Physiognomy of Manuscripts—Mediteval Penmanship—Curious Changes. Three works, jentitled "Fac-similes of National

Manuscripts from William the Conqueror to Queen Anne, Selected under the Direction of the Master of the Rolls," "Fac-similes of National Manuscripts of Scotland," and "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," furnish the subject for an interesting article on the "History of Writing," in the last number of the North British Review. We quote a few passages:-

· PHYSIOGNOMY OF MANUSCRIPTS.

"In our day, when everywody writes for himself, and the form of writing is little regarded, there is abundance of physiognomy in the various hands; but neglect of form prevents it from touching upon the borders of art. When writing was in a few hands, and the writers writing was in a lew hands, and the writers were an order or a prefession, they became more or less consciously, artists. Their caligrapay had a history which is truly a branch of the history of art, and the changes which it underwent must be attributed to the working of some such art instinct as that which leads to novelty in dress or in architecture. In these latter the type and standard of beauty is subject to variation, more frequently in the one case and more rarely in the other; and in like manner we see in writing not merely an induite variety, like that of physicenomy, which is due no deabt to the monite variations of individual character; but we also see, as in the case of dress and architecture, a succession of standards or types of beauty which from time to time make their appearance, win their way, extinguish some former type, culminate, and then sooner or later retire to make way for the next unnovation.

There is a general and comprehensive sense to start with, in which the course of English mediseval writing corresponds to that of architec ture. They both occupy the same space of time; they rise together and full together. We lay no stress on the term Gothic as applied to both, except as a testimony to the above fact; there is no doubt that it was applied to the one in consequence of its companionship with the other. Gothic characters were so called simply because they were found to predomi nate on Gotnic monuments and in Gotnic buildings. The term Gothic, as applied to art, is said to have been started in derision by an Italian writer of the sixteenth century. It so, it was a most appropriate inauguration for a word which was presently to stand forth as the antithesis, in so many respects, or that which was Italian or Boman, or (more generally) classic. It represents in a general way the outgrowth of the northern mind of Europe, as opposed to that of the southern. In philology and ethnology it comprehends the two great subdivisions of the Tentonic and Scandinavian families, from whom has proceeded everything which has consti-tuted the distinction between the modern European civilization and that of the Roman emptre. Gothic architecture was a product of the north, perhaps of Normandy; but it nowhere had so long a career, it nowhere was so thoroughly domesticated, it penetrated the nooks and glonof no country so completely, as of England. Gothle handwriting also was a northern taste, which developed in the northwest of Europe; but in no country did it pass through such succession of deficate transformations as in this country.

BLACK LETTER. "The main grand result, that of the black letter, is indeed common to many lands, in a form almost identical. This was through the great commerce of literature which connected the Universities of Europe, and which led to the possession of a common writing character for iterature. This is the character commonly meant when 'Gothic writing' is spoken of, but we must vindicate that expression as belonging to the whole series of varieties of the pointed style in permansulp. We only grant to the black letter that it is 'the Gothic' par exceor the 'Square Gotine,' or the 'Monkish Gotine, The great Romance lands of Italy and Spain never lost the roundness of their hand, although it was not quite unaffected by the influence of northern Europe. And it was this roundness which at length returned upon us with the revival of classic lore, and extinguished our native architecture and hand writing at the same

MEDIÆVAL PENMANSHIP.

"The three volumes of English historical monuments, extending from the Conquest to the year 1600, include the entire period of that pecultar mediaval style of penmanship in which there is so much to explore. At the opening of the series (Vol. I., No. 1) we see the decline of the style which preceded the Gothic—a style which was, in fact, a British type of Roman-esque. At the close of the Third Part the last lingering traces of the Gothic are being effaced by the general preference for the Italian hand, at the time when the Renaissance was changing the race of all things (Vol. III. No. XXV, and No. LV.) The earliest specimens still belong to that round hand in which the Auglo-Saxon manuscrip a are written, and which has from this circumstance been sometimes called the Anglo-Saxon character. But this is not a good designation, because the Irish, Scottish and Saxon manuscripts are all equally written in this character, who her the contents are in the vernaculars or in Latin.

"What gives interest to this style of writing is the fact that it is peculiar to the British Isles. though not peculiar to the Saxons. It is the monument of that intellectual dominion which Ireland once exercised over the British Isles and which extended uself beyond our seas to many parts of the Continent, This type of handwriting, whose origin we shall glauce at by and by begins to lose its character soon after the Conquest. Already in the two short Saxon documents with which the present series opens, we perceive a great declension from the bold round hand of the Saxon books. But in fact it was not a mere decline; it was a change in fashion. The same king who first imported the use of the Norman seals, imported also the fa-hion of Norman writing. Not without justice has Edward the Confessor been styled by some historians the first of our Norman kings. change which Saxon penmanship admitted in his day finds no parallel in our history, as a foreign innovation, until the entrance of the Italian hand in the sixteenth century.

CHANGES IN THE REIGN OF HENRY II. * * 'It is in the reign of Henry II that the tendency to seek beauty in a new direc-tion is clearly pronounced. We observe a studied and delicate manipulation which makes it plain that handwriting was become There is a progressive elegance in the body of the writing, accompanied by an outgrowth of the tall letters, which in the previous style hardly emerge above their feliows. nected with this is the large space now allowed between the lines, up through which, as if towards some lofty calling, the long letters shoot their graceful shafts, tipped off at their summits with a gentle flourish, like the deticate chapter of an early English column. This progress is well exhibited in the present collection between the numbers VI. (Henry II) and XII (Richard I). The numbers XII and XIII, which fill one page, present an admirable and instruc-tive contast, which tends to carry on the history of penmanship one step further. while the fast of these two excibits to the full the development already described, the second displays most strikingly the awakening con-sciou-ness of artistic effect, so that while utility reigns in the one piece, elegance is domirendered in description of the means by which this contrast is effected. Yet the contrast is palpable and obvious. A finer nibbed pen, a palpable and obvious. A finer nibbed pen, a touch as of etching rather than writing, a subdued flourish (not inxurant), an induigence of faniasy in capital letters, but, more than alt, an enlarged widening of the lines—thus redoubling the effect of lightness produced by the interlinear expanse. Here the last traces of Norman massiveness are abolished and the tail ogival gracefulness of the first pointed style is fully developed.

MAGNA CHARTA. m* * "In the grand historical monument of the Magna Charta we are arrested by a change in the style; we recognize a development distinct from that which we have thus far traced. In fact, we have stepped aside into a separate department of caligraphy. The object was to get a long document into the surface of a single

the ordinary business style of penmanship which was adopted, but the, of literature, which naturally had preserved an archaic manner, and which had learned the art of compression from the habit of dealing with large quantities of material. Hence the writing of Magna Charta (1215) carries us back a century or more, and indeed it is not very much

more modern than that of Domesday. It is in the book text of the day.

"At this point we are at the root of one of the chief causes of difficulty to the student of media-val writing. It all the varied forms which present themselves could be catalogued in one direct series, could be arranged in a single line on the same plane, as the variations of architecture may (with slight deflections for local tecture may (with slight deflections for local peculiarity) be arranged, then it is probable that the history of writing would have been long are cleared up. But the fact is, that there is more than one style in use at one time, so as to be distinct from each other, yet not without blendings and mutual influences. The business hand and the literary hand having once established a sepa-rate existence, took their own several lines of development, along which they travelied at very different rates of velocity. The one described a short course, and performed it very slowly and deliberately; the other passed with comparative rapidity through a long succession of phases. So that in the middle ages, when there was but one way of multiplying books, namely, by the pen, there existed two fash ons of written char-acters, as distinct from each other as our present manuscripts are from print. The one of these was cursive or running hand, and was used in business, and the other was reserved for literature and the greater acts of diplomacy.

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, "We may assume the middle of the fourteenth century as the date by which the black letter had attained such maturity of form as was to attained with pen and ink. But another field lay before it, as we shall presently explain. It was the work not of the scribe, but of the engraver, to bring this character to that cleanand delicately-typed outline which is its tinguishing perfection. When Caxton first distinguishing perfection. When Caxton first used a fount of black letter, in 1477, it had stready experienced a metallic development of

considerably more than a century. "It was in the fourteenth century that this character assumed its dominant position as the most dignified of all forms of writing. In the course of this century it became the received character for lapidary inscriptions and the legends of seals. At the beginning of the four-teenth century this letter had not yet been put to this use; at the close of the same century no other was recognized. Previous to this the character employed in epitaphs, seals, and come was the Lembardie capital, which was intro-duced about the time of, if not by, Atchbishop Laufranc, the whilom Lombard lawyer. Tuis fine round barbaric variation of the old Roman uncial is well known to the ecclesiologist in the lettering on the stope coffin slabs for that long period during which the leading words were rather gist icy than hie jucet. This period closed in the fourteenth century. In that century, during which French yielded to English in courts of law and in literature, and during which Latin took the place of Freuch in lapidary inscriptions, it also happened that the Gothic black letter superseded the Lombardic Roman, in epitaphs and for the lettering of scals.

WRITING OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

"The second volume of the National MSS, is

made up of select documents from the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, and forms a rich oody of illustration for the handwriting used in this island and on the continent during the first baif of the sixteenth century. The pieces here given are, for the most part, in the handwriting of persons who are laminar to us. There are letters and autographs of Henry VIII, of Queen Corbins March 1987. Catherine, Mary Tudor, Cardinal Wolsey, the Emperor Charles V. Queen Margaret and James V. of Scotland, Anne Boleyn, Cranmer, Latimer, Catherine Parr, Edward VI, Francis I. Prince Parlic (afterwards Philip II, of Spain), Cosmo de Medici, the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth, Gastavos Vasa, Lady Jane Grey, and other names of the highest distinction in history. "These documents have a manifold value for the historical information they afford, for the light they throw on the English language. It is not perhaps generally known how great, and even insuperable, are the difficulties which a tend the investigation of the mother tongue at any date prior to the eighteenth century. Almost all the older books which are in our hands have been so modified in the transition that they are utterly useless for the purposes of philological study. The true Bible of 1611 is one of our most valuable monuments of English. but it is very imperfectly represented, speaking philologically, by the current reprint of the authorized Bible. We do not say this by way of re-echong the blame which some years ago was unjustly cast upon the privileged printers for the multitude of little alterations which have been introduced without authority into the author zed Bible. The Bible of 1611 is practically for the bulk of the people at this day, a book written in a dead language; and the minute remunt of that Bible some twenty years ago, by the authorities of the Oxford University Press, formed a decisive au-swer to all such complaints. But the fact remains, that we have not in our Bible a bloc which carries us back to the English of 1611. en, if we go to Shakespeare, how very few of the readers of the national pact have ever seen a dozen lines written and spelt as he wrote and spelt them! Until quite lately, that is to say in 1864, when Mr. Booth gave us his pretty reprint of the toho of 1623, and still later, when Day & Son brought out the handsome fac-simile of the first folio, executed in photolithography (a portion of which tolio was copied by pholozincography, as we understand, at the Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton), the original English of Shakespeare was absolutely inaccessible to the student who did not happen to live within reach of one of the great libraries. To this we may add further, that every extract that was made from a writer of the sixteenth century, or earlier, was more or

less modified when it assumed the form of a quotation. FRANKISH HANDWRITING. * * * "The caligraphy of the Franks is not much less distinct and characteristic than that of the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. And as the one was called 'Saxon,' after the foremost of the races and nations which used this insular style, so the other is 'Frankish' only in a loce sense, as it was in fact the writing of the whole northwest or Gothic part of the continent. The Cottonian manuscript of the 'Heliand,' or old Saxon Harmony of the Gospels, is in this hand. The alphabet of this style is figured in the first volumes of Hickes' 'Thesaurus,' in a plate prefixed to his Grammatica Franco-Theolisea. This is the peumanship of the whole old High German literature. This Frankish writing was in nearer relationship to Rome than was the The true distinct on would perhaps be that the Frankish drew its descent from Papat Rome, and the Saxon from Imperial Rome. The Franki-h handwriting underwent in the tenth century a sensible modification, which made it more Roman in its character. This change took place about that juncture in history at which we cease to talk of Franks and Gauls, and begin to speak of the French. It corresponds to the content of the formula of the jonds to the use of the Capetian dynasty. Ac cordingly the French writing of the tenth and eleventh centuries used to be styled Capetian, and by that name it goes in Asile. Modern paleographers have called it Ludovician, after those two Ludovici, viz: Louis le Gros and Louis le Jeune, who pretty nearly parcel out the eleventh century between them. Perhaps the former name is truer to chronology, luasmuch as the style was already formed in the tenth

We are loth to close the studies into which we have been led by these important publica-tions of the Ordnance Survey Office, without resterating our conviction that they have in them the seeds of discoveries valuable even for advanced history, and that they possess withat a general attractiveness which will tend to diffuse historic tastes and to enlarge the history loving public. We are glad to learn that preparations are making for a second volume of the Scottish manuscripts, and that the tourth of the English is nearly all in print. We hope that the series will by and by ba-rendered complete by a selection from the great examples of our insular pre-Ludovician penmanship. An Irish series would afford special sheet of veilum; and for this purpose it was not | The Irisb, Scotian, and Anglo-Saxon Church

manuscripts present a most instructive group, which now can only be seen by wide travelling or in highly expensive works. These might appropriately be grouped together under the name of that people with whom the type of writing was originated. Not so the Saxon historical cocuments; these are inseparable from England. The originals of the charter printed in the Coder Diplomaticus, where the originals exist, would for double reasons be worthy of a place in a future volume, to stand at the head of the Eng-lish manuscripts.

THE FUTURE OF ABYSSINIA.

Interesting Despatch from Sir Robert Napter.

From the London Telegraph, June 29. Some important correspondence with the Com-mander in Chief of the Abyssinian Expedition has been pactished to-day. It includes a despatch from Sir R. Napier to the Secretary of State for India, received on the 19th instant, dated from the Commander in Chief's Office, Political Department, Camp Dildee, 30th Sir R. Napier reverting to the events which took place at Magdala and in its neigh-"Anxious as I felt to abstain from further in-

terference in Abyssinian affairs after the object

necessary, for the sake of our national credit.

that due consideration should be shown for tu-

of the expedition had been astained, yet it

large numbers whose interests and safety had centered in Theodore's existence, and who remained disarmed and unprotected, and exposed to merciless plunder and slaughter at the hands of the wild tribes which circumstances bad for the moment converted into our allies. The disposal of the fortress of Magdula first demanded attention. This strong position is situated geographically in the country of the Wotlo Gallas, from whom it was finally wrested by Theodorus about ten years ago, In his hands it has imposed an effectual check upon the encroachments of the Gallas on Chris-tian Abysania. I desired, in the interests of than Abyssinia. I desired, in the interests of Christianity, to piace the stronghold in the possession of Wagshoom Gobazch, the de facoruler and principal chief of this portion of Abyssinia. But when I had sent for his lieutenant, the Dajaz Masbashah, the latter excuse I himself, in his muster's name, from accepting the challenge, alleging as his reason that it would require so large a garrison to hold it that it would be a source of weakness rather than of strength. Wagshoom Gobazeh himself, notwithstanding his repeated invitations to us, through Brigadier-General Merewether, C. B. to come quickly to his aid, had removed himself and his army to a distant quarter before our arrival, in pursuit of objects of his own, and it was impossible for me to await a reply to the letter which I addressed to him on the subject of Magdala. I therefore destroyed the gates of the fort, burned everything on the mountain that was combustible, and abandoned it. Several claimants for its posses-sion had, in the meantime, addressed me re-garding it. One of these was the Chief of Daoont, a small territory lying adjacent to Mag-data. Werkait, one of the two rival queens of the Gallas, had also put forward her claims, as likewise bad Mastceat, the other and more powerful of the Galia Queens. At the time when the disposal of Magdala was thus exciting so many hopes and destres, the widowed Queen of Theodore and her son were brought down in salety from the mountain, and placed within the protection of my camp; the removal of the disarmed garrison and release of the native prisoners was at the same time in progress. Shortly after the arrival of Werkait's letter soliciting that the fortress might be delivered to lady presented herselt at my pickets. Although it was evening, she was immediately admitted to an interview, and allowed to represent her claims. She was greatly affected in revisiting a locality which had been as sociated with so many misfortunes to her family and people. Bue remarked to me:-"We fought with Theodore as long as we could, and when ils power was too strong for us to resist any longer, my son submitted to him, on receiving a promise of good treatment; notwithstanding which he was inhumanty cut to pieces and thrown over the precipice of Magdala; and now I have come to see the grave of my enemy The-odore, and the place where my son fell." At this time the offer of the fortress had been made to Gobazeh's lieuterant, and his auswer had not yet been received. Magdala was still the scene of military operations, while our troops were engazed in destroying Theodore's cannon, and the exodus of its former inhabitants continued in full progress. Therefore it was not thought expecient that Werkait's wish to ascend the mountain should be indulged at such a time, Almost before her story was concluded, intima-tion was received that her rival Masteeat was also in the neighborhood, and on her way to offer her congratulations and submit her claim, At first I hoped to be able to make peace between these two rival Queens; but when this was hinted at to Werkait she said:-"When two persons are striving for a crown, how can peace e made between them? If Masteeat were to peace with me to-day, before you, she would betray me to morrow." The news of Mas-teent's approach caused great aneasiness amongst Werkan's escort and adherents; and after a second interview with me, during which she exhibited symptoms of much distress, she took a tasty departure, apprehensive lest she should be intercepted by her more powerful and more fortunate rival; more fortunate because her son is alive, and the centre of the hopes of a large body of the people; while to poor Werkait there remains only the memory of her son, so treacherously slain by Theodore. Sutuable presents were made to her, as she took her leave; and shortly after her departure, Masterat arrived with her son, Aman Ahmad, and expressed no small gratitude and rejoicing at Theodore's fall. She had responded very effectually to our request to close all avenues by which the late king could have escaped, and thus she came to us in the character of an established ally. To her request for the possession of Magdala, I was able to answer that, Gobazeh's lieutenant having declined to receive it, I would abandon the place, after dismanting it and burning all of it that could be so destroyed, as a mark of the anger of the British at the ill treatment of our countrymen, as well as of our abhorrence of the cracities which Theodore had committed there. this the Queen replied that, indeed, nothing but fire could parify it. On my asking her if she could make peace with Werkalt, she answered that she would ladly do so, but that it was impossible; because if Werkait were to swear friendship on the Koran itself to-day, she would violate her oath to-morrow. A list of the principal political prisoners liberated by us on, our occupation of Magdala is appended. An opportunity was taken of receiving all of them who desired an interwith me, and advice suitable to their several circumstances was then tendered to them. Booroo Gooshoo, the Prince of Godjam, was the first who was introduced. He bore in his enterbled frame the marks of fourteen years spent in captivity. It is probable that Godjam, which has generally formed a separate principality, will now become subject this chief. The Prince of Enderta, who is the maternal uncle of the present ruler of Tigreb, was next presented to me. He left the following day for the court of his rela-tive, Dajasmaj Kassa. Wagshoom Tiferri, who is said by some to be in reality the hereditary Prince of Wag, was then introduced, and afterwards other chiefs of lesser note. The widow of Theodore and her numerous attendants still remain, as it were, the guests of our camp, and will probably travel with us as far as the nearest point in our route to the lady's native district of Semian. Her severe illness during the past ten days bas prevented my seeing her; but I trust she is now recovering under the care of the medical officer attached to my staff, who has heen detailed by me to provide for her comfort. Translation is appended of a produmation which I have thought it right to issue to the

the present time. -An explosion of a nitro-glycerine manufactory, in the neighborhood of Steckholm, has been announced. Fourteen persons lost their lives, and the laboratory, with its valuable apparatus, the manager's house, and a small adjoining workshop, were totally destroyed. In the city most of the windows were broken, and within a circle of three miles the violent commotion of the air was distinctly felt.

chiefs and people of this portion of Abyssinia at

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