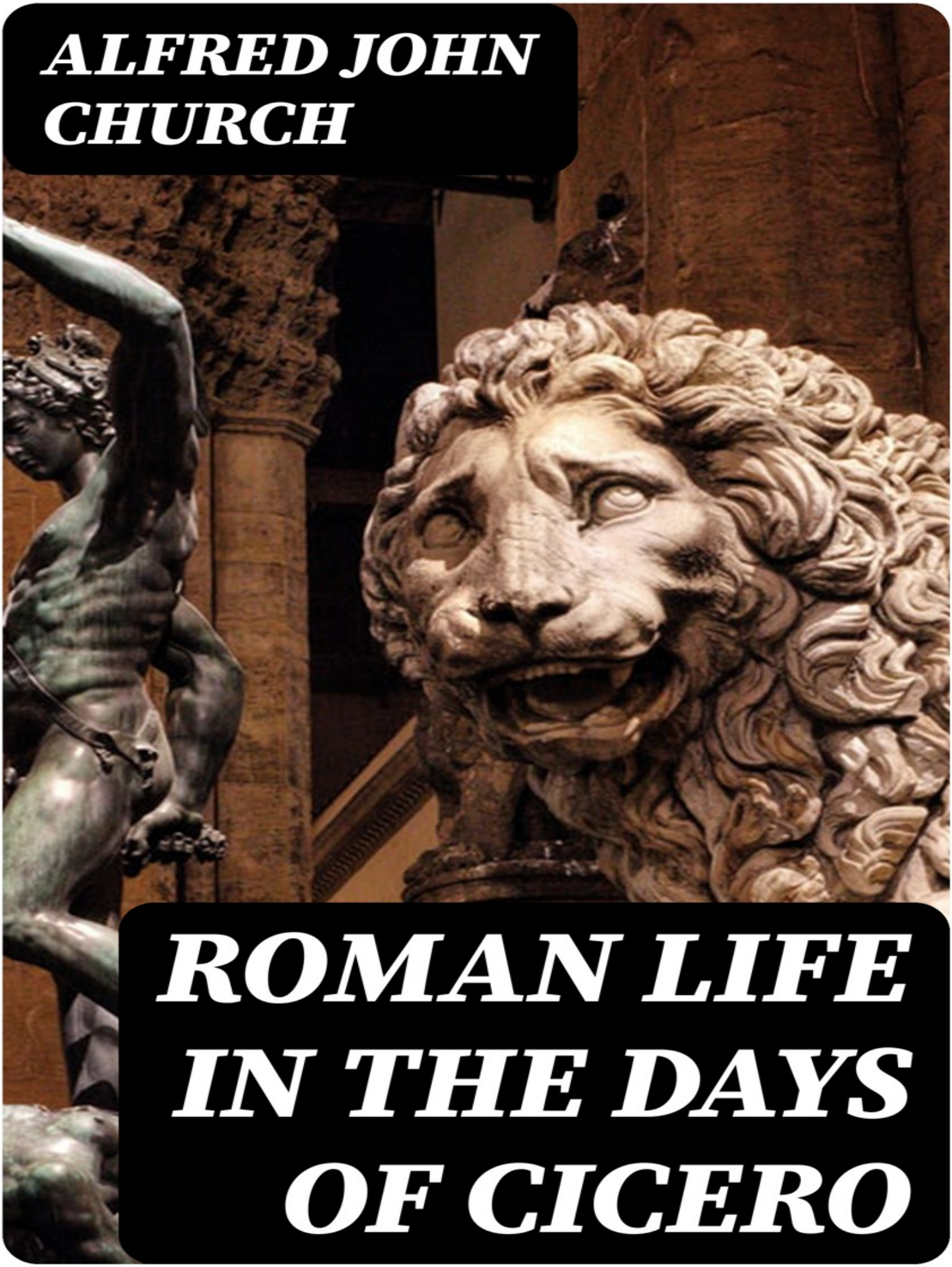
ALFRED JOHN CHURCH



ROMAN LIFE IN THE DAYS OF CICERO

Alfred John Church

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

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PREFACE.

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This book does not claim to be a life of Cicero or a history of the last days of the Roman Republic. Still less does it pretend to come into comparison with such a work as Bekker's *Gallus*, in which on a slender thread of narrative is hung a vast amount of facts relating to the social life of the Romans. I have tried to group round the central figure of Cicero various sketches of men and manners, and so to give my readers some idea of what life actually was in Rome, and the provinces of Rome, during the first six decades—to speak roughly—of the first century B.C. I speak of Cicero as the "central figure," not as judging him to be the most important man of the time, but because it is from him, from his speeches and letters, that we chiefly derive the information of which I have here made use. Hence it follows that I give, not indeed a life of the great orator, but a sketch of his personality and career. I have been obliged also to trespass on the domain of history: speaking of Cicero, I was obliged to speak also of Caesar and of Pompey, of Cato and of Antony, and to give a narrative, which I have striven to make as brief as possible, of their military achievements and political action. I must apologize for seeming to speak dogmatically on some questions which have been much disputed. It would have been obviously inconsistent with the

character of the book to give the opposing arguments; and my only course was to state simply conclusions which I had done my best to make correct.

I have to acknowledge my obligations to Marquardt's *Privat-Leben der Romer*, Mr. Capes' *University Life in Ancient Athens*, and Mr. Watson's *Select Letters of Cicero*, I have also made frequent use of Mr. Anthony Trollope's *Life of Cicero*, a work full of sound sense, though curiously deficient in scholarship.

The publishers and myself hope that the illustrations, giving as there is good reason to believe they do the veritable likenesses of some of the chief actors in the scenes described, will have a special interest. It is not till we come down to comparatively recent times that we find art again lending the same aid to the understanding of history.

Some apology should perhaps be made for retaining the popular title of one of the illustrations. The learned are, we believe, agreed that the statue known as the "Dying Gladiator" does not represent a gladiator at all. Yet it seemed pedantic, in view of Byron's famous description, to let it appear under any other name.

ALFRED CHURCH.

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ROMAN LIFE IN THE DAYS OF CICERO.

CHAPTER I.

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A ROMAN BOY.

A Roman father's first duty to his boy, after lifting him up in his arms in token that he was a true son of the house, was to furnish him with a first name out of the scanty list (just seventeen) to which his choice was limited. This naming was done on the eighth day after birth, and was accompanied with some religious ceremonies, and with a feast to which kinsfolk were invited. Thus named he was enrolled in some family or state register. The next care was to protect him from the malignant influence of the evil eye by hanging round his neck a gilded *bulla*, a round plate of metal. (The *bulla* was of leather if he was not of gentle birth.) This he wore till he assumed the dress of manhood. Then he laid it aside, possibly to assume it once more, if he attained the crowning honor to which a Roman could aspire, and was drawn in triumph up the slope of the Capitol. He was nursed by his mother, or, in any case, by a free-born woman. It was his mother that had exclusive charge of him for the first seven years of his life, and had much to say to the ordering of his life afterwards. For Roman mothers were not shut up like their sisters in Greece, but played no small part in affairs—witness the histories or legends (for it matters not for this purpose whether they are fact or fiction) of the Sabine wives, of Tullia, who stirred up her husband to seize a throne, or Veturia, who turned her son Coriolanus from his purpose of besieging Rome. At seven began the

education which was to make him a citizen and a soldier. Swimming, riding, throwing the javelin developed his strength of body. He learned at the same time to be frugal, temperate in eating and drinking, modest and seemly in behavior, reverent to his elders, obedient to authority at home and abroad, and above all, pious towards the gods. If it was the duty of the father to act as priest in some temple of the State (for the priests were not a class apart from their fellow-citizens), or to conduct the worship in some chapel of the family, the lad would act as *camillus* or acolyte. When the clients, the dependents of the house, trooped into the hall in the early morning hours to pay their respects to their patron, or to ask his advice and assistance in their affairs, the lad would stand by his father's chair and make acquaintance with his humble friends. When the hall was thrown open, and high festival was held, he would be present and hear the talk on public affairs or on past times. He would listen to and sometimes take part in the songs which celebrated great heroes. When the body of some famous soldier or statesman was carried outside the walls to be buried or burned, he would be taken to hear the oration pronounced over the bier.

At one time it was the custom, if we may believe a quaint story which one of the Roman writers tells us, for the senators to introduce their young sons to the sittings of their assembly, very much in the same way as the boys of Westminster School are admitted to hear the debates in the Houses of Parliament. The story professes to show how it was that one of the families of the race of Papirius came to bear the name of *Praetextatus*, i.e., clad in the *praetexta*

(the garb of boyhood), and it runs thus:—"It was the custom in the early days of the Roman State that the senators should bring their young sons into the Senate to the end that they might learn in their early days how great affairs of the commonwealth were managed. And that no harm should ensue to the city, it was strictly enjoined upon the lads that they should not say aught of the things which they had heard within the House. It happened on a day that the Senate, after long debate upon a certain matter, adjourned the thing to the morrow. Hereupon the son of a certain senator, named Papirius, was much importuned by his mother to tell the matter which had been thus painfully debated. And when the lad, remembering the command which had been laid upon him that he should be silent about such matters, refused to tell it, the woman besought him to speak more urgently, till at the last, being worn out by her importunities, he contrived this thing. 'The Senate,' he said, 'debated whether something might not be done whereby there should be more harmony in families than is now seen to be; and whether, should it be judged expedient to make any change, this should be to order that a husband should have many wives, or a wife should have more husbands than one.' Then the woman, being much disturbed by the thing which she had heard, hastened to all the matrons of her acquaintance, and stirred them up not to suffer any such thing. Thus it came to pass that the Senate, meeting the next day, were astonished beyond measure to see a great multitude of women gathered together at the doors, who besought them not to make any change; or, if any, certainly not to permit that a man should have more wives

than one. Then the young Papirius told the story how his mother had questioned him, and how he had devised this story to escape from her importunity. Thereupon the Senate, judging that all boys might not have the same constancy and wit, and that the State might suffer damage from the revealing of things that had best be kept secret, made this law, that no sons of a senator should thereafter come into the House, save only this young Papirius, but that he should have the right to come so long as he should wear the *praetexta*."

While this general education was going on, the lad was receiving some definite teaching. He learned of course to read, to write, and to cypher. The elder Cato used to write in large characters for the benefit of his sons portions of history, probably composed by himself or by his contemporary Fabius, surnamed the "Painter" (the author of a chronicle of Italy from the landing of Aeneas down to the end of the Second Punic War). He was tempted to learn by playthings, which ingeniously combined instruction and amusement. Ivory letters—probably in earlier times a less costly material was used—were put into his hands, just as they are put into the hands of children now-a-days, that he might learn how to form words. As soon as reading was acquired, he began to learn by heart. "When we were boys," Cicero represents himself as saying to his brother Quintus, in one of his Dialogues, "we used to learn the 'Twelve Tables.'" The "Twelve Tables" were the laws which Appius of evil fame and his colleagues the decemvirs had arranged in a code. "No one," he goes on to say, "learns them now." Books had become far more common in the forty years

which had passed between Cicero's boyhood and the time at which he is supposed to be speaking; and the tedious lesson of his early days had given place to something more varied and interesting.

Writing the boy learned by following with the pen (a sharp-pointed *stylus* of metal), forms of letters which had been engraved on tablets of wood. At first his hand was held and guided by the teacher. This was judged by the experienced to be a better plan than allowing him to shape letters for himself on the wax-covered tablet. Of course parchment and paper were far too expensive materials to be used for exercises and copies. As books were rare and costly, dictation became a matter of much importance. The boy wrote, in part at least, his own schoolbooks. Horace remembers with a shudder what he had himself written at the dictation of his schoolmaster, who was accustomed to enforce good writing and spelling with many blows. He never could reconcile himself to the early poets whose verse had furnished the matter of these lessons.

Our Roman boy must have found arithmetic a more troublesome thing than the figures now in use (for which we cannot be too thankful to the Arabs their inventors) have made it. It is difficult to imagine how any thing like a long sum in multiplication or division could have been done with the Roman numerals, so cumbrous were they. The number, for instance, which we represent by the figures 89 would require for its expression no less than *nine* figures, LXXXVIIII. The boy was helped by using the fingers, the left hand being used to signify numbers below a hundred, and the right numbers above it. Sometimes his teacher would have a

counting-board, on which units, tens, and hundreds would be represented by variously colored balls. The sums which he did were mostly of a practical kind. Here is the sample that Horace gives of an arithmetic lesson. "The Roman boys are taught to divide the penny by long calculations. 'If from five ounces be subtracted one, what is the remainder?' At once you can answer, 'A third of a penny.' 'Good, you will be able to take care of your money. If an ounce be added what does it make?' 'The half of a penny.'"

While he was acquiring this knowledge he was also learning a language, the one language besides his own which to a Roman was worth knowing—Greek. Very possibly he had begun to pick it up in the nursery, where a Greek slave girl was to be found, just as the French *bonne* or the German nursery-governess is among our own wealthier families. He certainly began to acquire it when he reached the age at which his regular education was commenced. Cato the Elder, though he made it a practice to teach his own sons, had nevertheless a Greek slave who was capable of undertaking the work, and who actually did teach, to the profit of his very frugal master, the sons of other nobles. Aemilius, the conqueror of Macedonia, who was a few years younger than Cato, had as a tutor a Greek of some distinction. While preparing the procession of his triumph he had sent to Athens for a scene-painter, as we should call him, who might make pictures of conquered towns wherewith to illustrate his victories. He added to the commission a stipulation that the artist should also be qualified to take the place of tutor. By good fortune the Athenians happened to have in stock, so to speak, exactly

the man he wanted, one Metrodorus. Cicero had a Greek teacher in his own family, not for his son indeed, who was not born till later, but for his own benefit. This was one Diodotus, a Stoic philosopher. Cicero had been his pupil in his boyhood, and gave him a home till the day of his death, "I learned many things from him, logic especially." In old age he lost his sight. "Yet," says his pupil, "he devoted himself to study even more diligently than before; he had books read to him night and day. These were studies which he could pursue without his eyes; but he also, and this seems almost incredible, taught geometry without them, instructing his learners whence and whither the line was to be drawn, and of what kind it was to be." It is interesting to know that when the old man died he left his benefactor about nine thousand pounds.

Of course only wealthy Romans could command for their sons the services of such teachers as Diodotus; but any well-to-do-household contained a slave who had more or less acquaintance with Greek. In Cicero's time a century and more of conquests on the part of Rome over Greek and Greek-speaking communities had brought into Italian families a vast number of slaves who knew the Greek language, and something, often a good deal, of Greek literature. One of these would probably be set apart as the boy's attendant; from him he would learn to speak and read a language, a knowledge of which was at least as common at Rome as is a knowledge of French among English gentlemen.

If the Roman boy of whom we are speaking belonged to a very wealthy and distinguished family, he would probably

receive his education at home. Commonly he would go to school. There were schools, girls' schools as well as boys' schools, at Rome in the days of the wicked Appius Claudius. The schoolmaster appears among the Etruscans in the story of Camillus, when the traitor, who offers to hand over to the Roman general the sons of the chief citizen of Falerii, is at his command scourged back into the town by his scholars. We find him again in the same story in the Latin town of Tusculum, where it is mentioned as one of the signs of a time of profound peace (Camillus had hurriedly marched against the town on a false report of its having revolted), that the hum of scholars at their lessons was heard in the market-place. At Rome, as time went on, and the Forum became more and more busy and noisy, the schools were removed to more suitable localities. Their appliances for teaching were improved and increased. Possibly maps were added, certainly reading books. Homer was read, and, as we have seen, the old Latin play-writers, and, afterwards, Virgil. Horace threatens the book which willfully insists on going out into the world with this fate, that old age will find it in a far-off suburb teaching boys their letters. Some hundred years afterwards the prophecy was fulfilled. Juvenal tells us how the schoolboys stood each with a lamp in one hand and a well-thumbed Horace or sooty Virgil in the other. Quintilian, writing about the same time, goes into detail, as becomes an old schoolmaster. "It is an admirable practice that the boy's reading should begin with Homer and Virgil. The tragic writers also are useful; and there is much benefit to be got from the lyric poets also. But here you must make a selection not of authors only, but a part of authors." It is

curious to find him banishing altogether a book that is, or certainly was, more extensively used in our schools than any other classic, the Heroides of Ovid.

These, and such as these, then, are the books which our Roman boy would have to read. Composition would not be forgotten. "Let him take," says the author just quoted, "the fables of Aesop and tell them in simple language, never rising above the ordinary level. Then let him pass on to a style less plain; then, again, to bolder paraphrases, sometimes shortening, sometimes amplifying the original, but always following his sense." He also suggests the writing of themes and characters. One example he gives is this, "Was Crates the philosopher right when, having met an ignorant boy, he administered a beating to his teacher?" Many subjects of these themes have been preserved. Hannibal was naturally one often chosen. His passage of the Alps, and the question whether he should have advanced on the city immediately after the battle of Cannae, were frequently discussed. Cicero mentions a subject of the speculative kind. "It is forbidden to a stranger to mount the wall. A. mounts the wall, but only to help the citizens in repelling their enemies. Has A. broken the law?"

To make these studies more interesting to the Roman boy, his schoolmaster called in the aid of emulation. "I feel sure," says Quintilian, "that the practice which I remember to have been employed by my own teachers was any thing but useless. They were accustomed to divide the boys into classes, and they set us to speak in the order of our powers; every one taking his turn according to his proficiency. Our performances were duly estimated; and prodigious were the

struggles which we had for victory. To be the head of one's class was considered the most glorious thing conceivable. But the decision was not made once for all. The next month brought the vanquished an opportunity of renewing the contest. He who had been victorious in the first encounter was not led by success to relax his efforts, and a feeling of vexation impelled the vanquished to do away with the disgrace of defeat. This practice, I am sure, supplied a keener stimulus to learning than did all the exhortations of our teachers, the care of our tutors, and the wishes of our parents." Nor did the schoolmaster trust to emulation alone. The third choice of the famous Winchester line, "Either learn, or go: there is yet another choice—to be flogged," was liberally employed. Horace celebrates his old schoolmaster as a "man of many blows," and another distinguished pupil of this teacher, the Busby or Keate of antiquity, has specified the weapons which he employed, the ferule and the thong. The thong is the familiar "tawse" of schools north of the Border. The ferule was a name given both to the bamboo and to the yellow cane, which grew plentifully both in the islands of the Greek Archipelago and in Southern Italy, as notably at Cannae in Apulia, where it gave a name to the scene of the great battle. The *virga* was also used, a rod commonly of birch, a tree the educational use of which had been already discovered. The walls of Pompeii indeed show that the practice of Eton is truly classical down to its details.

As to the advantage of the practice opinions were divided. One enthusiastic advocate goes so far as to say that the Greek word for a cane signifies by derivation, "the

sharpener of the young" (*narthex, nearous thegein*), but the best authorities were against it. Seneca is indignant with the savage who will "butcher" a young learner because he hesitates at a word—a venial fault indeed, one would think, when we remember what must have been the aspect of a Roman book, written as it was in capitals, almost without stops, and with little or no distinction between the words. And Quintilian is equally decided, though he allows that flogging was an "institution."

As to holidays the practice of the Roman schools probably resembled that which prevails in the Scotch Universities, though with a less magnificent length of vacation. Every one had a holiday on the "days of Saturn" (a festival beginning on the seventeenth of December), and the schoolboys had one of their own on the "days of Minerva," which fell in the latter half of March; but the "long vacation" was in the summer. Horace speaks of lads carrying their fees to school on the fifteenth of the month for eight months in the year (if this interpretation of a doubtful passage is correct). Perhaps as this was a country school the holidays were made longer than usual, to let the scholars take their part in the harvest, which as including the vintage would not be over till somewhat late in the autumn. We find Martial, however, imploring a schoolmaster to remember that the heat of July was not favorable to learning, and suggesting that he should abdicate his seat till the fifteenth of October brought a season more convenient for study. Rome indeed was probably deserted in the later summer and autumn by the wealthier class, who were doubtless disposed to agree in the poet's remark, a remark

to which the idlest schoolboy will forgive its Latin for the sake of its admirable sentiment:

"Aestate pueri si valent satis discunt." "In summer boys learn enough, if they keep their health."

Something, perhaps, may be said of the teachers, into whose hands the boys of Rome were committed. We have a little book, of not more than twoscore pages in all, which gives us "lives of illustrious schoolmasters;" and from which we may glean a few facts. The first business of a schoolmaster was to teach grammar, and grammar Rome owed, as she owed most of her knowledge, to a Greek, a certain Crates, who coming as ambassador from one of the kings of Asia Minor, broke his leg while walking in the ill-paved streets of Rome, and occupied his leisure by giving lectures at his house. Most of the early teachers were Greeks. Catulus bought a Greek slave for somewhat more than fifteen hundred pounds, and giving him his freedom set him up as a schoolmaster; another of the same nation received a salary of between three and four hundred pounds, his patron taking and probably making a considerable profit out of the pupils' fees. Orbilius, the man of blows, was probably of Greek descent. He had been first a beadle, then a trumpeter, then a trooper in his youth, and came to Rome in the year in which Cicero was consul. He seems to have been as severe on the parents of his pupils as he was in another way on the lads themselves, for he wrote a book in which he exposed their meanness and ingratitude. His troubles, however, did not prevent him living to the great age of one hundred and three. The author of the little book about schoolmasters had seen his statue in

his native town. It was a marble figure, in a sitting posture, with two writing desks beside it. The favorite authors of Orbilius, who was of the old-fashioned school, were, as has been said, the early dramatists. Caecilius, a younger man, to whom Atticus the friend and correspondent of Cicero gave his freedom, lectured on Virgil, with whom, as he was intimate with one of Virgil's associates, he probably had some acquaintance. A certain Flaccus had the credit of having first invented prizes. He used to pit lads of equal age against each other, supplying not only a subject on which to write, but a prize for the victor. This was commonly some handsome or rare old book. Augustus made him tutor to his grandsons, giving him a salary of eight hundred pounds per annum. Twenty years later, a fashionable schoolmaster is said to have made between three and four thousands.

These schoolmasters were also sometimes teachers of eloquence, lecturing to men. One Gnipho, for instance, is mentioned among them, as having held his classes in the house of Julius Caesar (Caesar was left an orphan at fifteen); and afterwards, when his distinguished pupil was grown up, in his own. But Cicero, when he was praetor, and at the very height of his fame, is said to have attended his lectures. This was the year in which he delivered the very finest of his non-political speeches, his defence of Cluentius. He must have been a very clever teacher from whom so great an orator hoped to learn something.

These teachers of eloquence were what we may call the "Professors" of Rome. A lad had commonly "finished his education" when he put on the "man's gown;" but if he thought of political life, of becoming a statesman, and

taking office in the commonwealth, he had much yet to learn. He had to make himself a lawyer and an orator. Law he learned by attaching himself, by becoming the pupil, as we should say, of some great man that was famed for his knowledge. Cicero relates to us his own experience: "My father introduced me to the Augur Scaevola; and the result was that, as far as possible and permissible, I never left the old man's side. Thus I committed to memory many a learned argument of his, many a terse and clever maxim, while I sought to add to my own knowledge from his stores of special learning. When the Augur died I betook myself to the Pontiff of the same name and family." Elsewhere we have a picture of this second Scaevola and his pupils. "Though he did not undertake to give instruction to any one, yet he practically taught those who were anxious to listen to him by allowing them to hear his answers to those who consulted him." These consultations took place either in the Forum or at his own house. In the Forum the great lawyer indicated that clients were at liberty to approach by walking across the open space from corner to corner. The train of young Romans would then follow his steps, just as the students follow the physician or the surgeon through the wards of a hospital. When he gave audience at home they would stand by his chair. It must be remembered that the great man took no payment either from client or from pupil.

But the young Roman had not only to learn law, he must also learn how to speak-learn, as far as such a thing can be learned, how to be eloquent. What we in this country call the career of the public man was there called the career of the orator. With us it is much a matter of chance whether a

man can speak or not. We have had statesmen who wielded all the power that one man ever can wield in this country who had no sort of eloquence. We have had others who had this gift in the highest degree, but never reached even one of the lower offices in the government. Sometimes a young politician will go to a professional teacher to get cured of some defect or trick of speech; but that such teaching is part of the necessary training of a statesman is an idea quite strange to us. A Roman received it as a matter of course. Of course, like other things at Rome, it made its way but slowly. Just before the middle of the second century b.c. the Senate resolved: "Seeing that mention has been made of certain philosophers and rhetoricians, let Pomponius the praetor see to it, as he shall hold it to be for the public good, and for his own honor, that none such be found at Rome." Early in the first century the censors issued an edict forbidding certain Latin rhetoricians to teach. One of these censors was the great orator Crassus, greatest of all the predecessors of Cicero. Cicero puts into his mouth an apology for this proceeding: "I was not actuated by any hostility to learning or culture. These Latin rhetoricians were mere ignorant pretenders, inefficient imitators of their Greek rivals, from whom the Roman youth were not likely to learn any thing but impudence." In spite of the censors, however, and in spite of the fashionable belief in Rome that what was Greek must be far better than what was of native growth, the Latin teachers rose into favor. "I remember," says Cicero, "when we were boys, one Lucius Plotinus, who was the first to teach eloquence in Latin; how, when the studious youth of the capital crowded to hear him it vexed me much,