

Kind may be of Use at Sea to take the Distance of the Moon's Limb from the Sun or a Star, in order to find the Ship's Longitude, when the Theory of that Planet is perfected, I leave to Trials to determine.

The Society have the Satisfaction of knowing that Theory to be already brought to a good Degree of Certainty and Exactness, thro' the consummate Skill in Astronomy, and indefatigable Diligence in observing, of a very learned Member; and have great Reason to hope, that this useful and difficult Part of Astronomy will in a little time appear to be absolutely compleated by the continued Labour and Application of some of their own Body.

II. *An Extract of a Dissertation De Styli Veterum, & diversis Chartarum generibus, [by the Hon. Sir John Clerk, one of the Barons of the Exchequer in Scotland, and F. R. S.] By Roger Gale, Esq; Vice-President and Treasurer R. S.*

THE learned and judicious Author takes occasion from some antique Brass Implements found near the Wall of *Antoninus Pius*, now named *Graham's Dyke*, in *Scotland*, to give us this curious Dissertation upon the *Stylus*, an Instrument used by the Ancients for Writing, with the Figures of some of them annex'd in a Copper Plate; two of which are represented in the Shape and Form of the Roman *Fibula*; but the Author is of Opinion they were designed for a different Purpose, for which he produces very cogent Reasons.

He observes, that before the Use of Pens the Ancients performed their Writing with an Instrument call'd by them a *Stylus* or *Graphium*. The Matter of it was Gold, Silver, Brass, Iron, or Bone; the Shape various, but alike in being pointed and sharp at one End, and flat and broad at the other End: The first for writing, or rather cutting their Letters, the latter for defacing or rubbing out whatever wanted Correction; for all which, as well as for every thing else asserted by him, he produces sufficient Proofs from proper Authors.

He informs us, that the *Styli* made of Iron, were sometimes used as Daggers, and quotes two Passages out of *Suetonius* to prove it; one where *Julius Cæsar* is said to have wounded *Cassius* in the Arm, *Graphio*; the other, where he tells us it was customary with *Caligula* to get his Enemies murder'd, *Graphiis*, when they came into the Senate-House, and confirms these two Passages by a third, taken from *Seneca's* First Book *De Clementia*. He supposes the *Stylus* made of Bone was for the Use of Women and Children, as less dangerous than those of Metal; by a Quotation from *Prudentius*, it appears that *Cassianus* the Martyr was kill'd by his Scholars with Iron *Styli*.

He agrees with *Petavius*, or his Editors, that the Implements, which gave Birth to this Dissertation, were *Styli*, and not *Fibulæ ad connectendas vestes*, as *Monfaucon* and other Antiquaries have imagined, and thinks an Objection that the Tongues of the *Styli* must have been much longer than the Tongues of their supposed *Fibulæ*, to be of little Weight; since there

there must have been some of them longer, and some of them shorter, according to the different Fancies of the Writers. Military Men might sometimes write with the Point of their Daggers, and from this Practice the Words *Stylus* and *Pugio* came to be confounded; but Men of Business and private Persons cannot be supposed to have made use of Daggers for Writing. He observes also, which is no small Argument for his Side of the Question, that if *Monfaucon* had consulted the numerous Draughts he has published of the Habits belonging to the old *Greeks* and *Romans*, he would not have found one of these Implements, either as a Fastening or an Ornament upon them.

He proceeds next to a Description of these *Styli* found in *Scotland*, and shews how they were accommodated to the Business he supposes them designed for; but as the Copper Plate prefix'd to his Dissertation will give us a much clearer Notion of that, I shall refer you to it, and only take notice that the fifth Figure in it is so intirely different from the others, that he himself is in some Doubt about it, and owns it might have served the *Aruspices*, in examining the Bowels of Animals, and have been one of those Instruments called *Exsispicia*. However, he thinks that if he should pronounce it to have been a *Stylus*, he should not be much out of the way, since the Ancients had their *Thecæ Graphiariæ*, which Name will agree very well with this Brass Case, and the Instrument found within it. From the *Stylus* used to form Letters comes that figurative Expression, that a Person writes such or such a sort of a *Style*,  
to

to denote his manner, as a *lofty Style*, or a *low Style*; which way of Speaking our own and other modern Nations have introduced into their Language.

As to the several Sorts of *Charta* used for writing, he observes the most ancient were made of Barks of Trees, or Skins, or were such as are called *Pugillares*. The oldest were of the inner Bark of Trees called *Liber* in *Latin*, whence a Book had the Name of *Liber*; but very little of this Sort is now in Being, except the *Ægyptian* Paper may be accounted one Species of it.

The *Papyrus* was called ΒιβλαϞ or ΒιβλαϞ by the *Greeks*, and thence their Books Βιβλοι or Βιβλια. This Sort of *Charta* was made of a Plant that had many pelliceous Tunicles, as *Pliny* informs us, which were separated from one another by a Needle, and then glued again together, to give them a Strength and Firmness sufficient to retain what might be wrote upon them. *Alexandria* was the Place most eminent for this Manufacture. There are some Fragments of this Sort still extant in Libraries, particularly the famous Manuscript of *St. Mark's Gospel* at *Venice*.

The *Chartæ Membranaceæ* are made of the Skins of Animals, dressed either like our Glove-Leather, or modern Parchment. The first Sort was commonly used by the *Jews* for writing the *Law of Moses* upon it, and from the rowling up of these Skins comes the Word *Volumen*. But the Skins which *Varro* and *Pliny* say were first made by *Eumenes* King of *Pergamus* were in more common Use: However, *Eumenes*, who is related by these Authors to have made them in Opposition to *Ptolomy* King of *Ægypt*, that had forbid the Exportation of the *Papyrus* from his Dominions,

minions, does not seem to be the Inventor of the *Chartæ Membranaceæ*, since *Herodotus*, who lived long before his Time, informs us, that the *Ionians* and other Nations were used to write upon Goat and Sheep-Skins. *Josephus* also tell us, that the *Jews* sent their Laws written upon Skins in Letters of Gold to *Ptolomy*; by which it seems as if the writing upon Skins was no new thing at that Time among the *Jews*.

The Use of the *Pugillares* was also very ancient, being mentioned by *Homer*, and among the *Latins* by *Plautus*. They were made of all Sorts of Wood, Ivory, and Skins covered over with Wax. They were likewise of several Colours, as red, yellow, green, saffron, white, and others. Being waxed over, any thing was easily wrote upon them by the Point of the *Stylus*, and as easily rubb'd out, and alter'd by the flat Part of it. Sometimes these *Pugillares* were made of Gold, Silver, Brass, or Lead, and then there was a Necessity of an Iron *Stylus* to write or cut the Letters upon them, which explains that Passage in the 19th Chapter of *Job*, *Quis mihi det ut exarentur in libro, Stylo ferreo & plumbi lamina, vel celte sculpantur in Silice*. They consisted sometimes of two, three, five, or more Pages, and thence were called *Duplices*, *Triplices*, *Quintuplices*, and *Multiplices*; and by the *Greeks*, *Δίπλυχα*, *Τετρίπλυχα*, &c.

The *Diptychs* and *Triptychs* that were covered with Wax, served only for common Occurrences, the other Sorts received every thing else that was wrote upon *Chartæ* or *Membranæ*, and were sometimes called

called by the *Greeks Palimpsestæ*, from the rubbing out of the Letters upon them.

The *Chartæ Lintææ*, and *Bombycinæ*, which were made of Linnen or Cotton, were of a much later Date; and from these we learned to make the Paper now in Use of Linnen Rags, an Invention probably of about 600 Years standing.

Writing was practised upon all these *Chartæ* with a Reed, and afterwards with a Pen, except upon the *Pugillares*. These Reeds grew upon the Banks of the *Nile*; the *Greeks* also used Reeds imported from *Persia* for the same Purpose. *Calami argentei* are also mentioned for Writing.

Their Letters were formed with Liquors of various Colours, but chiefly black, thence called *Atramentum*, and in *Greek μέλαν* or *μελάριον*. It was sometimes made of the Blood of the *Cuttle Fish*, sometimes of Soot. *Apelles* composed a *Black* of burnt Ivory, which was called *Elephantinum*. They had Ink also from *India* of an approved Composition, as *Pliny* says.

The Titles of their Chapters and Sections were wrote in Red, or Purple: Hence the Titles of the *Roman Laws* are called *Rubricæ*. Their *Purpura* was an exceeding bright Red; or Crimson, much in Vogue with the *Byzantine Writers*, and called *Κιννάβαρις*, which was a Liquor made of the *Murex* boiled, and its Shell very finely powdered; or as *Pliny* relates, of the Blood of that Fish. Almost all the ancient Emperors wore this Colour, their Names were painted in it upon their Banners, and they frequently wrote with it, and wore it. This Colour was often the Distinction of a *Roman Magistrate*,

strate, and to put on the Purple was the same thing as to assume the Government. This Colour was so admired by the Poets, that they called every thing which was very bright and fine, Purple; as *Horace* complements the Swan, which is never of any Colour but white, with

*Purpureis ales oloribus.*

We find even *Snow* honoured with the same Epithet, whence some have imagined that *purpureus* signify'd *white*.

The Children of the Emperors, and such as had a Prospect of rising to the Throne, and their Guardians, sometimes wrote with Green; Gold also was employed for the like Purpose. They that desire to see more upon this Subject may have Recourse to *Mabillon De Re Diplomatica*, and *Monfaucon* in his *Palaeographia Græca*.

---

III. *Some Experiments concerning the poisonous Quality of the Simple Water distilled from the LAURO-CERASUS, or common Laurel, made upon Dogs, at Toppingo-Hall in Essex, August the 24th 1731. and others made before the ROYAL SOCIETY in their Repository. By Cromwell Mortimer, M. D. R. S. Secret.*

I Took a Peck of Laurel Leaves, and put them into an Alembick with three Gallons of Water, which