

STORIES

FOR

SUMMER DAYS & WINTER NIGHTS.

SECOND SERIES.



THE BOY

AND

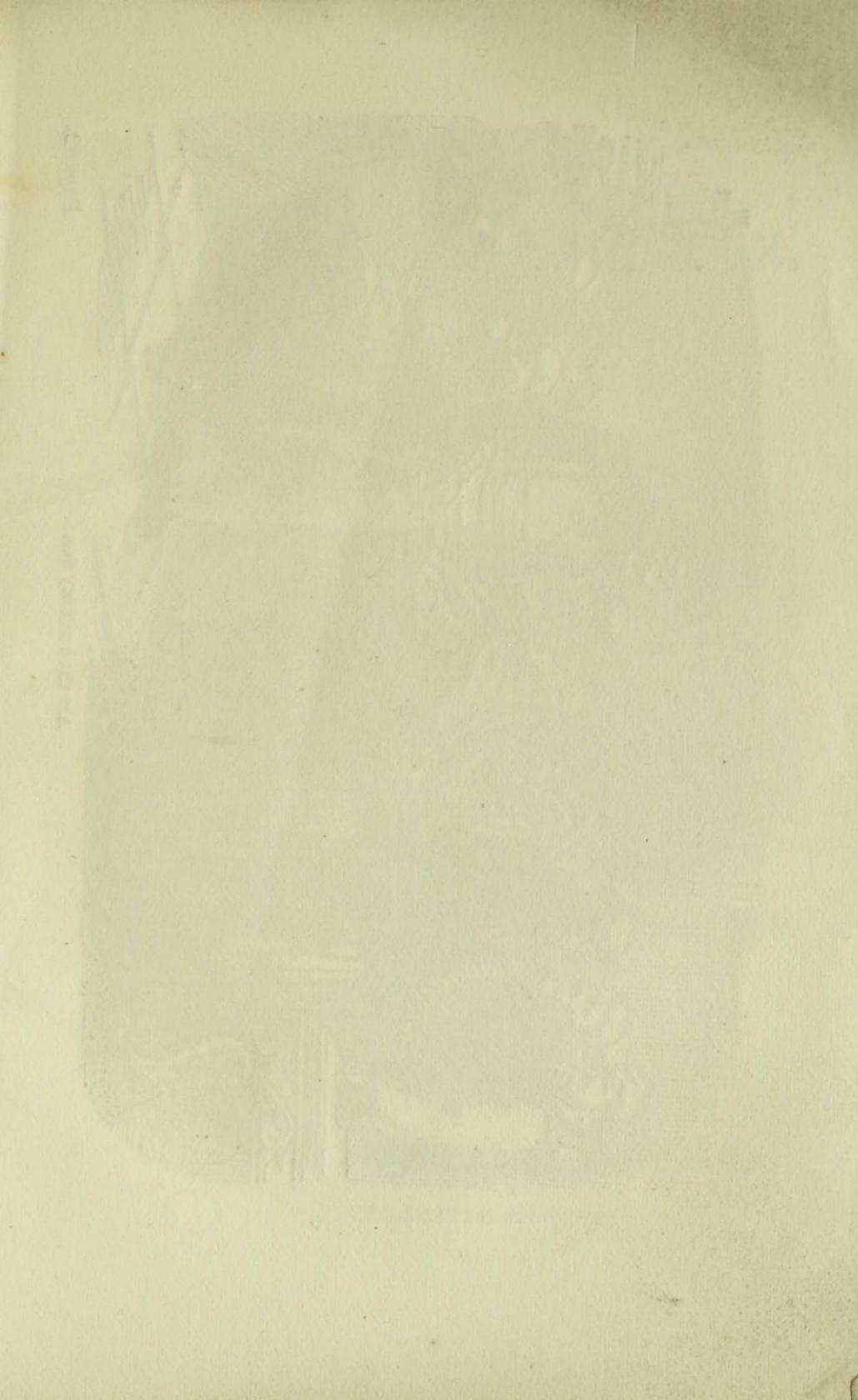
THE BOOK.



LONDON:

GROOMBRIDGE AND SONS,

PATERNOSTER ROW.





Art thou not my Son?

THE BOY AND THE BOOK.



Trying the Knife.

Page 17.

London :

GROOMBRIDGE AND SONS,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE BOY AND THE BOOK.

PART I.

THE BOY.

Can English boys and girls living now in the nineteenth century, carry their minds back so far in time as to the period when our Henry the Fourth was reigning in England, and can they travel in thought so far distant as to the country called Germany, and picture to themselves the life of a little boy at that time and in that country? If so, we will tell them something of the life of Hans Gensfleisch, the only son of a poor widow, who lived about the beginning of the fifteenth century, not far from Mainz, or Mayence, a city built on the banks of the river Rhine, about half-way between its source and the sea. The father of Hans had been a dyer, and had at one time carried on rather a thriving business in Mainz; but after his death Frau* Gensfleisch had gone with her son to live at a little village called Steinheim, about three miles from the city walls, where on a few acres of land, bought with her husband's savings, and laid out partly as garden and partly as field and vineyard, she contrived to live with this her only child. Hans and his mother

* The German for Mistress.

cultivated the little garden, sowed their own crops of barley and flax in their little fields, and tended and trained the vines in their small vineyard. Strong and active, and fond of employment, the life of the little Hans was one long course of busy industry, from the sowing of seeds in Spring to the gathering in of their small vintage late in the Autumn. And in the long winter nights, there was always too much to do within the cottage walls, by the light of their pine-wood fire, for him ever to find the time hang heavy on his hands. One night he would be busy helping his mother to comb and hackle her little store of flax ; on another he would mend the net, with which he at times contrived to catch his mother a river fish or two for supper ; and it would be *play* to him when nothing else was wanting his help, to go on with the making of a cross-bow and arrows with which he intended some day to bring down many a wild duck or wood-pigeon.

The principal occupation of Hans was, however, to assist his mother in carrying on some part of her husband's former trade ; she having become acquainted with many of the secrets of the art by which colours could be extracted from plants and mineral substances, so as to give to wool, flax, and silk, bright and unchanging colours. In those days such operations, instead of being carried on in large factories and workshops, and by wholesale as it were for the manufacturer of the material, were often done just as people wanted any one particular article of dress

to be of a particular colour. For instance, a woman who had fashioned for her husband a rudely knitted vest of wool of her own spinning, would bring the rather dingy garment to Frau Gensfleisch to have it made red or blue, so that, worn under his brown leather jerkin, it might look smart and gay;—or the young hunter on going to the chase, would come to her to have the tassels of his bow or horn made scarlet or yellow;—or the knight equipping himself for war would send to her the soiled plume of his helmet to be made of a brilliant crimson—to say nothing of the knight's lady, who as she sat at home in her dismal castle with little else to amuse her but the embroidery frame, would be for ever sending down her maidens and serving-men into the valley with skeins of wool and silk to be dipped into Frau Gensfleisch's dye-pots, and brought back to her of every colour of the rainbow. In this way Hans' mother continued to make a comfortable living, and Hans himself was a very important help to her in the carrying on of her little art.

It was Hans' business to collect the numerous herbs and plants that his mother required for the different colours. He not only knew well which plants would produce certain colours, but knew where they could be found and at what seasons they were fit for use. Of some he carefully collected the blossoms when fully expanded in the mid-day sun—of others the leaves and stalks—while in many the colouring matter was to be extracted from the roots; which Hans

would carefully dig up, knowing well by the forms of the leaves above ground the kind of root that grew beneath the soil.

This kind of knowledge which Hans had been picking up ever since he was a very young child, made him at twelve years old a most useful little personage, and although he had never learned to read or write, or even been in a school, yet he could not by any means be called ignorant, for he not only observed and remembered all that came in his way, but he turned his knowledge to the best account by making it of use to himself and others.

We say that Hans could neither read nor write, but it must not therefore be thought that such acquirements were not valued in those days ; on the contrary, it was considered at that time one of the very best and most desirable things in the whole world to be able to read, and one of the cleverest things in the world to be able to write ; while he who was so happy as to be the possessor of a book was esteemed one of the most fortunate of human beings.

This may seem strange to you little girls and boys, my readers, who ever since you were born have been surrounded with books of all sizes and shapes, and on all sorts of subjects, from the books of grown-up people that you could not understand, down to your most favourite story book that you do understand and like so well as to read again and again.

We must, however, remind you that books in those days were very different things from what they are

now, and their great value arose from the fact that they were all written with pen and ink upon parchment; for although a kind of paper had been made at that time it was not commonly used; and it was only after weeks and months of careful labour that one of these written books could be produced, so that it is no wonder that a great value was set upon them. A book too was so prized that people liked to ornament it as much as possible, and many of these written or manuscript books, which means *written by hand*, had not only beautiful pictures in them, but were bound in rich bindings, sometimes silk embroidered with gold and silver thread, and sometimes even the backs were of beautifully carved ivory, or adorned with filagree work and pearls and precious stones.

We value books in our times, but we do not ornament them so very much, because we would rather have twenty interesting books on our shelves to read by turns, than one precious volume locked up with clasps and kept in a box only to be taken on particular occasions; and instead of a man spending half his life over the writing of such a book, letter by letter, word by word, and page by page, a man who in the course of a little time has set the small metal letters together, which we call printing types, so as to form a number of pages, can print those pages if he likes on ten thousand sheets of paper, which will form a part of ten thousand books of the same kind, and which when finished can be read by *ten times ten thousand* human beings!

But we will return to little Hans. We have said that he lived not far from the town of Mainz in Germany, and we must mention that one of the most pleasant things he had to do in his little life was to pay a visit occasionally to this great town and see all the busy and wonderful things that were going on there. Mainz was a rich and important town at that time and was governed by an Archbishop, who was called an Elector, because he was one of those who had the right of choosing an Emperor for Germany, when one was wanted. Many Princes had also this right, but the Archbishop of Mainz had the particular privilege of setting the crown on the new Emperor's head when he was crowned in the neighbouring city of Frankfort. Besides seeing all that was going on at Mainz, and purchasing the different things that his mother wanted in the market, Hans' great delight was to pay a visit to an uncle, who lived in the monastery of St. Gothard, near the great cathedral.

This uncle was a monk, and called Father Gottlieb, and was considered at that time as a very learned man. He was good as well as learned, and full of kindness to his little nephew Hans, who, from having so early lost his own parent, looked up to Uncle Gottlieb as a real father and loved him as one.

A monastery, I must tell you, was a place where a number of men lived together away from the rest of the world, in order, as they thought, to devote themselves more to the service of God, than if they were mixed up with the business and pleasure of life,

Whether they were right or wrong in so doing, we will not now stop to inquire, but we must point out that this custom had at that time a great many advantages, and certainly enabled these monks to do a great deal of service to their fellow-creatures. One of the most important of these services was with regard to the making of books, such as we have before described. It was in these monasteries, or houses of monks, that nearly all the books of those times were written or transcribed, and a number of the monks were always employed if not in writing books, at all events in making copies of those which had been written before. A room called the Scriptorium, or writing-room, was to be found in every monastery, and most of the monks could either write or read, and were looked upon in consequence as very learned and wise. This made the visits of little Hans to his uncle very pleasant. There was nothing he thought so great a treat



as to have something read to him out of one of Father Gottlieb's books, for he possessed two of these precious volumes. One was a copy of the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible you know, and the other was a history of the lives of some of the holy men that have been called saints by the Catholics. Seated on a low stool at his uncle's knee, Hans could have listened for hours to stories of the patriarchs Abraham, and Jacob, and Joseph, which Father Gottlieb slowly read from the pale written volume ; but the duties of the convent allowed him only short portions of time, in which, shut up in his own little room or cell, he could entertain his dearly loved nephew ; and often when both were so engaged he had to jump up at the sound of a bell calling him to prayers, and then, hastily locking up the precious volume, he would kindly stroke the boy's curly head and with a message to his mother bid him farewell. At other times he would take Hans into the beautiful chapel belonging to the monastery, and show him its gaily adorned altars and curious images ; and once or twice Hans got a peep into the Scriptorium, or writing room, where the monks were at work over their sheets of parchment, writing so carefully one after another the curiously formed letters which were then in use, and which are still used in the printed books of Germany. Being read to, and finding what pleasure arscse from being able to read, and seeing so much of book-making and writing, made little Hans wish very much to be able to read and write. A few years

before, he had thought that nothing could be so grand or so nice as to be a knight and go to the wars, and he would make himself a helmet of rushes, and with a long willow wand in his hand for a spear, and his cross-bow slung at his back, he would try to fancy himself a warrior, and set off in pretence to the Holy Land to fight against the Turks ; but latterly he had begun to think that he should like nothing so well as to be able to read and write like Father Gottlieb and the rest of the monks, and it was a great delight to him, when his uncle allowed him to take in his own hands one of the precious volumes to pick out the different letters and learn their names.

What brought Hans at this time very often to the monastery, was, that his uncle, whose turn it was to be purveyor or provider for the convent, had employed his mother to make what they called writing colour or dye, for the copyist. This was of course something the same as what we call *ink*, and it so happened that Frau Gensfleisch was in possession of a secret by which a black dye could be made, which would not turn brown with time, as that of many of the manuscripts. Every ten days or fortnight, therefore, it was Hans' business to take to the convent a small flask of the valuable liquid which his mother had carefully prepared from certain mineral and vegetable substances, and it was no fault of his, if he did not on each occasion somehow or other add to his own stock of knowledge ; getting at one time perhaps a verse

or two read by his uncle, which finished the history of Joseph, or puzzling out for himself the difference between the shape of a C and a G till he could quite distinguish them ; or being told by his uncle some wonderful legend or history connected with the paintings and carvings on the walls of the convent ; so that it may be said that the education of little Hans was slowly proceeding in those matters, which at that time was considered learning and science. In the midst of all his other employments which did not require thought, Hans' mind would be occupied with this new knowledge ; and as he worked in the garden, or weeded and dressed the vines in their little vineyard, the remembrance of the stories Uncle Gottlieb had read to him or told him would come into his mind, and the pictures he had shown him appear as it were before his eyes. At night too, as he sat by his mother's spinning-wheel, he would try to trace on the sanded floor the letters he had learned from the books, or begging a drop of black dye, he made attempts with a pointed stick to mark them on the wooden table. Wherever he was, in fact, and whatever he was about, letters would dance before his eyes, and his former hopes of being a famous hunter or warrior when he grew up were all lost in the one great hope, which now filled his mind, of one day becoming a learned copyist or scribe. Such was the change that had taken place in the mind of little Hans, when, on visiting the convent one day, he found to his great dismay that his good uncle had gone on a

journey to the city of Frankfort, which lay some thirty or forty miles off, upon the banks of the same river Maine, which just by Mainz empties its waters into the Rhine. It was the time of the great Frankfort Market or Fair, and Father Gottlieb had gone there to purchase for the convent all that was wanted for the next year. He had gone up the river in a boat with a party of monks and merchants, and was not expected to return until the next week, as he would wait to bring with him all the merchandise he purchased. It was a great trial to Hans to have another whole week to wait before he saw his dear uncle again, but then what a pleasure had he in his next visit to the convent : not only Uncle Gottlieb to see but all the beautiful and wonderful things which he had brought back from the Frankfort Fair, and his own present to receive too, which the kind uncle had not forgotten amid all his bustle and business. This was no less than a knife—the first that Hans had ever possessed of his own. It had a pretty stag's-horn handle and a green leather sheath, so that stuck in his girdle it looked quite like that of a real woodsman or hunter, and made Hans not a little proud.

Then what wonderful things had not his uncle to relate of the large and rich city of Frankfort. Of all the beautiful works in gold and silver with which the shops were filled ; of the grand old hall where the Emperors were elected and the chapel in which they were crowned ; and then of the curious people called Jews, who lived in such numbers in

one part of the city, who did not worship Christ or the Virgin, and were the same people whom he had heard about in the stories of Jacob and Joseph. Long after his usual time did Hans stay listening to all these matters, and it was nightfall ere he got back again to his mother's cottage with his present to her of a piece of fine cloth for a new head coif which Father Gottlieb sent her.

For many days Hans could think of nothing but his new knife, and well pleased was he to show it to his young companions, many of whom had never before seen so polished a piece of iron. In his herb-gatherings for his mother too, how useful it was to him in cutting through the tough stalks of some of the plants and in digging up the roots; and what fine things it enabled him to cut and carve for his mother,—a new comb for her flax amongst other things, and a spoon to stir her pots of dye.

He grew very expert in using his knife, and cutting and carving with it almost put out of his head his dearly beloved letters that he had taken such pains to learn.

It happened, however, one day, that after having been some hours out on the hills, behind his mother's cottage, collecting a quantity of acorns and oak-galls, which his mother required to make her black dye or ink, a very violent storm came on, which obliged him to take shelter under a large spreading beech tree, behind whose trunk he crept while the wind and hail beat fiercely down. The storm lasted long, and

to amuse himself Hans began to exercise his carving powers upon the smooth bark of the beech tree which sheltered him.

He carved some letters upon it ; cutting away the bark of the beech and leaving the letters white. Some he cut deep into the wood in sharp furrows like the letters on a seal. Then he tried cutting away the bark and leaving the letters stand out *in relief*, as it is called, from the tree, like the letters on the impression of a seal. This was the prettiest way of all, and he began to carve the letters of his own name. The word *Hans* he could manage very well, for he knew well the letters which formed it, and he got on very well with the rest of his other name as far as *Gens*,—but here, alas ! he was stopped, for he did not know how to make an F. He had learned how his name was spelt, but it had never occurred to him before to write it ; but it did not matter—he was going the very next day to the convent, and he would learn how an F was made, and then too he could also make himself sure of the C, which he had always a difficulty in distinguishing from G, as he had never learnt the alphabet in proper order. The next day accordingly, on visiting the convent, after delivering his flask of ink, he asked his uncle to show him once more the different letters which he did not yet know perfectly ; and his uncle not only did this, but on a strip of old parchment he kindly wrote down all the letters from A to Z, so that at any time Hans could

use it as a copy when he wanted to put letters together so as to make words.

Hans was greatly delighted. It seemed to him now as if he had got possession of a key which locked up a great deal of valuable knowledge, for his alphabet would not only help him to write but to read also. He could not rest that evening, even before he had taken the bowl of milk and piece of black bread that his mother had left for his supper, till he had climbed the hill to the great beech tree, and carved upon it the other letters of his name. When finished, his name reached half round the tree, and each letter was nicely formed and neatly cut. All the lines were straight and the little points were all sharp and clear. Written in those (to us) old-fashioned letters it looked perhaps something like this:—

h a n s g e n s f l e i s c h

Hans wished his mother could but see it!

‘Do mother, I pray thee, come up the hill as far as the great beech tree,’ said he one evening as he thought of his nice piece of writing, ‘I want to show thee how strangely the elves have marked the bark.’ This he said in jest, hoping to entice his mother to see the wonder.

‘Nay child,’ said she, ‘my old bones are too stiff for climbing now-a-days, and nought that the elves can do can make me wonder, seeing as I do all the strange new things that are coming every day into

the world.' And it was in vain that Hans tried to persuade her.

Some days after this, however, Hans on paying a visit to the tree and finding that the white wood of the beech, from which he had peeled away the bark, was becoming brown, so that the letters no longer looked out plain and distinct, the thought came into his head of cutting each of these raised letters away from the tree and taking them home. He did so—slicing them carefully off, so that they were not split or broken, and he was thus able to carry home to his mother, as she would not come to see them, this first specimen of his own writing.

We shall see how the carrying home of those letters was afterwards to influence the fate of Hans Gensfleisch—and of the whole world!

Proud was Hans that evening, when after his frugal supper was over, he swept away the crumbs from off their little table, and arranged side by side the letters of his name before his astonished mother—so that when she compared them with his name upon the slip of parchment which was the register of his birth, she could see that it was really and truly her son's name that the curious signs signified. She thought her Hans very clever, and she was very pleased. We are not sure that Hans did not think himself very clever too!

Hans put his letters carefully away in an old leather pouch which had once belonged to his father, and often after his day's work was done would he

pull them out and arrange them on the table or on the hearth before the fire. He soon found out that besides making his own name, he could put together several other words which he had learned to spell. Out of the letters which formed Hans Gensfleisch, for instance, he could make the word *fisch* which is the German for fish—*lang*, long—*schein*, shine ; and it was a great delight to his mother as well as to himself, when he found too that he could put together the letters of her name, *Lischen*, just as they were also written on the parchment-register of his birth.

But he had other discoveries still to make with regard to his letters ; for one evening it so happened that as his mother was busy over a boiling of ink that he was to take the next day to Mainz, and had put some of it out in a sort of saucer or bowl upon the table to cool, Hans in playing with his letters let one of them fall into the black colour, and pulling it hastily out again he popped it on to the first thing that lay near, which happened to be a piece of chamois leather which was stretched out after being cleaned ready for dyeing.

Scarcely had the letter lain an instant on the white leather than Frau Gensfleisch turning round, saw with dismay the mischief that was done ;—a large **H** was marked upon the chamois skin !

‘Ah Hanschen ! Hanschen !’ cried she. ‘What art thou about—thou hast ruined thy poor mother. See, lackaday ! the lady of Dolberg’s beautiful chamois skin that was to be dyed of a delicate green for

her ladyship's slippers. See the ugly black marks that thou hast made upon it! This comes of all thy letter making and spelling of words and names. Away with the useless things! Thou canst do better with thy knife and thy time than to be bringing thy mother thus into trouble.' And in her anger the Frau Gensfleisch swept the precious letters off the table and threw them into the fire.

Hans started forward in dismay to save them but it was too late. One g alone remained of his treasured letters, but it was enough. He had his knife and he could make others—and more than that, there was left with him a valuable thought. The impression left on the white Chamois skin by the blackened letter had caused a new idea to flash into his mind—the idea of Printing. On that evening and in that little cottage, in fact, the *invention of Printing* took place.

It was something to have a lucky thought come into one's mind, but it is quite another thing to have patience and industry and perseverance enough to put that thought into action as it were, and make it turn to profit and use. Luckily for Hans and for the world, he had these good qualities even when thus a little boy, and from that time he made it the business of his life to turn the thought to good account. We do not say that the little boy Hans Gensfleisch could at that time foresee any but a very small part of the good which might arise out of the invention of printing. He could not possibly tell

before-hand, how through its means, knowledge would be spread all over the face of the earth, nor that that book which was then only to be found in convents and monasteries—locked up and rarely opened—read by a few learned monks, and seldom or ever read to the people;—that this book, or the Bible, would through the invention of Printing be distributed all over the world, and that rich and poor, wise and simple, young and old, would be able to possess it, and read it, and learn from it the Word of God:—he did not foresee this; but he saw that there might be an easier and a quicker way of making books, and this he felt would be a good and useful thing to bring about, and he resolved that he would do it. He saw that instead of spending so much time in shaping over and over again the same letters, that it would be a great saving of trouble if letters were to be carved out of wood or any other hard substance, and then blackened with ink and pressed or *imprinted* on the parchment, for then the same letters could be used many times in making different words in different books.

Hans saw this plainly. He was sure of it, and he was almost sure that no one had ever thought of it before. With a very natural feeling, and certainly not a wrong one, he determined that it should be himself who should bring about this new method of writing. He would keep it secret from every one until he could *prove* that it was a great and useful discovery.

In the meantime, however, he had much to do. First, he must learn to read and spell, and then he must also be able to write well, so as to shape all the letters correctly when he carved them. From that time Hans lost no more time in play. His cross-bow was laid aside, and he seldom or never joined the other boys of the village in their games of running and wrestling, nor did he follow the hunters to the chase on the hills as he had been accustomed to do, or spend time in loitering with his net along the river side. Instead of all this, he would go on every possible pretext into the town and to the monastery to visit his uncle and get all the knowledge he could. And after some time he told his uncle of his great wish to learn to read and to become a scribe, and begged him to persuade his mother to let him follow out his wish.

Father Gottlieb was pleased with the boy's earnest desire. He was good and pious, and when he saw how full of this high hope was the mind of the young boy, he said, 'It is the will of God. He makes the humblest of us tools for the furtherance of his wise designs. His will be done!' And he talked to the Frau Gensfleisch upon the matter, and though he did not think it right to tell her that her son might one day become a great and learned man, yet he persuaded her that it would be wrong to oppose the earnest wishes of Hans who had always been a good, and dutiful, and loving son; and so it was settled between them that henceforth part of the

widow's savings were to pay for the labour which was required for the field and garden, and that Hans was to come to the convent every day to be taught by the monks to read and write.

Henceforward Hans was to be a scholar, and his joy indeed was great!



PART II.

THE BOOK.

WE must pass quickly over several years of the time during which Hans Gensfleisch was going through the tedious operation of learning to read and write. We can all of us remember it to be tedious, but in those days it was so even more than now ; since there were no such things as spelling books, and children's story books to help on the young scholar, and the letters were not as plainly written, nor of such a simple form as our English letters. Hans' reading and spelling book was, perhaps, some musty old parchment manuscript, discoloured by age ; and he had to pore over it whole hours and days, before he could make out the meaning of a simple page. The monks who had to teach him, too, were not all of them so patient and kind as Father Gottlieb, his uncle, whose duties in the convent did not often allow him to be his young nephew's instructor ; and there were hours and days when Hans grew sadly wearied of the task he had undertaken, and his resolution would waver and falter. Instead of being shut up in that close cell in the convent where the small and high window allowed only a tiny piece of sky to be

seen, and where fresh air scarcely ever entered ; how much pleasanter would it be, he often thought, to be out and away on the hills with his bow, or armed with his knife herb-gathering for his mother. His bright vision of being the one who should make books in a new and quick method grew dim in his mind, and other ways of living seemed better and happier. But then again, at such times it would perhaps happen that his uncle would send for him to his own cell, and would make him read to him that he might see his improvement, and would praise him for his progress, and encourage him to go on ; so that Hans' very heart would glow within him, and fresh zeal and courage come to him again, and he would go back to his work refreshed, and pleased, and hopeful as before.

At times, too, it would happen that he had something given him to read to the monks, which interested him very much ; some portion of the history of a saint, perhaps, or a curious legend, so that no trouble was too great in decyphering the crabbed writing, provided that he could only get to the end of it, and make out all the sense ; and he would carry home the story in his head, and entertain his mother with it over their evening meal. Then all this time, too, was he busy carving with his knife, out of the hardest wood he could find, a stock of letters with which, when an occasion offered, he meant to make trial of *imprinting* whole sentences with ink, He did this secretly. He feared to vex his mother,

and run the risk of his letters being burned as before, and he feared too that some one might find out his plan, and make use of it before he was ready prepared to show it as his own.

All this kept him silent and reserved, and he nourished within his mind many thoughts and hopes that no one knew of, or suspected. To his mother he was ever kind and good, and as of old, he would in all his leisure hours gladly help her in her little household affairs, and in the preparation of her dye, and while doing the latter, he would also make trial of different kinds of ink that might be better for his letter imprinting than the thin ink used by the copyist. He saw that a thicker and more sticky kind of ink would be wanting for this purpose, and he endeavoured to find some substance that would produce this stickiness and thickness. And thus was he ever preparing himself for the time when he could bring every thing to bear on the great plan which he cherished in his mind; and in the meanwhile he grew up to be a man.

No longer a boy, at the age of eighteen Hans had not only learned to read and write well his native language, but had also learned the Latin tongue, which it was at that time quite necessary for him to know, seeing that many of the books then written were in that language. He came to be looked upon as a most learned youth, and the monks who had taught him, thinking that he would be a credit to their convent, were anxious that he should join them

and become a monk like themselves, devoting the rest of his life to copying manuscripts and writing books. But this would not have suited at all with the purpose of Hans, and he knew that he could be much more useful when out in the world than shut up all his life writing in the convent. It grieved him to disappoint his good uncle, who had always hoped that he would become a monk, but he knew that he was right in refusing, and this made him strong and firm.

Hans was not always faithful, however, at this time to his good purposes, and we must confess that the acquaintanceship of some gay young companions led him into some difficulties and dangers. He had one very favourite friend, who, like himself, had been a scholar in the convent, and this Conrad, for so he was called, being the son of a rich burgher in the town, Hans was led into companionship with many gay and thoughtless youths who spent much of their time in feasting and pleasure taking, and who were not like Hans accustomed to labour from morning till night, and live on simple fare. And not only did Hans, through the means of his friend Conrad, fall in the way of pleasure taking, as we have said, but was also brought into a good many quarrels and disputes which otherwise he would not have been exposed to. At this time it happened that there was in most towns two classes of people, who were more distinct from each other than they are now-a-days. These were the nobles or gentlemen, and the burghers

or trades-people. Instead of living peacefully together, and serving one another, these people were continually quarrelling; the nobles trying to oppress the burghers, and the burghers in their turn ever trying to resent the oppressions of the nobles. With the youths, especially in the town of Mainz, a continual warfare was always going on. The sons of the rich nobles being proud, and not liking to hold companionship with the sons of the burghers; and seeking on every occasion to vex and annoy them; and the latter, since they were rich, thinking that they had a right to the same pleasures and privileges as those of nobler birth, and being determined to stand up for them; so that their disputes would not unfrequently end in fighting and bloodshed.

It would have been easy for Hans, who was only the son of a poor and humble cottager, to have kept out of the way of these noble youths, and he was far from being of a quarrelsome disposition; but it so happened that he was often mixed up in the quarrels of his friend Conrad, who being very generous and kind to him, Hans thought himself obliged to take his part and defend him when any strife arose.

All this turned out very unfortunately for Hans Gensfleisch, as it was the occasion at last of his being obliged to leave his native city and be absent for many years from his poor mother.

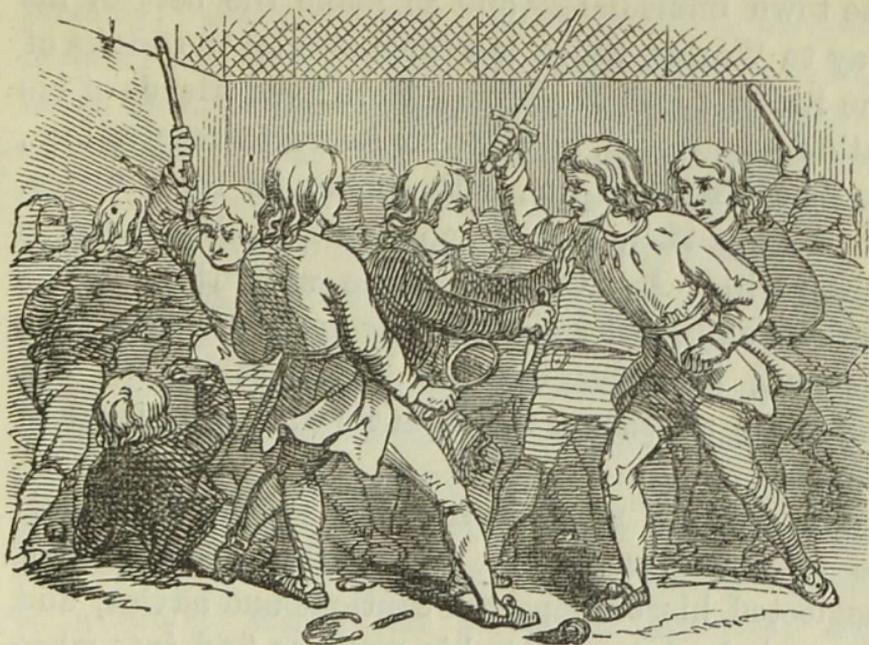
One evening, it happened that a party of youths were entertaining themselves in a place called the Tennis-court, where a particular game of ball was

played, which was a favourite amusement among the youths of that time. The greater number of the players on this occasion were burghers' sons, and among them Hans and Conrad, who were very expert at the game. Presently a party of nobles came up, who were vexed to find the place so occupied. They accordingly placed themselves so as to observe the game, and amused themselves with making rude remarks on the burgher youths and with laughing at their gestures and dress.

'See the fine gentlemen,' said they, 'how daintily they handle the ball! Better for them to keep to measuring silk or dealing out spices in their fathers' shops, than try their skill here.' 'And the learned scholars too,' said another, 'they ought to stick to their musty parchments and books and not amuse themselves with such idle games as these.'

Then one of them, on observing Hans exclaimed, 'See, too, the dyer's son, with his rusty black jerkin. 'Tis a pity he does not dip it in one of his old mother's dye-pots, if he would have himself pass for a gentleman.'

Conrad overheard this last remark and was very angry. A scornful allusion to his friend was almost more than he could bear. It was his turn to throw the ball, and scarce knowing what he did, he threw it with force in the direction of the group of young nobles, and it struck one of them on the temple. The youth drew his sword (for at that time it was common for the sons of nobles to wear them as



ornaments) and ran fiercely at him. Hans sprang forward to defend his friend and placed himself before him. He had no weapon but his knife, and in defending his friend with this, it so happened that he wounded the youth severely in the side.

A cry arose of 'To prison with the assassin!' and it was with difficulty that Hans could make his escape from out of the crowd which ran up from all sides to see what was passing and take part in the affray. He succeeded however in getting to the house of his friend, which was near at hand, and here he was soon followed by Conrad, who was in great distress. He said that the wound of the young man being found to be dangerous, the officers of justice were already in search of Hans. He advised him to leave

the town immediately and to make the best of his way to Worms, which is a town also on the banks of the Rhine, south of Mainz. Here lived friends of his father who would, he said, be ready to receive him, and he furnished him with money for the journey. It was nightfall, and wrapped in a cloak which was lent to him by Conrad, Hans crept through the darkest and most retired streets until he reached the convent, in order that he might relate his unfortunate adventure to his uncle and take leave of him.

Not without much shame and sorrow had Hans to acknowledge to the good father, how he had neglected his oft-repeated cautions and advice, and it was indeed a grief to his uncle to find into what dangers and difficulties Hans had fallen, which would thus oblige him to leave his friends and protectors and suddenly go forth alone into the world. He reproached him severely for having gone into the company of riotous and quarrelsome youths, and pointed out to him that as a monk he would have been saved from all such dangers and temptations. He recommended him, however, to repair immediately to a convent of monks in the town of Worms, of which the Superior, or chief monk, was known to him, and giving him a letter of recommendation, he hoped that he might by this means get employment as a scribe. With much good advice, and many prayers for his safety, Father Gottlieb bade him farewell, laying his hands on his head and bestowing on him his parting

blessing. Hans had now to take leave of his poor mother, and he turned his steps with a heavy heart towards her cottage. Grieved was he indeed to tell her all that had befallen ;—how that he had shed the blood of a fellow-creature, and that he must leave her, when to return he knew not.

Frau Gensfleisch wept long and sore. She knew not what she should do without her Hans. It was like tearing the life from out her body she said. Old as she was, who could tell that she should ever see him again. Where would his wanderings end? What would become of him in the strange wide world into which he was thus thrown without guide or guard? While she lamented, however, she hastily made a number of little preparations with motherly care, to preserve him from want and to secure his comfort. A bundle of clothes put together, a knapsack with bread and pieces of dried meat and cheese, and a purse with all the money that she possessed in the world, which she insisted on his taking.

‘I will come back to thee, mother,’ said Hans, in a tone of more cheerfulness than he really felt. ‘I will come back to thee again, and see if I shall not one day become rich and great,—see if thou wilt not have reason to be proud of thy Hanschen.’

His mother shook her head. She could then only feel that she was losing his daily care and presence, and that the future was all uncertain. But she was at the same time pleased to see him of good cheer, and that his courage and spirit did not forsake him.

She promised to find out if the young man whom he had wounded recovered, and to discover some means of sending him word when he might return in safety ; and with many embraces and blessings and parting words of love he went away.

Hans had not gone far, however, before turning his thoughts to the future, and thinking of what had been his former hopes and intentions, he all at once remembered the little bag of letters which he had some years before carved out of wood, and which hung in the back room of the cottage. He called to mind all the schemes and visions which of old he had formed over these letters, and he thought to himself that now, perhaps, was come the right time for turning them and all his acquired knowledge to account. He determined to go back and fetch his letters ; and he thought it best to do so unknown to his mother, so that he might not renew in her the sorrow of parting ; retracing then his steps, he got over the hedge which divided his mother's little garden from the road, and softly opening the door that led to the little room in which he had been accustomed to sleep, and where he had kept his treasured letters, he took the little pouch from the nail on which it hung, and was hastening away—when the sound of his mother's voice struck his ear. She was weeping—but in the midst of her tears was she also praying for her son. 'Oh, good Lord,' she said, 'protect my child from the dangers of the world. Let him not again sin against thy laws. Be thou to him a shield, a fortress of de-

fence, and let him love thy word and law. Preserve him, I pray thee, to me good and pure, and let my eyes behold my child again, ere they are closed in death.'

Hans was deeply moved by these words of his poor forsaken mother, and he also prayed. He prayed that her hopes might be fulfilled ; and that he might be a comfort and a blessing to her old age ; and he said to himself, that he would henceforth lead a life of usefulness and peace ; and so he went forth, strong in purpose, yet full of tenderness and love.

After this parting, many years passed over Frau Gensfleisch's head ere she beheld her son again ; and few and far between were the tidings of him that reached her cottage. Long and weary years were they to her ; and the hope so long deferred of seeing him again made, indeed, her heart grow sick. Many and many a time would she go on foot into the town to make inquiries of Father Gottlieb as to whether aught had been heard of the absent one ; and if by chance she was told of some traveller who had come into the town from the south, she would go there though ever so weak or weary, and never rest until she had found the stranger out, to question him herself about all the youths whom he might have fallen in with, in the hope that her Hans might have been one of them.

Through Father Gottlieb she heard of his safe arrival at Worms ; and these tidings came written on a slip of parchment by Hans himself, and was

brought by a travelling monk who was going about to collect alms, and who called at the convent of St. Gothard in Mainz. In return, Frau Gensfleisch got one of the monks to write for her a letter, in which she told Hans of the recovery of the youth whom he had wounded, and begged him to return to her. This letter was given into the charge of the same monk who, after visiting several other cities, was likely to return to Worms; but as it did not bring Hans home again, no one felt sure that it had ever reached him.

Several years passed without any more tidings of her son reaching Frau Gensfleisch, until there called at her cottage one day a pilgrim who was returning from the Holy Land, and was on his way to the city of Treves, to which he was taking some holy relics. He brought to Frau Gensfleisch a small bag of silver coin, as much in value as the money she had given to Hans at his departure. The pilgrim told her it was sent by a youth in the town of Strasburg, who sent with it love and greeting, and had directed him where to find her cottage. The pilgrim had forgotten the name of the youth, he said, but that he had marked the little bag with a mark that he was sure his mother would know; and sure enough she did; for there on the leather had been imprinted the very same letter **G** which Hans had saved from the fire, when his other letters were burnt. Frau Gensfleisch knew by this that the money came from Hans, and her heart beat for joy at the knowledge that he was well and rich, and above all that he had not forgotten her.



Years rolled on, and the mother and son had never met again ; when one summer evening of the year 1438, a traveller, who had that morning arrived in the town of Mainz, passed out of it towards the little village of Steinheim. He was weary and way-worn ; his clothes soiled and dusty with long travel, and his cheeks tanned from long exposure to the sun. Upon his back he bore a knapsack, and under his arm he carried a large and carefully wrapped packet. As he reached the little hill at the foot of which the village lay, he paused to look around him ; and he looked not as one who beholds for the first time a beautiful view, taking in at a glance the whole picture which was spread before him ; but seeking out rather each well remembered object that was connected

with the past years of youth and childhood. Stretching from the north, and far away to the west, was a long and wavy chain of hills, behind which the sun was setting in a bright blaze of gold and red. How often had the traveller seen such a sunset behind the blue summits of those hills before! Flowing yet nearer to him was the noble river Rhine, winding onward to the north, and bearing on its bosom many a little skiff which scudded quickly before the evening breeze, or raft of timber which floated slowly down its stream. How often had the stranger sailed in such little barks upon its surface, or bathed and fished in its waters! At his feet lay the little cluster of cottages which formed the village of Steinheim; and amid its clustering trees and vineyards, it was not fancy, perhaps, that led the traveller to think that he could distinguish one roof from all the rest, and one patch of vines from out the other larger vineyards. He passed on with quickened steps; but as he approached the cottages, he found—not like the distant mountains or the wide river—that much was new and changed. Houses and cottages had sprung up where fields of barley and flax had grown, and a new church stood where once a barn had been. He sought out the little cottage that once he had known so well. Alas! it was strangely changed. A stone wall supplied the place of the old briar-hedge, and shrubs had grown up into trees, shadowing the door and window, whilst moss and ivy covered the walls and roof. With a trembling hand he knocked at the

lowly door. The lattice was opened, and a strange face came to answer his inquiries.

‘Does not the Frau Gensfleisch live here?’ asked the stranger with a faltering voice.

‘The Frau Gensfleisch,’ said the woman; ‘nay, my good friend, the Frau Gensfleisch has left our village this many a day. Maybe she lives now in the town, or maybe she is dead; I cannot tell thee which.’

The traveller turned away.

Frau Gensfleisch, however, was not dead. Finding that the care of her little fields and vineyard was more than she was able to manage in her declining years, she sold her cottage and land, and returned into the town of Mainz to live, so that she might be near the Father Gottlieb, who was now the only relation she had left besides her absent son. To the good Father she could at least talk about Hans, and he was able sometimes to cheer her fading hopes, by telling her that the day might yet come when Hans would return to spend the rest of his life with her. She lived in a dark and narrow street, and seldom went from home except on certain days, when, as of old, she would take a flask of her ink to the convent for the use of the monks, who were still, as during the childhood of Hans Gensfleisch, busied over their endless copying and writing. It was on the morning of the day on which the traveller we have spoken of above had inquired after her at her old cottage, that a message came to her from Father Gottlieb to say that she must come to the convent with all speed, to hear

some tidings of her son, which had been brought by a traveller from the south. With a beating heart she went, and from the Father Gottlieb she heard that a learned scribe had come that day into the town who had known her son in the city of Strasburg. This scribe had brought with him a most wonderful book, and all the town was filled with surprise and curiosity to hear that this volume, which was a copy of the Bible, had been written by one man—the traveller himself—and that in its production he had used neither pen, nor style,* nor reed, but had *imprinted* it with ink in some unknown way, which had caused the writing to be more regular and even, and plainer to read than that of any manuscript which had ever been seen or heard of. The whole town was talking of the book, and the wonder of the people was even greater still when the traveller said that he could at will produce many such books as this, and that each should be so much alike the other, that not one letter—not one jot or one tittle of a letter should be different. Frau Gensfleisch listened in wonder,—but wonder was lost in hope, for she said to herself. ‘This man has known my Hans, for he too could imprint letters ;’ and she eagerly inquired his name.

Father Gottlieb said that the name of the stranger

* The style was a pointed instrument, made of metal, and used for writing with by the ancients. Pens made of reeds were also used.

was Johann Gutenberg, and that he was tall and dark, and spoke with a northern tongue. He promised Frau Gensfleisch, however, that she should see him and question him herself about her son, as soon as the stranger returned from the palace of the Archbishop, where he had gone to exhibit his wonderful book, and he left her in his cell promising to return and fetch her when the stranger should arrive.

Frau Gensfleisch sat in silence and alone for two heavy hours. She heard bell after bell rung, which summoned the monks to their prayers or to their meals. And many a passing footstep made her cheeks flush and her pulse quicken, as she said to herself, 'Now, I shall hear about my son ;' and she repeated over to herself all the questions that she would ask and the messages she would send, in case the stranger really knew her Hans ; when at last the door of the cell was unlocked and the Father Gottlieb came.

He said he would take her to the apartment of the Superior, to which the traveller had been summoned on his return from the Archbishop, and there she could wait until he had time enough to speak with her about her son. When Frau Gensfleisch entered the room of the Superior, a crowd of monks was so gathered round the stranger that she could see neither his face nor form. He was opening out his wonderful volume, and the curious monks pressed eagerly round him. Loud and long were their exclamations of surprise as the book was opened, and page

after page displayed. It was wonderful—It was marvellous—It was not like the work of hands, they said No scribe or copyist would write each letter so like another, and they said it must be done by magic, for that no mortal hands could write so wonderfully plain and exact and regular ; and they questioned the stranger about his method of *imprinting*, but he replied to all their questioning, ‘It is not magic, holy fathers, but it is patience which hath done it.’

Scarcely had these words been uttered, when catching the ear of Frau Gensfleisch, she started from her seat, and pushing aside the monks, who stood around the stranger, she made her way up to him, and she said, as she laid hold of his cloak and looked him in the face, ‘Stranger, what is thy name—what is thy true name? Is it not Hans Gensfleisch—were thou not born here—art thou not my son?’ And as she spoke she grasped eagerly both his hands.

The stranger paused, and a pang as if of sorrow seemed to pass across his brow, as he saw the weakness and infirmity of her who stood trembling before him. The years which had passed over his own head and had changed him from the slender youth into the strong and healthy man, had indeed laid a sore and heavy hand on her, who all this time had been left alone and unprotected, bowed down with sorrow and infirmity. He reproached himself for his long absence and neglect. Then falling on her neck, he embraced her long and tenderly,

and he said, 'Mother, I am indeed thy Hans!' and then turning to the wondering monks, 'Yes, holy fathers, I am the Hans Gensfleisch, who was in this convent taught to read and write. When but a child, it was chance which first gave me the thought of thus imprinting books, but long years of patience and industry have been needed ere I could bring it to perfection.' Then to his mother, he said, 'I will leave thee no more. Too much of my life has been passed away from thee—but now shalt thou have thy son again to cheer thy last days and to make thee happy.'

And happy indeed was Frau Gensfleisch, and she needed no promises from her son to assure her of the joy and comfort which his care would secure her for the few remaining years of her life. One thing alone displeased her, which was that he should have adopted a name different from that by which he had been known in childhood, but when he told her of the ridicule which had followed him wherever he went, when his strange name of Gensfleisch* was heard, she was reconciled; especially when he reminded her too, that the name which he had taken, was one which belonged to his family and to which he had some claim; and when in future she would hear her son called by his name of Gutenberg, and was told that that name was become known not only all over Germany, but in strange and distant lands,

* In English, *Gooseflesh*.

she would say, 'Yes, Gutenberg—it soundeth well. It is a goodly name,—but he is still my Hans, my own son Hans!'

And Father Gottlieb, too, when they talked to him of the fame which his nephew had gained, and how that his native town felt proud that one of her citizens should have discovered and made perfect so wonderful and useful an art, so that he was looked upon as a great and famous man—the good Father would thank God that the fame and the greatness he had gained, stood not in the way of his being likewise a duteous, loving son, and a good and pious man.

And thus our *story* ends—but we will venture to add something of the *history* of Johann or John Gutenberg. Nothing, we believe, in the foregoing story is contrary to *what is known* of the real history of the first inventor of printing, and it is certain that after his return from Strasburg to his native city in the year 1438, he established a printing-press in Mainz, and produced from it many printed books, principally in Latin. He had for some time as a kind of partner in his art, a man of the name of Faust, or Fust, the son of a goldsmith of Mainz, who afterwards separating from Gutenberg went to Paris, where he printed books, and in consequence was persecuted as a magician or sorcerer; so wonderful was it thought to be able to produce books so easily and so much like each other.

Gutenberg was afterwards assisted in the carrying on of his printing by a rich burgher of Mainz of the name of Conrad Hammer, whom we may suppose to have been the early friend through defence of whom he was obliged to fly from home.

Shortly after the invention of printing, it would appear that paper was made in sufficient perfection to be employed instead of parchment in the formation of books. A celebrated Latin Bible, printed by Gutenberg in 1450, of which a very perfect copy is to be seen in the public library at Frankfort, is beautifully printed on paper: and it must strike every one with astonishment that such great perfection could have been attained in so short a time in so difficult an art—especially when we call to mind that each of the little letters with which it was printed, had to be carved separately out of wood, since metal letters or *type* were not used till a few years later. The printing, too, is remarkably clear, distinct, and regular, and is a striking proof of the extraordinary skill and industry—and as he himself says in our story, patience—which must have been employed over it.

The great superiority of printing over writing was so generally felt and acknowledged, that before the end of the century in which Gutenberg lived, printed books began to be common, and in the year 1471, an Englishman of the name of Caxton, introduced the art into England, and set up a printing press in Westminster.

We have alluded to the advantages we enjoy in our days from the *commonness* of books, and from the knowledge which by their means is spread all over the world; and the sense of this advantage has led people to feel a great interest in all that concerned the inventor or discoverer of printing.

The city of Mainz especially, has always felt proud that he was born there, and, about two hundred years after his death, erected a statue to him in one of their streets. In 1837, however, another and a finer statue in bronze was erected, and the people of the town celebrated the event with all kinds of rejoicings and festivities. They liked to do honour to their ingenious and useful citizen, even though he had been dead nearly four hundred years, and they hung garlands of flowers on his statue, and had music and processions and illuminations—all to celebrate the memory of the son of the poor widow Gensfleisch.

No one who then looked upon the beautiful bronze statue of Gutenberg, or sees it now as it stands in the middle of the city of Mainz, can doubt for a moment that such a patient, persevering, and ingenious man, the inventor of such a great and useful an art, deserves better to have a statue raised to his memory, than any hero, king, or conqueror, that has ever yet existed.

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