

BY JAMES REEB.

Printing—Old Books, Antiquities and Curiosities.

"Thus has caused printing to be used, and contrary to the King, his crown, and dignity, built a paper mill."

Shakespeare.

The utility of printing, as far as regards the progress of truth, is counteracted by the great expense of setting type; for as all books sell best which flatter prevailing opinions and support vested interests, and as they are printed chiefly at the risk of traders, who print for sale and profit, so few (very few) printed books contain the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Before the art of printing, books were of incredible price. From the 6th to the 13th century many bishops could not read, and Kings were scarcely able to sign their names; and hence the use of seals and sealing. In the year 1471, when Louis XI. borrowed the works of Rasis the Arabian physician, from the faculty of medicine in Paris, he not only deposited in pledge a considerable quantity of plate, but was obliged to procure a nobleman to join with him as security in deed, binding himself under great forfeiture to restore it. When any person made a present of a book to a church or a monastery, in which were the only libraries during several ages, it was deemed a donation of such value, that he offered it on the altar, pro remedio anime sue, in order to obtain the forgiveness of his sins. These were the ages in which superstition, witchcraft and priestcraft obtained so universal an ascendancy. From 500 to 1200 all learning was in the hands of the Arabs, Saracens and Chinese. It is supposed by many that the art of printing originated in China, where it was practised before it was known in Europe. The Romans had the possession of the art long before they were conscious of the rich possession. And it is a curious fact, that a well known Italian, to whom learning owes much, actually published a treatise on the art of reading a printed book, which was dedicated to the higher and more enlightened class of society. Copying was in ancient Greece and Rome, a productive employment, but it afterwards fell into the hands of the monks, who copied chiefly theology. A good copy of the bible, on vellum, employed two years; and the works of either of the Fathers still more time. Jerome states, that he had ruined himself by buying a copy of the works of Origen.

Books were originally boards, or the inner bark of trees, the word being derived from *Bench* a Beech tree. The Horn-Book, now used in nurseries, is a primitive book. Bark is still used by some nations; skins are also used, for which parchment was substituted. Papyrus an Egyptian plant, was adopted in that country, and an article of commerce, thin plates of brass, were also used for the church service. The Papyrus and parchment books were commonly rolled on round sticks, with a ball at each end, and the composition began at the centre, the outer fold being its termination; these were called volumes. The outsides inscribed just as we now letter books.

The MSS. in Herculaneum, consist of Papyrus rolled, charred and matted together by the fire, and are about nine inches long and one, two or three inches in diameter, each being a volume or separate treatise. Specimens of most of these modes of writing may be seen in the British Museum. No. 2478, in the Sloanean library, is a Nabob's letter, on a piece of bark, about two yards long, and richly ornamented with gold. No. 3207, is a bark of Mexican hieroglyphics printed on bark. In the same collection are various species, many from the Malabar coast and the East. The letter writings are chiefly on leaves. There are several copies of Bibles written on palm leaves, still preserved in various collections in Europe. The ancient doubloons, wrote on any leaves they found adapted to the purpose.

Among these early inventions many were singularly rude, and miserable substitutes for a better material. In the shepherd state they wrote their songs with thorns and awl on straps of leather, which they wound round their crooks. At the town Hall in Hanover, are kept twelve wooden bars, overlaid with bees-wax, on which are written the names of owners of houses, but not the names of streets. The wooden manuscripts must have existed before 1423, when Hanover was first divided into streets.

The laws of the twelve tables which the Romans chiefly copied from the Grecian code were, after they had been approved by the people, engraven on brass, were melted by lightning which struck the capitol and consumed other laws: a loss highly regretted by Augustus.

Of course as Books were scarce, and the art of reading uncommon, they were very dear. The bequest of one at a religious house, as we have already stated, entitled the donor to masses for his soul, and they were commonly chained to their station, and some to this day.

As specimens of the prices of books, the *Roman de la Rose* was sold for above 50l.—and a *Homily* was exchanged for 200 sheep and five quarters of wheat; and they usually brought double or treble their weight in gold.

The first printed books were trifling Hymns and Psalters, with images of saints, and being printed only on one side, the leaves were packed back to back. One of the first was the *Bible Pauperum*, of forty leaves, which lasted together, made twenty. An entire Psalter was printed in 1457 by Faust and Scheffer; and a bible in 627 leaves, in moveable type, was

printed at Mentz, between 1450 and 1455; but the most important part of the invention (that of the moveable types) is uncertain both as to name and date. The first characters were Gothic; and Roman type was first used in 1467. Some writers give the invention of printing to Gattenberg, of Mayence; while others ascribe it to Faust (often called Dr. Faustus) of the same city; and others to Laurence Koster, of Haarlem.

Correspondence of the Philadelphia Ledger. WASHINGTON, March 4, 1844.

There is some talk here, and I trust it will not end in mere talk, that a motion will be made in favor of paying Mrs. Gilmer, the widow of the late unfortunate Secretary of the Navy, a year's salary of her husband's. Let not the qualms of sensibility of some would-be sentimentalists, in regard to the dead, interfere with their duty to the living, which is of far greater importance to their character as men and Christians. General Harrison's widow received a year's salary out of the national Treasury, and yet her case was not nearly as distressing. Mr. Gilmer was taken hence in the pride of manhood, leaving a large, entirely unprovided, and let me add, destitute family. Let those who have witnessed the heart-rending scene on board the Princeton, Senators and members of the House of all political parties, forget their personal and party animosities, and join as men in doing an act of justice to a poor woman, to whose agonizing sufferings themselves may bear the best testimony, to an unfortunate widow whose husband died in his country's service, and to the fatherless orphans who will be exposed to penny and want, if not generously adopted by the nation.

The reason why Mr. Nelson is pressed as Secretary of State, is his able State paper, published while *Change d' Affaires* to Naples. But Naples is a power of the fifth, or rather fifteenth rank in Europe, indebted for its existence to Austrian bayonets; and a gentleman diplomatist, therefore, may be very successful with Naples, and not quite a match for Great Britain. I say so, not in disparagement of Mr. Nelson, who is a first-rate Attorney General, but merely in reference to the subject matter. Mr. Nelson has had much unmerited abuse heaped upon him during the administration of General Jackson, and I would be the last man to do him injustice now.

The Calhoun men really say that their champion has done with President-making and unmaking, and would be willing to accept the Secretaryship of State for national considerations. Mr. Hunter of Virginia, is pressed from the Navy for precisely the same reasons; but I doubt whether President Tyler will move in that quarter. As far as Mr. Calhoun is concerned, no one can doubt but that the appointment would elicit shouts of applause throughout the nation.

Mr. Spencer, it is said, will be again nominated for the office of Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States. I trust it will be so. He could now be confirmed without difficulty, and the act would reflect great credit on the firmness and consistency of the President. Mr. Spencer came within three votes of being confirmed. Such a case certainly deserves reconsideration on all sides.

If I had anything to suggest, certainly I would propose Mr. Spencer for the State Department. That Department has been managed for some years back by men of great and absorbing talent; but as its branches have multiplied, and there is but one Secretary for the home and foreign departments, to which is added the enormous branch of the Indian Bureau and the Patent office, it is desirable that in addition to a man of talents, a thorough systematic business man should take hold of it, to clear away the rubbish which has collected there for the last fifteen or twenty years. I know no man in the United States who possesses more energy, tact and administrative experience for such a task than John C. Spencer; and as President Tyler's administration stands *par excellence* on its merits, and not on the applause of selfish partisans, such considerations as I have advanced ought to weigh with him more than the wishes of his personal friends.

FRANKLIN.

From the Public Ledger.

ANTHRACITE IRON.—Your correspondent, speaking of Stockton's gun, attributes its defect to the Scotch anthracite iron, of which he asserts that it was made.

This is all a mistake. No Scotch iron is made with anthracite coal. And it is extremely improbable that the "big gun" was made with anthracite iron.

That anthracite iron is inferior for such purposes, is an assumption for which there is no warrant. The quality of the iron depends at least chiefly on the ore, and not the fuel.

ASTRAX.

THE MURDER IN WYOMING.—We learn from the *Susquehanna Register*, that the circumstances elicited on the inquest held on the body of Atkinson, go to show that he met with foul play. The wound, instead of indicating that it was produced by the falling of a tree, corresponds exactly with the head of Bailey's axe. Besides, we understand that blood was found in other places, and other indications discovered to make it probable he was removed from the place where killed, and laid where it might appear as if the tree had fallen upon him and felled him to the ground. The only conceivable motive which we have heard suggested as a probable inducement to this dreadful crime, is the fact that Bailey's wife and Atkinson, who were brother and sister, inherited a property together, which was to become her portion entirely, provided he did not marry or should die without issue, and it is said he was to have been married shortly.—*Bradford Reporter*.

VERY HARD TIMES.—The New York correspondent of a Washington paper states that he had just heard that "a shopkeeper in Broadway had imported several ladies' dresses, priced at one thousand dollars each, and had no difficulty in selling them."



THE AMERICAN.

Saturday, March 9, 1844.

Democratic Nomination for Governor, HENRY A. MÜHLENBERG.

V. B. PALMER, Esq., at his Real Estate and Coal office, No. 59 Pine Street, Philadelphia, is authorized to act as Agent, and to receive and receipt for all monies due this office, for subscription or advertising.

BREVIER TYPE.—100 lbs., or more, of second hand brevier type, for sale at this office, at 18 cts. per lb., cash. The type are the same as those used in our advertising columns.

We are indebted to the Harrisburg Argus extra, for the proceedings of the meeting of the Johnson State Central Committee, at Harrisburg, on the 4th inst. The meeting passed resolutions condemning Dr. Seth Salisbury, after which he was deposed from the office of Chairman of the State Committee and Strange N. Palmer elected in his stead. The Committee adopted an address urging the election of Richard M. Johnson for President.

Our columns as well as those of most of the papers, are filled with accounts of the disaster on board the Princeton. In the death of Judge Uphur, the President has lost his wisest counselor and best friend, and the nation one of its most able, honorable and upright men.

MÜHLENBERG NOMINATED.—In another column our readers will find a condensed statement of the proceedings of the 4th of March convention, brought down until Wednesday noon. The nomination was not made until the afternoon. The vote, we are informed, stood 67 for Mühlenberg; Shunk 55; scattering 9. As our first choice we are pleased that the choice of the convention has fallen on Mr. Mühlenberg, although we should cheerfully have supported Mr. Shunk, had the convention seen fit to nominate him. Mr. Mühlenberg has always been eminently popular in this country.

THE ICE MOVED off the Susquehanna river, opposite this place, in a solid body, on Tuesday evening. An individual from this place had crossed about half way over when it started. He hurried his steps some and reached the opposite shore in safety.

THE MELANCHOLY intelligence of the terrible disaster on board the steam ship Princeton, did not reach us until Saturday morning last, after our paper had been worked off. We immediately issued an extra and supplied such of our subscribers as we could send to on that day. On our first page will be found a full and correct account of the whole affair, extracted from the letters of the Philadelphia Ledger's Washington Correspondent.

THE MILTON LEDGER.—The editor of this paper says its existence, under his control, will cease with last week's number. We wish the editor success in his retirement.

DEATH OF GEN. FRICK.—We regret to announce the death of the Hon. Henry Frick, member of Congress from this district. He died at Washington on Friday, the 1st inst., aged about 50 years. His remains were brought home on Sunday evening last. The funeral took place on Monday at 3 o'clock, and was attended by a large concourse of friends and relations. Gen. Frick had been in feeble health for several years past. His many noble and generous qualities had acquired for him a large circle of warm and sincere friends, who sincerely regret his loss.

The remains of Gen. Frick were accompanied from Washington City, by two of his colleagues in Congress, Mr. Irwin of Centre, and Mr. Hays of Venango. His death was announced on Monday last, in the House, by Mr. J. R. Ingersoll and by Mr. Buchanan in the Senate. The usual resolutions were passed, when both Houses adjourned. His disease was consumption.

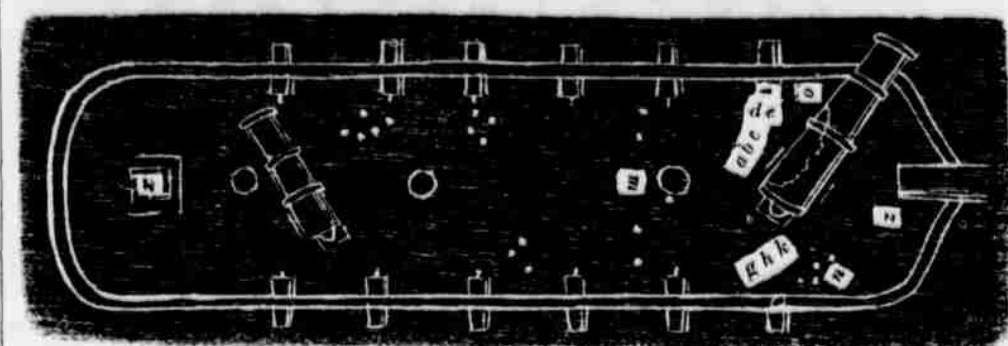
AN ELECTION for a member of Congress, to fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of Gen. Frick, will, we presume, soon take place. The law requires the Governor to issue his warrant to the Sheriff, of the counties which compose the district, as early as convenient, designating the day on which the election must be held. The writ must be delivered to the Sheriff at least fifteen days before the election, who must give due and public notice thereof, at least ten days before the election, and also send a copy of such notice to at least one of the inspectors of each election district. We have not yet heard who the candidates will be. Gen. Frick has served about three months of his time. The remainder of the present session, we presume, will last about three months longer.

OUR WOOD CUT, representing the deck of the steam ship Princeton, will enable our readers, after reading the account on our first page, to understand more fully the position of the different persons on board who were injured, and these who were near the scene of danger. It will be seen that Messrs. Gilmer, Kennon, Uphur, Gardiner and Maxey and a sailor, who were killed, were all standing in a cluster immediately opposite the section or fragment of the gun that was blown off.

The cut is not quite so well executed as those of some of our City cotemporaries, yet it answers the purpose fully as well, and is, withal, not a bad specimen of pen-knife engraving.

Miss Somerville was slightly injured. A Mulatto Servant of the President was killed.

THE UPPER DECK OF THE PRINCETON AT THE TIME OF THE EXPLOSION OF THE "BIG GUN."



The above cut explains, as nearly as can be, the position of all the principal parties at the time of the accident, by which it will be seen that the five distinguished persons who were killed were all standing in a cluster, (as it were,) on one side of the gun, distant but 8 or 10 feet.

The position of the parties on deck will be seen by the following references: a Mr. Maxey, killed; b Mr. Gardiner, do; c Mr. Uphur, do; d Mr. Kennon, do; e Mr. Gilmer, do; o A Sailor, do; s The Cabin.

The three circles represent the masts. The small white spots, groups of persons. The big gun was fifteen feet long—had a bore or mouth twelve inches in diameter—required a charge of thirty pounds of powder, and carried a ball of two hundred and thirty pounds weight. The gun itself weighed ten tons. The Princeton, it will be seen, carried also 12 smaller guns on her upper deck.

THE DEATH OF Mr. Uphur and Mr. Gilmer has caused two vacancies in the Cabinet, for which there are already a number of aspirants. Mr. Calhoun has been talked of to fill the place of Mr. Uphur, Secretary of State.

TAX PRESIDENT. It is said, has offered the office of Secretary of State to John C. Calhoun, of South Carolina, and that of Secretary of the Navy to Wm. C. Rives, of Va. It is not known whether Mr. Calhoun will accept the appointment. Some of his best friends say he will.

A NUMBER of papers have found fault with the style and manner of the Correspondent of the Philadelphia Ledger, in his account of the calamity on board the Princeton. His statement is much the best that we have seen, and although minute in its details, has proved to be correct in all its important particulars.

THE WIND CONVENTION met at Harrisburg on the 11th inst., and nominated Gen. Markle, of Allegheny, on the 23d ballot, as their candidate for Governor.

The vote stood Markle 68, Irvine 65; S. Guilford Canal Commissioner. W. B. Reed and John Strohm delegates to the Baltimore Convention.

A Washington correspondent of the N. Y. Commercial writes: "I have seen the shrouded bodies, lying in the east room. The countenance of Mr. Gilmer is little changed. When taken up there was a pleasing smile on his lips. Mr. Gardiner appeared little altered. Mr. Uphur's face, and also that of Captain Kennon, could not be recognized.

Among the mysteries of this melancholy affair, I have seen a ring of value, and a rich purse, picked upon the deck, which cannot be traced to their owners. The purse was found in a pocket, which had been evidently blown off from some one's dress. Its contents were gold, silver and paper. The articles cannot be traced to either of the sufferers. No one is known to be missing."

A Correspondent of the Baltimore Sun says: "Having entered the east room at a moment when nearly every one had retired to some of the rooms adjoining and in immediate connection with it, I stepped aside to give a moment to reflection. Presently, a tall, slim form was seen stepping slowly along from one of the parlors. He proceeded to the coffin of Messrs. Uphur and Gilmer, there he halted; he wrung his hands in an agony of grief, and the tears flowed freely down his manly cheeks. That mourner was Henry A. Wise. His tears reflected honor upon his heart. There was profound silence throughout the spacious room."

The Washington correspondent of the N. Y. Express says: "Commodore Kennon, for some time the officer in command of the Navy Yard of this city, and among whom and by all respected as the officer and beloved as the citizen, has left a large family, to mourn his loss. He had recently married a great-grand daughter of Madam Washington, Miss Britannia Wellington Peter.

Mr. Maxey, one of our oldest and most respectable citizens, has also left a wife and daughter to suffer from his sudden and painful death.

Col. Gardiner, of New York, was on a visit to our city, accompanied by his two daughters, who were also on board the Princeton at the time of the accident.

MR. CHARLES AUGUSTUS DAVIS, of the city of New York, was on board the U. S. steamer Princeton at the time of the explosion. In a letter to the New York Express, he says—

"I was standing at the time about ten feet from and behind Captain Stockton, who fired the gun. I saw my escape entirely to the accidental circumstance of having clambered upon an inner rigging, with a lady. (Mrs. Wethered, of Baltimore.) a few feet above the deck, and every thing living on deck below us was killed or wounded. She was spattered all over with blood; our hats were blown off, but the only injury I received was a slight contusion on the upper lip. I saw Stockton fire the gun, and then for a few seconds all was darkness to me—and the first scene presented was the devastation in the group directly under me."

WM. STRICKLAND, Esq. of Philadelphia, was also on board the Princeton, and a spectator of the heart rending scene. In a letter to his family he says—

"I had been one foot more to the right or left, I should have been killed. Captain Stockton had all his hair burnt off, and was otherwise, though slightly injured. I was immediately behind him while he was explaining the construction of the lock of the gun, when he ordered her to be fired, and the first sensation which I had was that I was prostrated on the deck, my hat blown nearly a-midships."

DEMOCRATIC STATE CONVENTION.

The delegates chosen to represent the different counties of Pennsylvania in a Democratic State Convention, for the nomination of a candidate for Governor, Canal Commissioner, delegates to the Baltimore National Convention, electors for President and Vice President, &c., convened in the Court House at Harrisburg, on Monday, March 4, 1844.

The Convention was called to order at 11 o'clock A. M., on motion of Messrs. Frazer of Lancaster, and Lowry of Crawford, by the appointment of the following temporary officers: JAMES C. MARSHALL, Esq. of Erie, Chairman; DAVID FRAWLON of Westmoreland, and Gen. GIBSON W. BOWMAN of Bedford, Secretaries.

The names of the delegates were then called over in alphabetical order. Mr. BREWSTER of Philadelphia moved that the chairman appoint a committee of seven, for the purpose of hearing the evidence on the contested seats and report the facts to the convention in writing.

MR. FRAZER of Lancaster moved to amend, as follows:—That the contested delegates be heard at the bar of the convention, and that the convention then decide upon their respective claims. The yeas and nays were called on the amendment, and were yeas 61, nays 63. The amendment having been rejected, the original resolution was adopted without division.

The Chairman announced the following committee: Benjamin H. Brewster, Reah Frazer, G. A. Irvine, H. B. Wright, Timothy Ives, Robert Love, C. D. Eldred.

On motion of Mr. Wright a committee to nominate officers for the permanent organization of the Convention was appointed. In the afternoon the Convention was addressed by Messrs. GALBRAITH, LOWRY and WILSON, indicating a spirit of concession and harmony, whatever their own predilections might be.

MR. BREWSTER, on behalf of the committee appointed to investigate the contested seats, made report of the documentary evidence in relation thereto.

MR. LOWRY moved that the case of the Schuylkill county contested delegates be now disposed of.

MR. FRAZER moved to amend so as to take up all the contested seats in their alphabetical order.

The amendment of Mr. Frazer was rejected by a vote of 63 yeas to 61 nays, and the resolution of Mr. Lowry adopted by a vote of 63 yeas to 61 nays.

Hon. GEORGE RAHN and MICHAEL COCHRAN were then unanimously admitted to seats.

On Tuesday morning the 5th, the Committee reported the following officers:

President: Hon. JACOB FRY; Vice Presidents: William F. Coplan, Alexander Johnston, George W. Gilbert, Hon. John Galbraith, David Wilmet, Henry Welsh, Gen. R. H. Hammond, Col. Conrad Shimer, Galbraith A. Irvine; Secretaries: Francis L. Bowman, Franklin Vansant, J. P. Hoover, John B. Dimock.

SAMUEL MYERS Esq., was admitted as the Senatorial delegate from Schuylkill, Carbon, Monroe and Pike.

SAMUEL REEB Esq., was admitted as the Senatorial delegate from Berks and Monroe. Gen. DAVID POWER and THOMAS BOYS were admitted as the representative delegates from Beaver.

On motion, both the claimants from Perry and Cumberland, Mr. Anderson and Mr. Mator were rejected, as were also Mr. Guernsey and Mr. Fiolet, of Tioga and Bradford.

On Wednesday morning the 6th, Mr. Hemphill, of Chester, offered a preamble and resolution, to take up a "third man," which was disagreed to by a vote of 61 to 70.

Resolutions were then offered to admit the Senators from Bradford and Tioga and Cumberland and Perry, to fill the vacancies in these two districts.

MR. KEAR of Mercer raised the following point of order:—

"Upon a resolution offered by Mr. FRAZER, presenting the application of the members of Cumberland and Perry, offering a delegate to the 4th of March Convention, to which Mr. WRIGHT offered an amendment. The point of order is, that an original document, petition, or application, cannot be amended by the convention."

The President sustained the point of order and decided the motion of Mr. Wright to be out of order.

MR. WRIGHT appealed from this decision, and after a lengthy discussion the decision of the Chair was reversed—yeas 58, nays 72.

The question then recurred on Mr. Wright's amendment, when:

MR. MARTIN moved to postpone the resolution and the amendment, for the purpose of proceeding to make nominations for Governor.

After a lengthy discussion Mr. GILMER moved to adjourn, which was disagreed to, yeas 35, nays 91.

The motion to postpone for the purpose of proceeding to make nominations, was agreed to, yeas 69, nays 62.

The Convention then adjourned until half past three o'clock.

CRUELTY TO A HORSE.—Mr. Alfred Williams, of Pontiac, Michigan, recently trotted his horse, attached to a four wheeled vehicle, from Royal Oak to Detroit, a distance of twelve miles, in forty-three minutes.

FOREIGN GRAIN.—A writer in the London Globe contends that three millions quarters of foreign grain will be required before harvest—John Bull can have it—we would as leave pay him in flour as any thing else.

ENGLISH WIVES.—A lady in London named Blayden, has lately been made defendant in an action of ejectment. The principal count in the declaration was for throwing her husband out of the window.