in the 7th century, and parchment or vellum was too expensive for book purposes, so that it is not wonderful if in this state of affairs the human intellect became enfeebled, that morals were corrupted, and that society in general sank to a low level.

A revolution in this state of affairs was caused by the discovery of the art of printing.

It is singular that while the "art preservative of all the arts," as it is aptly termed, records the birth of other inventions, no positive proof exists of its own. The honor of the invention is claimed by each of the three towns of Harlem, Mentz and Strasburg. The earliest record we have is a single engraved page with a few lines of engraved letters known as the "St. Christopher" print of the date of 1423. In 1438 the letters were separately cut in wood. In 1450 they were separately cast in metal, and in 1455 the first Bible in Latin was printed at Mentz. In 1474 the first book was printed in England by Caxton, under the title of "The Game and Playe of Chesse."

It was during the reign of Richard III, though designated in history as a tyrant and a murderer, that the parliament passed an act which, while laying restrictions on foreign traders, expressly excepted from its operation trade in books, "written or printed," which were allowed to be brought in and sold by men of any nation. The statutes of this reign were the first ever printed. Specimens of the Roman type of printing have been in existence from the earliest dawn of the typographical art, but the black letter of Caxton continued in use so late as the early editions of the authorized version of the Bible, the two types having had a parallel existence for a lengthened period.

During the two or three preceding centuries and down almost to the close of the last one, the alphabet was taught by means of the horn book. The letters were printed upon white paper which was laid upon a thin piece of oak and covered with a sheet of horn, secured in its place by eight tacks driven through a border or mounting of brass, the object of the horn covering being to keep the leaf unsoiled. The first line is called the cross row and Dr. Johnson says it is so named "because a cross is placed at the beginning to show that the end of learning is piety." The horn book is mentioned by several English writers. Shakespeare in Richard III says, "He hearkens after prophecies and dreams; and from the cross row plucks the letter G," and again in Love's Labour Lost, "He teaches boys the horn book."

Ben. Johnson says:—

"The letters may be read through the horn,
That makes the story perfect."

Shenstone, Cowper, John Britton in his autobiography, published in 1771, Locke in his "Thoughts on Education" all describe the horn book, which was in part, if not altogether superseded by the gingerbread alphabet, which was in use at the the time the writer was a boy, and was sold in most of the candy and cake shops in England. One English writer (Prior) says:—

"To master John the English maid,
A horn book gives of gingerbread,
And that the child may learn the better
As he can name, he eats the letter."

Many Englishmen now living received the first rudiments of education from one of the race of self-constituted and unqualified teachers, generally an old dame, of whom some years since every town and village of England could boast one or more specimens. For a number of years the

"Delightful task, to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to shoot,"

As the poet terms it, was, in England entrusted to ignorant women, old soldiers, bankrupt tradesmen, or anyone who had been unfortunate in or unfit for other pursuits.

The poet Shenstone, who began his educational career in a dame's school, in his excellent poem of the "Schoolmistress" has left a truthful but humorous account of this state of things.

"In every village marked with little spire,
Embowered in trees, and hardly known to fame,
There dwells in lonely shed, and mean attire,
A matron old, whom we schoolmistress name;
Who boasts unruly brats with birch to tame:
They grieven sore, in piteous durance pent,
Awed by the power of this relentless dame;
And oftimes, on vagaries idly bent
For unkempt hair, or task unconned, are sorely spent.

But a better state of things now exists in that country, although England was long in learning that one of the things which contributes to the prosperity and greatness of a nation, is the education of the masses. In 1870 the Elementary Education Bill was passed after almost insurmountable difficulties arising from discordant opinions on the subject of national education, and is a great improvement upon the denominational or voluntary system which had previously existence, and of which schools there were about 20,000 in existence at the time of the passing of the act. A comparison of the system introduced by the act above mentioned with the system at present existing in this province would be interesting.

Mr. Ellis Explains.

HE TELLS THE NEWS ABOUT THE DETROIT SEIZURE, AND HOW AMERICANS ARE WORKING AGAINST THE IMPORTATION OF CANADIAN GOODS.

The recent difficulties between P. W. Ellis & Co., the wholesale jewelers of this city, and the United States customs officials, are not at an end yet. A News reporter saw Mr. Ellis yesterday, and asked him for a full statement of the facts in the case, as what has already been published has not altogether covered the ground. Casual items have been printed from time to time, but much has been left untold. The whole story will be found printed below.

"Let us begin at the beginning," Mr. Ellis said.

"We have received a number of orders from different parts of the United States for goods of our manufacture, more particularly that class known as 'winter sports' jewelry.'"

"Yes."

"The first two or three shipments passed the customs without objection. Then a shipment to one F. F. Egan, of St. Paul, Minnesota, was stopped, appraised at double the value invoiced, and a penal fine of 20 per cent. imposed for alleged under-valuation. According to the laws of the United States this must be protested against within twenty-four hours, or the appraisement must stand. It was not within our power from Toronto, nor that of our customer in St. Paul, to do so within this time, so the detention, or in other words, seizure, took place at the port of entry at Detroit, and the Express Company, only acting as carriers, did not undertake the responsibility of making protest. As these goods were urgently wanted for the St. Paul winter carnival, and other orders awaited their being satisfactory, we paid the extra duty and fine under protest, to save delay, then wrote the Collector on the subject, accompanying our correspondence with a sworn affidavit, made before the American Consulate at Toronto, certifying to the correctness in every particular of our invoices, and also enclosed to the Collector our regular illustrated lists and prices to the Canadian trade."

"What was the result of that?"

"The correspondence was acknowledged in respectful terms, and we were told that our letter would be referred to the appraiser for action in the future, and that our invoices were correct in form. We believed then that this would end the matter. Imagine our surprise when informed that our next shipment, to another jeweler in St. Paul, was treated in like manner. In this instance the express agent demanded an appraisement by Detroit merchants, which demand was conceded. I might state here that the former appraisement was confirmed by the appraiser calling in two Detroit merchants, and in this second instance, in compliance with the request of the express agent, two other merchants, different from those in the first instance, were called in. They actually raised the price higher than double the value, with the result that the goods will be sold by the American authorities in the usual course, unless the penal fine and increased duty are paid.

"We have other shipments," Mr. Ellis continued, "repeat orders, in the hands of the express agent at Detroit, that he dare not attempt to enter without making the goods liable to double the duty, and a penal fine of 20 per cent. on the increased valuation. This agent has therefore thought it advisable to apply for permission to return. The deputy collector is reported as stating that he believed these goods are simply sent in on consignment to be sold for us and that we are trying to get the better of the customs. We cannot think this statement could have been made in the face of the evidence he has before him on our part. We ourselves state positively that all these goods are sent in response to actual orders and invoiced at the price we expect to get. Only in one instance were we asked to sell goods on consignment, and that request we refused. I must confess surprise at merchants who have never purchased nor manufactured this class of merchandise fixing the value so positively in the face of so much evidence against their estimate. We are prepared to supply these same merchants all they will buy at the same prices as the invoices submitted for their inspection called for."

"Well, how does the matter stand now?"

"Practically thus: We must invoice our goods at $2 for every $1 we expect our customers to pay us in order to save this penal fine of 20 per cent., and thus force the customer to pay an import duty of 50 per cent on his cost, instead of the 25 per cent. that the laws and regulations call for. This appears to us, from our Canadian standpoint of view, as trying to close the American markets against us, and is an unjust discrimination against our goods, which we cannot think is intentional, but rather an error of judgment. We are ourselves large importers of goods, the product of American manufacturers, and no such obstacles are placed by our government or our merchant citizens against their entry." [Toronto News.

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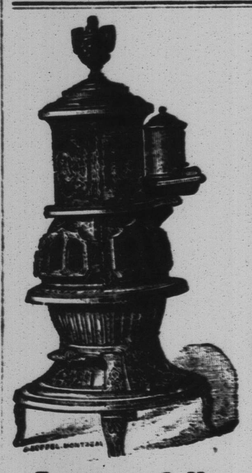

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