



OUR MODERN SCRIBES.

PENS,
INKS & INKSTANDS,

WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS.

“Thorow earth and waters deepe,
The pen by skill doth passe :
And featly nyps the worldes abuse,
And shoes us in a glasse.”

CHURCHYARD.

LONDON:
W. KENT & Co., (LATE D. BOGUE,)
86, FLEET STREET, & PATERNOSTER ROW.

1858.

P R E F A C E .

AT the time when Charlemagne signed his Charters and Ordinances, by dipping the thumb of his dexter glove into a fluid somewhat resembling Day and Martin's Superior Blacking, and dabbing it boldly on to the Royal Sheepskin, pens were doubtless at a discount. The transparent goose-quill was valuable more for the benefit its feathery portion conferred on the straight flight of an arrow than for the power it has since acquired of wounding mortals in the most sensitive parts of their moral and mental susceptibilities.

Steel, then bore its greatest value in the shapes of dagger, brand, and battle-axe, acting keen-edged, in so decided a manner on the prevailing arguments and disputes of the time as to save much time, ink, and paper; consequently the good old rule of thumb was deservedly popular, and remained in general use.

A

It is not our province to dispute the superiority of this simple method over our own more elaborate system ; there is doubtless, much to be said on both sides. We can only wonder, on reflection, at the mighty changes that have occurred since that time, not more in man's mode of thought than in the means employed to perpetuate the continued succession of calculations and ideas that have chiefly wrought this wonderful revolution in the character and practice of the writing portion of mankind.

As the most important instrument, in a mechanical point of view, in promoting this march of improvement, a history of the "PEN," with its most necessary appliances, their rise, progress, and development, will not, we trust, be considered out of place or inapplicable at this present time.



P E N S

PENS have not been so fortunate in their historians as might have been expected from the gratitude of authors; like many other "helps" to fortune and to fame, they have been used, flung away, and forgotten.

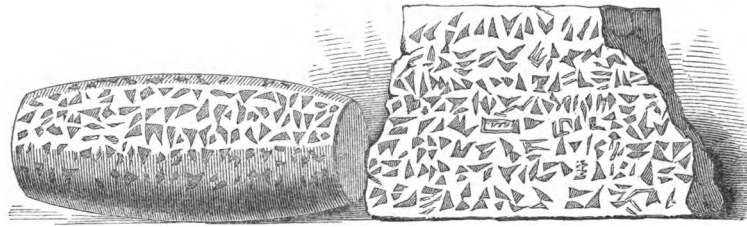
We never heard of a veteran writer hanging up his "good pen" in his study—taking it occasionally out of its case, and dropping a tear of affection upon it—after the manner of Sterne's "Marquis," with his ancestral sword; yet few swords have done such work in the world as the pen of Luther, the reed of St. Paul, the graphium of Aristotle, or the writing implements, whatever they were, of hundreds of others whose names shine in the pages of history with as great a lustre as that of the proudest conqueror.

B

A good old Saxon monk, of the seventeenth century, Adhelm of Malmesbury, who made his pens from pelican quills, did indeed write a pretty little poem in Latin on the "writing pen," which does great credit to his feelings. He is almost the first writer who mentions the quill as being used for a pen, and his authority is valuable, as giving our ancestors the credit of early making an application so obviously useful of the wings of their wildfowl. All scribes however, unfortunately for us, were not like the grateful Adhelm; though the history of writing has been traced back to very great antiquity, that of writing implements is involved in considerable obscurity. We are compelled to conjecture from the substances written *on*, and the form of the character inscribed, what instruments were employed. The square Hebrew letter, with its straight bevilled edge, distinctly betrays the use of a chisel, and seems most suitable for inscription on "tables of stone." Egyptian hieroglyphics were carved with a bronze chisel—rather a soft metal for an encounter with the tough granite of the Sphinxes;



no doubt it was sufficient for that edition of the Greek Hesiod upon lead, spoken of by classical antiquaries; with *metallic pens* of the like description, the arrow-headed inscriptions of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, must have been performed; at least, all the public announcements carved on rocks and monumental



edifices. The Babylonian bricks and cylinders (constituting the state documents and archives), which Sir Henry Rawlinson has, with such wonderful skill, discovered and dragged out of their secret lair, may have been manipulated in a plastic state; they may have been in fact ancient stereotype printing blocks.

Stone, lead, brass, ivory and wood, were all writing materials that required pens with points both sharp and

hard. The letters written by the Lacedæmonians to the Jews, on plates of brass, must have been of the austere kind, we may form an idea of what they looked like, from the Cingalese MS. in the British Museum, written on fifty-three leaves of copper, gilt; or from the Javanese letter, written on both sides of a thin plate of gold.

At Constantinople, in the days of the lower Empire, Chrysography, or writing in gold, was a profession by itself—and a very honourable one too it would seem, since it is recorded of the Emperor Artemius, that before he came to the throne he was a Chrysographus.

Undoubtedly the most primitive kind of correspondence, (by writing on wood,) is that practised by the Red Indian, when, with his hatchet, he carves an arrowhead upon the trees of the forest to indicate to his followers the directions in which he has bent his steps; but, that a more convenient instrument for writing despatches on wood, than an Indian hatchet must have existed, is evident from the very word *codex* (trunk of a tree,) as applied to ancient MSS., a curious monument of this

kind of writing or engraving on wood, to wit, the clogg or Anglo Saxon Almanac, might be seen in out-of-the-way country houses in England, not many years back.

The stylus, graphium or graver, with which the ancients wrote their leaden histories, brazen epistles, tables of stone and wood, &c., must have been larger and sharper than the neat little implements, pointed at one end, flat or round at the other, with which they scratched their *billet doux* on diptychs coated over with wax;* the flat, or round end of the stylus, was used to *efface* the writing, and prepare the wax for fresh matter; whence a polite Roman, when unable to compliment a friend on his writing, would simply recommend him "to turn his stylus;" and the Horatian precept to correct often, is expressed by the words "*Sœpe stilum vertas.*" The styli were made of iron or of brass, and proved, on occasion, formidable weapons not unworthy of their progeny, the Italian stiletto; Cæsar, who was attacked by

* The wooden tablets were sometimes whitened with a preparation of chalk, to make the engraved letters distinct.

the conspirators armed with their styli, once ran his own stylus through Casca's arm; in fact, it was found necessary in the schools to have them made only of bone, on account of the mischief done with them by the boys in their quarrels.

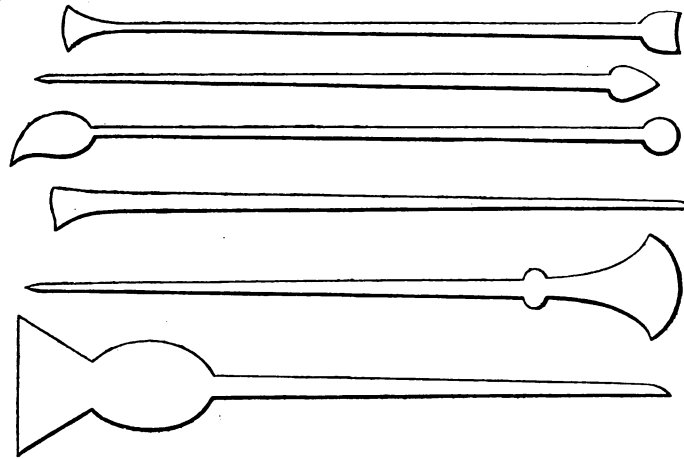


One instance is recorded of some pugnacious young dogs murdering their own schoolmaster with literary

prickers.* If Poor Van Ploos, whose sufferings are so graphically narrated in the "*Household Words*," had possessed one of these dangerous weapons, the "cracks on the knob," administered by Mr. Spiphlicater, at every demand "mend my pen, Sir," might have been resented by we know not what desperate deed.



* It was by order of the Emperor Julian, that Cassianus, a refugee bishop, who had set up a school in Rome, was martyred by his scholars.



The stylus of the ancient Hebrews was of iron, as is seen in the well known passage of the book of Job, "Oh, that my words were graven with an iron pen, and lead, in the rock for ever;" and from a passage in the Book of Jeremiah, we may infer that what we deem a *modern* improvement, namely, the hardening of the pen point with a diamond, was a refinement not unknown in his day, for he uses the expression "written with a pen of iron, and with a point of a diamond."

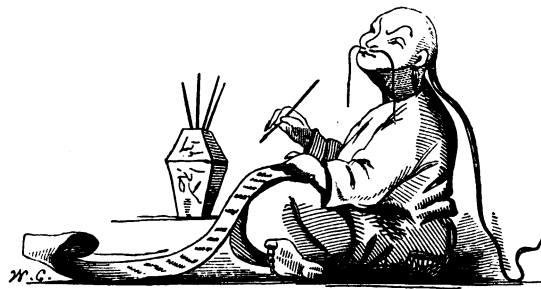
The Sibylline leaves were, doubtless of the vegetable kind, with their mysterious announcements scratched on the fibre with an iron pen.

The natives of India at the present day write on the palm leaf with a stylus that looks like a long darning needle ; and it is interesting to see the rapidity with which one will indite a note, folding the leaf round the fore finger of his left hand. With a similar instrument must the books be written which constitute the library of the Arab, who inscribes the annals of his tribe on the shoulder bones of sheep, and strings up the picturesque documents in his tent like a rope of onions. A Cingalese brass stylus, used for writing on palm leaves, may be seen in the British Museum.

As the scribbling propensity of mankind developed itself, the inconvenience of such rigid stationery as brass, stone, wood, and bone was speedily felt, and materials were sought out that would be at once more pliable and more portable. Hence leather was used by the Jews ; linen, silk, skins of serpents and fishes by the Greeks ;

bark and parchment by the Romans ; but, greatest of all, papyrus by the Egyptians. This change in the nature of the book or substance written *upon*, involved a corresponding change in the writing implement, and the reed or calamus was brought into use also by the Egyptians, for the purpose of writing on papyrus with a pigment or ink.

Pigments were applied to writing purposes before the introduction of the reed to common use, by means of hair pencils, a practice still followed in China. Dipstychs



of smooth wood and ivory were written on in this way. But the calamus, juncus, or arundo, as the writing reed

was variously called with its split nib or cloven foot, (fissipes) soon superseded every other kind of writing tool among the scribes of the then civilised world. To the facilities which it afforded for writing much and quickly, together with the cheapness of papyrus in the Augustan age, must be ascribed that commonness of books which we are little accustomed to believe in, but which Horace implies when he deprecates the fate that might befall his works if they reached the hands of the street vendors of pepper and sweetmeats, to be by them used as waste paper.

“ I would not be exposed to view in wax,
 A hideous form ; nor praised in hobbling verse ;
 Lest bard and patron, in an open box,
 Be carried to the street, where spice, perfumes,
 And frankincense are sold, with all such trash,
 As commonly is wrapped in worthless leaves.”

The home of the Calamus, as we have said, was Egypt, where it is still used, the crouching scribe holds it fixed in his left hand, while, with his right, he draws the paper beneath it over his knee. The reeds,

however most favoured now by Eastern scribes, are found in the Persian Gulf, near Aurac, where they are gathered in the month of March, and prepared by six months' immersion in fermenting manure, which coats them with the yellow or black varnish, for which they are prized.

It must not be supposed that the stylus, the reed, and the quill were brought into use in regular successive order, no one of these absolutely and at once superseded the others, any more than the metallic pen of our own day has altogether superseded the quill ; Romans found it convenient to carry their waxen tablets and stylus about with them long after the *scriptores* had been habituated to the calamus. According to Chaucer, in his "Sompnour's Tale," conveniences of this kind were in use even in the fourteenth century, he says—

" His fellow had a staffe tipped with horne,
A paire of tables all of iverie ;
And a pointell polished fetouslie,
And wrote alway the names as he stood,
Of all folke that gave hem any good."

But to the reed must we yield the honour of having conveyed to us the imperishable thoughts of the great minds of antiquity. Not only were the papyri lodged with mummies in the pyramids 1500 years before our era, inscribed by the calamus ; but a like “pen of a ready writer” was employed in the composition of the Psalms, in the execution of that wonderful copy of the “Iliad and Odyssey,” which was written in letters of gold on a material made from the intestines of serpents, in the penning of the orations of Demosthenes, who, it is said, “used to bite his reed when meditating,” in the writings of Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Cicero, Tacitus, and Livy, in the fish skin charters of Hugo and Lothaire, kings of Italy, and even by so recent a notability as Erasmus, who, in one of his letters, makes much of a present of three reeds that he had received from his friend Reuchlin. The latter *savant*, by the way, did not estimate peacock’s quills so highly as Southey seems to do in his rhapsody in the “Doctor,” for Reuchlin, in one of his

letters, expresses his pleasure at having swan's instead of peacock's pens.

Whether the *kaligrafoi* (fair writers) and the *tachi-graphoi* (swift writers) invariably used the calamus, it is hard to say, but in all probability the latter gentlemen were not long in discovering the advantages of the more elastic quill, this supposition is strengthened by the appearance in the eighth and ninth centuries of MSS. in a *running hand*; further, by Isidore's mention of the quill in the seventh century, and by Adhelm's short poem on the pelican pens, already alluded to.

An old anonymous writer testifies to the use of quills, even in the fifth century, by the following singular anecdote: "Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths," he says, "was so illiterate and stupid that, during the ten years of his reign, he was not able to learn to write four letters at the bottom of his edicts, for this reason, the four letters were cut for him in a plate of gold, and the plate being laid upon paper, he then traced out the letters

with a quill." It may not be amiss to add, that the contemporary Emperor Justin, used, in like manner, a piece of wood with the letters cut in it, but with this difference, that in tracing them out, he caused his hand to be guided by one of his secretaries.

The Dutch poet Heerkens strives to make out that quills were used for writing much earlier; according to him, the Roman armies in the Netherlands, (who appear to have been as glad to catch a goose as were our brave fellows in the Crimea,) not only enjoyed the roasted flesh of the birds at their repasts, but lay on their soft feathers when they slept, and wrote despatches with their quills; we know not Heerkens's authority for this statement, but for our own part incline to believe that the articles manufactured on this occasion were tooth-picks, not pens.

The monks of the middle ages employed both kinds of pens; and to judge from the broad massive character of their writing, both with a broad nib: reeds, it is said, served for text and initials, while quills were used

for small writing. We should be inclined to drop rather a handsome donation into the monastic poor-box if for the purposes of this article we could have been favoured with an insight into a mediæval *scriptorium*; such a one for instance, as Alcuin describes when he says, "people ought not to talk there, lest the *pen* of the transcriber should make a mistake."

"There along the cloister's painted aisle,
The monks—each bending low upon his book,
With head on hand reclined—their studies plied,
Forbid to parley, or in front to look.

* * * * *

Hard by, against the window's adverse light,
Where desks were wont, in length of row to stand,
The gowned artificers, inclined to write,
The pen of silver glistening in the hand."

The penner or pencase of the monk, though sometimes of silver or gold, set with jewels, was more frequently made of tin; it formed part of the reverend father's "personals," and was not unusually carried in the ear. A variety of apparatus was necessary in the outfit of the copyists: pens, chalk, pumice-stone, inkhorns, penknife,

a kind of razor to scrape the parchment, a punctorium or awl, which pricked the parchment, a plummet, rule, &c. Among the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum is (No. 2,897) a Service Book, one of the illuminations of which, representing St. Jude writing his epistle, is curious, as exhibiting the tools of a scribe of the fourteenth century. The professed scribes wrote on the vellum while in quires, one of which is there represented as held in its place by a piece of lead suspended to a string; one page is already written, the other is prepared



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to receive the writing, in one hand the writer holds his pen, in the other a scraper to erase errors, on one side of his seat are three inkhorns to hold the different coloured inks, a box within the chair he occupies contains his writing implements.

Great benefits did those monastic writing implements confer upon mankind, no doubt; yet they committed great mischief too. If the reed and the pen of the copyist preserved to later ages many literary treasures, his pumice-stone and scraper urged on "*pergameni amore*," by the love of parchment, committed frightful ravages among the classic remains of antiquity. In order to secure a clean skin of vellum for some foolish, monkish legends, many works precious to the scholar were obliterated, as is proved by the number of palimpsests (twice written) that have already been discovered and deciphered.

To the quill pen must be conceded the glory of bodying forth all the conceptions with which genius has endowed the world from the revival of letters to the

present century—the poet's fancies—the philosopher's theories—the discoveries of science, and the progressive facts of history. How have the pens of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Bacon, Newton, and a host of others discoursed for the delight and improvement of mankind ! Scanty as are the facts concerning this despised and feeble instrument, a curious chapter might yet be written on the pens of famous men. Philemon Holland wrote the whole of his translation of "Camden's Britannia" with one pen, and immortalised the stump in these lines :—

" With one sole pen I wrote this booke,
 Made of a grey goose quill ;
 A pen it was when I it tooke,
 And a pen I leave it still."

D'Israeli, in his chapter on the physiognomy of autographs, suggests thoughts that might illustrate this subject. How Henry VIII. must have split up many a quill with his brawny fist, and how fastidious must have been his queenly daughter Elizabeth in the pen which traced her bold yet careful signature ! The juvenile

autograph of Henry of Navarre, of which we give a fac-simile, certainly must have been written with a broad nibbed pen.



“Henry,” says Miss Freer, “*greatly excelled* in penmanship.” She may have meant “the use of his pen,” as with these autographs of his, he skilfully contrived to extract loans of money from the nobles and ladies of Guyenne and Bearn.

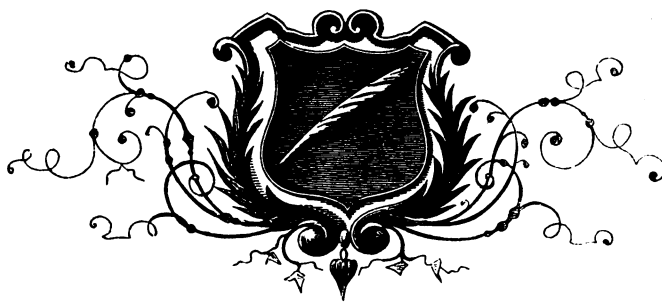
Southey concocts one of his heavy sententious quizzes from an entry in the Commercial List at Leith, of a cargo which included 1,820,000 quills, which were destined, he says, to take ample vengeance for the cruelties committed against the goose tribe. This importation took place in 1830, and contrasts strongly with

the state of the quill trade in the fifteenth century, at the Great Commercial Emporium of the Adriatic.

In 1433, quills were very scarce in Venice ; a Monk, Ambrosius, sent a bunch to his brother in another convent, telling him to *show* them to "our friend Nicolas," and to let him select *one*—as great a favour no doubt as being asked, at the present day, to select the best out of a handful of MORDAN'S most costly Gold Pens.

Singularly enough, the first modern example of the invention of metal pens, was the gold pen of Peter Bales, the famous writing master of Queen Elizabeth's time ; it was valued at twenty pounds sterling, and Peter carried it off in triumph, after a terrific writing contest with one Johnson. Bales must have had a wonderful choice of pens to perform the extraordinary caligraphic feats that are recorded of him. "He contrived," says Holinshed, "and writ, within the compass of a penny, in Latin, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, a Prayer to God, a Prayer for the Queen, his Posy, his Name, the Day of the Month, the Year of our

Lord, and the Reign of the Queen." He presented the same to the Queen's Majesty, in the head of a ring of gold, covered with a crystal, and presented therewith an excellent spectacle, by him devised, wherewith Her Majesty read all that was written therein, with great admiration, and commended the same to the Lords of the Council and the Ambassadors, and did wear the same many times upon her finger. Another painfully laborious performance attributed to Bales was a Bible, written in so small a hand that it would lie in an English walnut shell. Not unworthily did such a master of the pen bear the arms of Caligraphy : Azure and a pen, Or.



A higher historical interest would attach to the pen, did we possess it, of the Italianised Greek, Angelo Vergicio, who taught the learned Henry Stephens to write. Francis I. had a fount of Greek type, cast from a model in his handwriting, which was so exquisitely beautiful as to give birth to a proverb, which has descended to us in the somewhat ambiguous form of "to write like an angel."

One of the early modes adopted for obviating the necessity for mending quill pens, was the manufacture of *quill nibs*, by which the quill was divided as profitably as possible into several new pens. After that, in order to retain the elasticity of the quill, combined with increased durability, the points were armed with metallic nibs; but the improvement was not adequate to the augmented cost. Metallic pens of every description now came into vogue—brass, steel, silver, and gold. Pens were introduced, too, with nibs formed of precious stones, one kind consisted of a tortoiseshell tube or barrel, with small fragments of diamond or ruby im-

bedded in the nib, another kind contained a nib of ruby set in fine gold, and these pens were said to last six years without injury. At the Great Exhibition 1851 was a gold pen, pointed with the native alloy of iridium—an extremely rare substance—generally found in combination with platinum, and which derives its name from the remarkable play of colours exhibited by some of its soluble salts.

The rapid progress of science during the last twenty years has had as great an effect upon pens as upon most other articles of modern necessity or luxury, reviving some old fashions, but creating many improvements.

Professor Wheatstone's invaluable adaptation of electricity to telegraphic purposes has, in a manner, revived the use of the old Roman stylus, by which, with the aid of coloured paper, the telegraph clerk can transcribe six or eight copies of a message from London to Edinburgh in as many minutes. In order to approximate the flight of time to this almost entire negation of space, the power of writing rapidly and continuously became in-

dispensable ; the inventive faculties, therefore, of many talented chemists and mechanics were exercised with more or less success, and almost every combination of metal, and every variety of form has been applied to what may be termed the physics of Calligraphy ; Iron, in various states, has certainly been the staple ingredient, protected by varnishes and other external applications from the corrosive qualities of the ink ; and so long as the manufacture was limited to this material, Birmingham had no rival as the emporium of pens ; there they are bought and sold by the hundred-weight, and large numbers of persons, principally women, spin out this mortal life by manufacturing that which may immortalise the fame of others. Iron, though possessing more lasting qualities than the grey goose quill, is far from infallible in the matter of pens ; cold steel, in most forms, has great charms for an Englishman, having stood the test of many a stern field and stormy passage, as steam engine piston or bayonet point ; but the corrosive acids employed in the manufacture of ink rapidly canker and destroy our

own peculiar metal. The moment the protecting varnish is overcome, the ink ceases to flow, the point loses its most necessary smoothness, and the pen becomes worse than useless, tearing up the paper, and interfering with the equanimity of the would-be scribe. Tin and brass, together and separate, have given similar results; and perfection in these, as in most articles requiring metallic agency, is reserved for that precious ore, which combines in itself the most valuable qualities of the baser metals. Elasticity, durability, and the power of resisting the action of acids, were the three great qualities required for a perfect pen, Mr. F. MORDAN, of London, has most happily attained this desideratum in the production of his Gold Pen—a very different article, we suspect, to the one Mr. Bales was so justly proud of; it is, in form, similar to a quill nib—perhaps somewhat flatter and larger than the ordinary quill, and, excepting its golden hue, differs but little in appearance from many steel pens—its great value and peculiarity consisting in the point being formed of the native alloy of Osimum

and Iridium, a material found in conjunction with the ore of platinum, in the mining district of Columbia, and also in the Ural Mountains, its specific gravity is greater than that of gold, and its hardness and incorrodibility exceed that of any other known metal; it was discovered by Dr. Wollaston, and its invaluable properties were then first applied to the arts, it being reasoned with much truth, that if a pen could be formed with an indestructible point, it must be *really* an *everlasting* pen.

These pens were first offered to the public in the year 1836, and met with the patronage of many eminently scientific men, who at once appreciated their value, amongst whom were Sir John Robison, Secretary of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, who, at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, at Glasgow, in 1840, bore testimony to the valuable properties of one of these pens, which he had been using for four years, without any symptoms of decay.

To Clergymen, Barristers, Shorthand Writers, and,

indeed, to all men connected with literature or commerce, whose time and handwriting are of consequence, these pens are found invaluable, as endless testimonials prove ; and so great is the effect on the general style of Calligraphy, that instances are known where signatures written with a common steel pen by persons accustomed to the "MORDAN" have been the cause of delaying the payment of a cheque until the signature has been verified.

The average working length of service of a quill pen (including mendings) may be set down at a week ; a steel one, which cannot be mended, may be in careful hands ten days ; but the "Everlasting," after hard work (with reckless or careful driving) for ten or twelve years, is as fresh and gay as ever, looking forward to the life he may lead in the hands of his present possessor's son and heir, to whom he will descend as a heir-loom ; with every probability, from his wonderful constitution and metal, of sustaining his present high reputation for many succeeding generations.

The Gold Pen was unknown in the United States in 1838, when the secret of working the Iridium into the point was carried over to New York, where it has thriven and flourished abundantly, rapidly superseding steel pens, and employing some hundreds of "enlightened citizens" in their manufacture, they are used there in all Government Offices, and in most of the public and private schools. Its progress in England has been less rapid. We are, with good reason, partial to *iron*: but that Gold Pens are gradually and steadily increasing in demand, may be safely inferred from the fact of 4½ cwt. of gold having been used in the manufacture of this little article alone.

F. MORDAN is in hopes, from the experience he has had, and his improvements in the mode of manufacture, added to the new designs he has from time to time patented and registered, to meet the wants of all—from the invalid, who is obliged to write in a reclining position, to the rapid shorthand writer, they must ultimately

come into general use, and supersede all other metal pens.

By the construction of his remarkable variety of writing materials (a list of which will be found at the end of these pages), this gentleman has achieved a success which leaves little to be desired, and if not in quantity, certainly in quality, divides the honour of pen-making and the gratitude of pen users with the smoky capital of Warwickshire.

It would carry us too far out of our road to expatiate upon the effect this great improvement in pens has produced upon the Caligraphy of our age, had the late Lord Byron, for instance, but possessed such an aid to good writing as this "opus magnum" of the pen manufactory, what a host of curses and anathemas would have been left unsaid; the fiery temperament of the noble poet must have been as severely tried by many an old goose quill, as the more patient temper of the compositor who had to decipher his soul-stirring but almost

illegible lines. How many a pang of hope deferred has been inflicted by the inability of some fair damoisel to express her tender emotions in characters legible even to the quick eyes of love? and this simply from want of a "Mordan's Gold Pen." Such elegance of design and

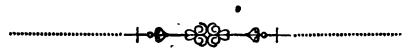


costliness of material are not unbecoming of the sceptre that rules the world of mind, and may remind the

reader of Montgomery's quaint and fanciful conceit, that the pen is "a talisman," which would enable him to call up from the dark pool in the inkstand all the legions of angel-forms who lie entranced within it—

"Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brook
In Vallambrosa."

This brings us to the subject of Ink.



I N K

The most ancient ink in the world is that provided by Nature herself for the benefit of the cuttle-fish (sepia), which employs it to discolour the surrounding water, and hide itself from pursuit; this fish was not only used by the Spartans in making their black broth, but contributed the ink with which the inscriptions on the ancient sarcophagi were written; Dr. Wollaston, until he was informed of this fact, puzzled himself greatly with the discovery of animal matter in ancient ink.

A remarkable proof of the permanence of the colour of sepia was afforded by Dr. Buckland, when, in 1829, he discovered fossil pens and fossil ink-bags in the lias,

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at the geologist's request, some of this fossil sepia was used by Chantrey, the sculptor, in a drawing; which, being shewn to another royal academician, the latter was so much pleased with its quality that he eagerly inquired the name and address of the colourman.

The invention of artificial ink is of such great antiquity that the name of its inventor is buried in oblivion,

“ Hard that *his* name it should not save,
Who first poured forth the sable wave.”

said the poet laureate Whitehead, who seems fondly to have imagined that the mere consumption of the stygian liquid entitled a man to immortality. The writing ink of the ancients was essentially different from that which is now used, its basis was finely powdered charcoal, mixed with some mucilaginous or adhesive fluid; it was, consequently, less liable to fade than modern writing ink, and somewhat more resembled printer's ink. Writing ink is now a chemical compound, and not a mere mechanical mixture.

Judging from the distinctness which remains to this

day of the writing on some specimens of the papyri, the ink of the Egyptians was very superior; the initial letters were written with red ink, which is stated to have been cinnabar, or vermilion, (the bi-sulphuret of mercury.) Mr. Lane says, that "The ink of the modern Egyptians is thick and gummy, which was, no doubt, its character in ancient times, when it appears to have been applied as paint or varnish, as well as ink." Plutarch says, that "The courts of justice in Athens were called each after some letter of the alphabet." These letters, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, &c., were written against the doors in red ink; that it was a pigment rubbed on a palette when required for use, (as we rub Indian ink,) is proved by the sarcasm addressed by Demosthenes to Æschines, when reproaching him with his low origin. "When a youth," says the savage orator, "he (Æschines) was in a state of great want, assisted his father in the school, *rubbed the ink*, washed down the forms, and swept the school-room." However obstinately this ink might resist the atmospheric influence, which so soon turns our mo-

dern MSS. brown and yellow, it abhorred water, and Beeker makes the plot of his instructive Greek story "Charicles," to turn upon this fact in describing the alteration of a will—the obliteration by means of a sponge of two letters in the name of a legatee. Red ink was also made from vermilion, red ochre, or *rubrica*, and extensively used in writing the titles and beginnings of books; and because the headings of laws were written with *rubrica*, the word rubric came to be used for the civil law—an adaptation made familiar to every one in the canonical directions of the book of "Common Prayer." Purple and gold were also much written with by the ancients, of which kind of writing the Iliad and Odyssey, already alluded to as existing at Constantinople, is a splendid specimen. One of the poems recited by Nero was so written in gold, and dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus; since his time, the art of illumination with that and other precious pigments has attained to the dignity of a fine art. There was a very expensive red ink reserved for the exclusive use of the Roman Emperors in

writing their signatures, the use of which was, by an edict, expressly forbidden to every one excepting the sons and near relatives of the Emperor, to whom the privilege was specially granted ; if the Emperor was under age his guardian used a green ink for writing his signature.

Several of the Latin authors make mention of ink, Horace must mean not a mere gummy mixture, but a vitriolic ink, that would bite into the substance of what it touches, when he says—

“ And yet as ink the fairest paper stains,
So worthless verse pollutes the fairest deeds.”

EP. ii. 236.

Pliny says, the Roman ink (*atramentum*) was made of soot, in various ways, with burnt resin or pitch ; and for this purpose, he adds, they have built furnaces, which do not allow the smoke to escape—a good hint to our tall chimney manufacturers. Some also made a kind of ink by boiling and straining the lees of wine. Pliny further observes, that an infusion of wormwood with ink preserves MSS. from mice. On the whole, it may be said,

that if the inks of the ancients were more durable than our own, they were certainly thicker and more unctuous ; an inkstand was discovered at Herculaneum containing ink as thick as oil, and still useable for writing, or more probably, painting, in the modern sense of the term ; the gummy character of inks preventing running to the point of the pen, was as much complained of by the ancient Romans as it is by ourselves.



Persius, a foppish writer, is sitting down to compose,
but as the ideas do not flow freely,

“Some peevish quarrel straight he strives to pick,
His quill writes double, or his ink’s too thick;
Infuse more water, now ’tis grown so thin,
It sinks, nor can the characters be seen.”

SAT. iii. 12.

It is manifest that “encaustum,” a word applied by the Romans to the vitriolic fluid, as distinguished from “Atramentum,” the black, gummy mixture, is the original source of our word “Ink;” the value of this ink has been strikingly exemplified in the recovery of ancient monuments of learning that lay concealed in the Palimpsests already spoken of; for, although the pumice stone in many of the specimens had done its work effectually so as to admit of its becoming useful a second time, yet so deeply had the iron of the ancient ink entered into the soul of the vellum, that an infusion of galls once more brought the original text to light. There is a very old rhetorical formula of hyperbole in connection with ink that was used by Jewish Rabbi’s

centuries ago, and has been continued through the Middle Ages down to the present time, two specimens of which we introduce here, the well-known lines beginning

“Could we with ink the ocean fill,”

are said to form part of an ode, sung in every synagogue on the first day of Pentecost. Our specimen (No. 1), however, is from old “Chaucer’s ballade, warnynge men to beware of deceitful women :”—

“In soth to saie tho’ all the yerth so wanne
Wer parchment smoth, white and scribbabel,
And the great see that called is the ocean,
Wer turned into ynke blacker than sabell,
Eche stick a pen, eche man a scrivener able,
Not coud thei writin women’s treacherie,
Beware, therefore, the blind eteth many a fie.”

The last little touch is admirably humorous.

The other application of the favourite image is well calculated to check a preposterous indulgence in it, and occurs in “Wit’s Recreation :”—

“If all the world were paper,
And all the sea were ink ;
If all the trees were bread and cheese,
What should we do for drink ?”

Many processes have been given for preparing writing ink, and many attempts have been made to concoct an ink that will never lose its colour; a story is told of Professor Traill, who, after many experiments, succeeded in producing a black fluid that resisted the action of all acids and alkalies. The pleased *savant* eagerly sent his mixture on trial to several banks and schools, where it gave general satisfaction, until some luckless scribbler voluntarily or involuntarily, applied a test of its durability, which had not been dreamt of—pure water, which completely washed off the Professor's "indelible."

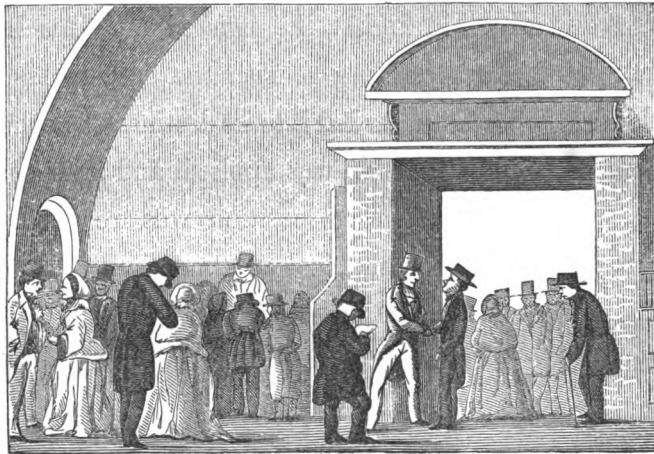
Mr. MORDAN, in his numerous experiments on calligraphic materials, naturally investigated the properties of various inks, and he tells us, with much reason, that the general adoption of metallic pens made a change in the character of ink positively necessary; it requires very little antiquarian knowledge to be convinced that the Roman Atramentum, or the modern ink of the Chinese, although adapted for any person using reed or even quill pens, is

quite unsuitable to those formed of metal. As the use of metal in every branch of mechanics seems to be the precursor of speed, ink has received the general momentum in connexion with it; and in the hands of Mr. M. has become limpid and quick flowing,—*fast*, indeed, in more senses than one,—forming a strong contrast to the sturdy material with which Dr. Johnson compiled his no less solid Dictionary.

The amount of ink consumed in the metropolis alone must be very considerable, one has but to witness the mighty throng that each morning crowd the great suburban thoroughfares converging on the City, to be convinced of this fact, each one hastening to ply the pen, with more or less rapidity.

The quantity used for signatures alone during the payment of dividends at the Bank and other public offices will constitute an important item, its unctuous or mucillaginous properties at these great establishments may vie with that of antiquity, whilst the pens with which it is used possess a brush-like quality of

point that would be no disgrace to those of ancient Herculaneum.



Indian Ink hardly belongs to our subject, except in the use made of it by the Chinese, who dip their brushes into a mixture of it both for writing and painting purposes.

The use of *Sympathetic ink* appears not to have been uncommon with the ancients; Ovid advises writing love-letters with fresh milk, which would be unreadable

until the letters were sprinkled with coal-dust. The latest historical occurrence, we believe, that put to the proof this invisible vehicle of intelligence was General Sale's "difficulty" in India; he penned a despatch in a solution of starch, heading it with the solitary legible word "*iodine*," and forwarded it to its destination; where, the hint being taken, iodine was applied, and an account of the General's dangerous position was revealed in characters of a bright blue colour; mention, also, may be made of an ink used almost entirely, in this age of delicate proprieties, for blacking the edges of mourning paper, envelopes, &c.; its composition is a secret of the trade, and may, with a precise tariff for adjusting the depth of the border to the various degrees of consanguinity, prove the subject of an interesting paper to some future antiquary.

We must not omit to mention a desk, which was presented to Queen Elizabeth, in one of her progresses, "with divers devices and a pair of tables and chess-board,

three silver boxes for the compters sand and inke, and forty compters." These being severally adapted to arithmetic, writing, and playing, all in one article.



INK STANDS

THE inkstands (*atramentaria*) used by the ancients were either single or double, the latter being intended, probably, to hold black and red ink ; they were of various shapes, as, for example, round or hexagonal, and had covers to keep the dust from the ink, as seen in most illustrations, which represent inkstands found at Pompeii.

Vessels of this nature have necessarily been aids and adjuncts to the business of a scribe ever since writing with reed or pen began, and form a chronological series of inkstands, from the simple Pompeian specimens represented to the elaborate piece of workmanship recently sent by Her Majesty to the King of Siam.



Montfaucon exhibits the figure of a very ancient ink-horn, preserved, he says, in the Treasury of St. Denis, and reputed to have belonged to the Apostle of France; it is of wood, covered with leather, and contains within it another vase of brass, with a silver rim and other ornaments; the frame from which it is suspended being perforated with four holes for the reception of the reeds.

The ink-case shown in the margin of this page is a curious relic of the sanguinary wars of the roses, there is little reason to doubt, from the tradition connected with it, that it was the property of the unfortunate Henry VI., who, wandering as a fugitive after the fatal battle of Towton Moor, was despoiled piecemeal of his very clothing; at Bolton Hall he lost his boots, knife, fork, and

spoon; and at Waddington he parted with this last curious relic more reluctantly than with the sword he held in so feeble a grasp: it was made of leather, ornamented with considerable elegance, and bore among other figures, the arms of England, with the rose of the House of Lancaster, surmounted by a crown; the cover is attached to the body by a sliding cord of silk, and the interior divided into three partitions, containing the ink-stand, pens, &c.

The application of science to the arts, or, we may now say in this instance, necessities of life, is illustrated by the annexed engraving of a pneumatic inkstand, in which the



sable fluid is raised for use, and *vice versa* by simple atmospheric pressure, and which, also, may safely bear com-

parison in the matter of form with those resuscitated from the classic regions of Pompeii.

That you, O ! gentle reader ! may escape similar annoyances, and live more in the fame of your own works than in those of any cotemporary Satirist, is our earnest desire ; and should that end be attained, in any measure, by the perusal of these pages, we shall have nothing to regret. The importance of the articles themselves, as the vast amount of knowledge they have been the means of dispensing to mankind, must be the apology of the writer to the reader ; justified, we hope by these concluding lines—

“ Writing’s an art, which, like a sovereign queen,
Amongst her subject sciences is seen ;
As she in dignity the rest transcends,
So far her power of good and harm extends.”

FINIS.

E