

was written, and it was then unrolled and sent home. In order to read it the Ephori must roll it on the stick corresponding to the general's, which they retained; a method which undoubtedly secured secrecy, though it could not have been convenient.

One of the most primitive forms of letters was messages recorded in knots, a method found in use in Peru by the Spaniards when they conquered it, and which was also employed in China in earliest times. The Peruvian knotted letters, if one may use such an expression, were recorded on a 'quipo,' according to descriptions given us by travellers. This quipo consisted of a main rope, upon which were knotted, at certain intervals, fine cords of various colors. Each color bore its own signification, and by means of these colors, and the position of the fine cords on the main rope, the message was conveyed to the person to whom this quipo was transmitted. The quipo is still used by the Peruvian shepherds to record the condition of their flocks. In the cities there are public letter writers, as there are in the East, and it is the duty of these men to translate the meaning of the quipo, whence their name of 'quipucamayocuna,' and in spite of the inconvenient form of these missives they are most skilful in deciphering and tying the knots.

No one who has read Greek and Roman history is ignorant of the important place the scribe held in those communities, nor is unfamiliar with the wax slate used in them. The record was cut in the soft wax with a delicate pointed instrument called the *stylus*, much as the little needle of the phonograph records the impressions on the soft wax of the cylinders. This was a long stride in advance of such primitive methods as the knotted rope, for it involved possession of an alphabet, and knowledge of reading and writing.

Here again the public scribe came in to practise these accomplishments for those not fortunate enough to possess them. The literary and learned men in Athens and Rome carried their own slates, and each had his own *stylus*, which was often beautifully carved out of precious metal and set with jewels.

Envelopes are only of very recent date; our great-grandfathers were still folding over the sheet of paper upon which they had written, and sealing it on its edges without

a thought of putting it in a separate paper case. But the earlier letters were not even sealed; they were rolled and tied together with silken strings. The Romans used seals, which were beautiful works of art, highly prized by them, but the impression was not made in sealing wax, which was not then known, but in a clay suitable for the purpose. Sealing wax made its way from China, where it was first used, to India, whence it was brought to Europe through Portugal in the sixteenth century.

In early days letters were forwarded by messengers—a process which prevented tidings received from an absent friend being in any true sense news of him. It was no unusual thing for a Crusader to be killed in battle long before his last letter announcing his safety to his beloved ones at home reached their hands. The Romans established a chain of couriers throughout the empire who were to forward news and dispatches—hence the name post-office, from the Latin *postum*, placed or fixed. But these couriers were only intended to forward public matters; the first letter post was not established till the thirteenth century.

A penny post, as a private speculation, was set up in England in 1685, which for the sake of its gains was claimed as a prerogative of the Crown, to which it was annexed. This was the beginning of the post-office system, and it was followed by the mail-coach, which travelled daily between certain points, carrying mail and passengers. Letters then had to be heavily charged for carriage, except one was a privileged nobleman, and had a 'frank,' as it was called, enabling his letters to pass free.

Sir Rowland Hill is the father of the present post-office system, with its low rates of postage paid to Government by the purchase of a stamp, which insures safe and speedy delivery.

Thus through the ages has come the gradual development from the knotted rope of primitive races, the stone and wax cutting of the ancients, the written parchment painfully transmitted by runners, stage-coach, or rider, to the sealed, convenient envelope, whisked to its destination by steam, under the protection of the Government, and delivered at any hour of the day for the sum of one penny. We may many of us 'hate to write letters,' but when we are inclined to grumble at the task let us reflect what a burden letter-writing once was, and sit down with light hearts to a work the march of progress has made so easy.

FLETCHER'S PHOSPHATONIC

An ideal preparation, containing Phosphorous in combination with Quinine, Iron, etc., is the finest Tonic obtainable for weakness, depression, and nervous affections.

It possesses remarkable powers of repairing loss of strength arising from disease, mental anxiety, or brain fag.

FLETCHER'S PHOSPHATONIC
GIVES HEALTH, STRENGTH, and
ENERGY.

2/6 and 4/6 a Bottle, Post Free,
from the SOLE PROPRIETOR,

CHAS. A. FLETCHER

Pharmaceutical Chemist and
Prescription Specialist,
292 LAMBTON QUAY,
WELLINGTON.

PATRONISED BY EVERYBODY.

TELEPHONE 1096.

Clifford

ARTIST PHOTOGRAPHER.

STUDIO: CASHEL ST., CHRISTCHURCH.

McNAB & MASON

MONUMENTAL SCULPTORS,

SYMONDS ST., AUCKLAND.
Next St. Benedict's Block.

Artistic Memorials Supplied to any
part of New Zealand.

Catalogues Free on application.

All Marble-work in St. Patrick's
Cathedral, Auckland, supplied by us.

There is no doubt about it

—The—

"OSBORNE"

SUITS FIT WELL, WEAR WELL
AND ARE AT THE RIGHT PRICES

The Supreme Point about the

"OSBORNE" SUITS

Are their RELIABLE QUALITY
You are invited to call and inspect
our Latest Stock of Suitings

CLERICAL WORK Our Specialty.
LADIES' COSTUMES.

H. OSBORNE & CO.

HIGH CLASS TAILORS
170 CUBA ST. WELLINGTON.

W. GILBERT

HAIRDRESSER & TOBACCONIST,
MANNERS STREET

(Four doors from Opera House),
WELLINGTON.

Sole Agent in Wellington for 'Royal
Seal' Tobacco.

The New English Perfumed Tobacco.
Delightful Aroma.

Smokers may rely on getting only
First-class Goods at my Establishment.

Only Best Brands Cigars and
Cigarettes Stocked.

Orders by post receive prompt
attention.