

books in order to use the vellum on which they were written for some new purpose which would have a more ready sale. Thus the Quini-Sext Council, A.D. 692, prohibits (Canon lxviii.) the destruction or cutting up of the books of the Old or New Testament, or of approved Ecclesiastical writers, for various purposes, especially for delivering them to those who are called *βιβλιοκάπηλοι*; unless, indeed, they had been rendered useless by moths, wet, etc. Probably we possess no palimpsest, the later writing of which belongs to so early a period as this.

It has been long known that in various libraries MSS. of the middle ages exist, which have beneath the plain and legible writing, traces of more ancient works. Thus, the Codex Ephraemi, at Paris, was long ago noticed as being written over large portions of the New Testament, and some of the Old; and about a century and a half since, many of its readings were deciphered by WETSTEIN. In 1762, KNITTEL read and edited from a Palimpsest in the Wolfenbüttel Library, portions of two MSS. of the Gospels (P and Q), and parts of the Gothic version of the Epistle to the Romans. At the end of the last century, Dr. BARRETT read much of St. Matthew's Gospel in the Dublin Palimpsest (Z), which he afterwards edited.

But it was reserved to the present age to examine Palimpsest MSS. with real care and attention, and indeed to *search* for earlier writing beneath that which proceeded from the hands of book-copyists of the middle ages. The written vellum stored in libraries has thus rendered to light its buried treasures, almost in the same manner as have the mounds of Nineveh or the plain of Babylon.

Forty years ago the palimpsest researches in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, carried out by the late Cardinal MAI, excited no small measure of attention and interest. Works long supposed to be lost were brought to light; and thus, from the Library already spoken of, and some others, there appeared, edited by MAI and others, such works as the Epistles of St. Paul in the Gothic version of Ulphilas, the Institutes of Gaius, and Cicero *De Republica*.

In the earlier researches of this kind, the chemical re-agents which were employed were such as to injure the vellum greatly: the object sought was to read in any way the older writing; and thus, to make the ancient ink again legible, infusion of galls was used, which made the whole of the MS. thoroughly unsightly. The mode adopted when FLECK obtained permission, at Paris, to apply chemical restoration to the Codex Ephraemi, was somewhat better: but it involved the separate immersion of each leaf in a certain tincture: the older writing was brought to light of a definite blue colour; but the vellum also received stains of various hues in almost every part. Happily it is now known that it is not needful thus to disfigure these precious ancient MSS.: minute and long continued attention will often succeed in deciphering Palimpsest MSS. without any chemical application: and where this is necessary, the vapour of the Hydro-sulphate of Ammonia suffices to combine with the Iron of the ancient Ink still remaining in the vellum; and thus the ancient letters are produced in a distinct green colour.

In examining palimpsests which have not been dealt with chemically at all, it often appears strange that the vellum should have been re-used, with letters of ancient writing so distinct in parts. The fact is that the vellum when re-prepared by washing out the ink, and then re-smoothing the surface, would show not a trace of the original black ink.\* But

\* It is generally found that those parts of re-used MSS., which had been written in *red*, are *entirely* effaced, so that not a trace of the vermilion colour remains: this CODEX ZACYNTHIUS is, however, an exception; perhaps from some peculiarity in the red ink employed, or possibly from the greater coarseness of the vellum.