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OLD AND RARE BOOKS

JAMES CHAPMAN WOODS

OLD AND RARE BOOKS.

An Elementary Lecture.

DELIVERED AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTION OF SOUTH WALES,
SWANSEA, ON MARCH 2nd, 1885.

BY
JAMES CHAPMAN WOODS.

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AND OTHER POEMS.

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Old and Rare Books.

I fear that I have chosen for my lecture a subject which can be but of comparatively little interest to the majority of you, and have consulted therein rather my own tastes and inclinations than those of my audience. For it is a fact that people in general take little account of old books—save, perhaps, for their convertibility into waste-paper. Nor is this little failing at all to be wondered at; as our greatest poet has said, "The world is still deceived with ornament;" and old books have, as a rule, little that is attractive about them externally; their covers are usually dull and forbidding; their backs are apt to be broken; they have a way of being short of the final pages; they are printed in crabbed and obscure characters; the foot-notes are often strangely hieroglyphical;—they have, in short, all that air of fustiness and old-fogeyism that comes alike, with age, to books and men. No; the love of old books, depend upon it, is the outgrowth of a special and eccentric education: it is "caviare to the general;" it is indigenous to dreamy, brotherless boys, brought up in far-off, silent parsonages, under the shadow

of solemn shelves—who, having no natural playmates, are thrown upon chance things for pastime, and fall of necessity under the spell of the genius of the place.

I myself have very vivid recollections of the kind : how familiar I grew with the long ranks of stately volumes, which once I was only allowed to touch in the hour before bed-time, but, later, had leave to revel among at my own sweet will. I can see them all to-night, though, alas! they have long been scattered for ever. There was a "Foxe's Book of Martyrs" there, I remember in particular, which must have been of some old and valuable edition, though of what, I have not the faintest notion, being then innocent of all such subtleties ; but now it is a standing regret with me that I never carried off that book while it was in my power, even though I had had to impose on my stepfather a dummy volume in its place. As it began, so it continued ; and, to-night, I am a living instance of the terrible depravity of moral purpose to which the bibliomaniac is apt to come, and of the yet more terrible boredom which he is capable of inflicting on an audience whom he can once get by the ear.

But this is no time for reminiscence ; for I have to traverse a subject of immense extent, and the compass of an hour is all too narrow even to skim it in the most casual way. And I must ask your forbearance while I trouble you at first with a little semi-history, which is probably familiar to many of you already.

The date of the invention of printing is now generally taken to have been about the year 1450; but this is accurate in a limited sense only, as I will explain. Very soon after the beginning of the fifteenth century, there were in use in Germany certain blocks of wood on which rude illustrations and types explaining them, all in a piece, were carved in relief. An impression of this relieved surface was transferred to vellum or paper by the simple process of placing the latter on the former, and rubbing its back vigorously with a kind of wooden flat-iron. The ink used was always of a light brown colour, and, as a matter of course, it was impossible to print on both sides of the leaf. These productions of the *first* printing-presses were at first printed as broadsheets only, but the process of binding them together was evidently not very difficult to discover, and the books so resulting are the famous Block-books, which are the parents of all printed books, and are now worth very considerably more than their weight in gold.

Block-books.

But this, though a great advance on manuscript writing, left evidently a far greater advance to be made; for the block-book printer was simply the possessor of one or more unchangeable series of plates, which were always being chipped and worn by the rough process of transference. He dealt with the earlier grievance first, when it occurred to him to cut single wooden letters, which could be used in ever-shifting combinations: and then the great step was taken which the moderns agree

to regard as the invention of printing, but which was in reality the substitution of metal for wooden types. The glory of this innovation is now generally ascribed to Gutenberg, who, with Fust, set up a press at Mentz on the Rhine, and thence issued the first metal-type-printed books. Some of you may, perhaps, have seen, towards the end of the long transcript of the title-page of a costly volume in a great book-sale the word "Moguntiæ," and wondered what on earth it meant or stood for:—well, it stands for Mentz, the cradle of the giant whose arms are folded now round all the world.

Metal types.

The first books.

The first complete book thus printed was a Bible which is known as the Mazarin Bible, because the first known copy of it was discovered in the library of Cardinal Mazarin. A copy sold in the Syston Park sale in December last for £3,900. The first book printed with a date was a Latin Psalter from the same press in 1457, and the second was also a Latin Psalter with the Athanasian Creed at the end, a copy of which was sold in the same sale for £4,950. Copies of all these books are in the British Museum, and in the magnificent library at Althorp of Earl Spencer, the present Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and are hardly likely to be met with at present on local book-stalls.

These books, like the block-books, are printed only on one side of the leaf, but this difficulty was overcome in 1460. Ten years later, a little book printed at Cologne was the first to have its pages

numbered, and simultaneously, a printer at Milan introduced the use of signatures—the technical name for the letters and figures which will be found at the foot of certain right-hand pages of almost all printed books, and indicate the size of the sheets, and their number and order for the proof-reader and binder.

So, you see, this art of printing was no great conception springing suddenly from one brain, but the slow, laborious ascent of a dark and irregular stairway, accomplished by simple working-men who had no help from the rich and learned, and probably small idea of the revolution which they were initiating. Neither, certainly, could their wildest dreams have imagined that, in distant centuries, the poor outworn blocks which they had discarded,—the rude prints and fly-leaves which recorded their failures, and which they forgot to burn,—would be guarded as jealously in imperial libraries as the illuminated manuscripts and emblazoned missals of the art of an elder day!

The childhood of any healthy movement is always wonderfully stimulated by a little adversity, and this, fortunately came at a very early date to the printers at Mentz. From the siege of the town in 1462 by Adolf of Nassau, and the subsequent abolition of their priviliges, they flew off in all directions, like a swarm of pigeons frightened by the shout of the bird-scarer, settling again, some in the neighbouring cities, some in France and the Low Countries, and some as far away as the great cities of Italy. During the last years

of the century, presses were established all over Europe, and having won the fight for existence, the printers had leisure to vie with each other in the quality of their work and publications. The early excellence which they achieved is quite wonderful, and the labours and experience of four centuries have made little advance upon their craftsmanship. The renowned names among them are legion; but foremost of them all stands that of Aldus Manutius, who established a press at Venice in 1490. Marvellous is the series of famous works issued from the Aldine Press, comprising splendid first editions of most of the Greek and Latin authors, and carefully collated texts of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, all of which rank as treasures in our chief libraries to-day. The Alduses held the appointment of Printers to the Pope, and the monopoly of publishing Breviaries and Missals of the version authorized by the Council of Trent.

Aldine Press.

The custom of using printers' emblems upon the title-pages of books came very early into vogue, and on the Aldines will generally be found that of an anchor with a dolphin twisted round it, which was first used in a Dante of 1502. Perhaps the greatest compliment to the character of the Aldine publications was paid them as early as that year and onwards, when they were forged in large numbers by the printers of Lyons and Florence.

The next foreign press to which I will refer was founded a century later, and is, perhaps, more generally known, since its minor works may still

be often bought on book-stalls for small prices. This is the press of the Elzevirs, established at Leyden (Lugdunum Batavorum is its name on title-pages) in 1592, and continued there and at Amsterdam for more than a century. The Elzevirs are especially noteworthy for the beauty of their type and paper, and often for their charming engraved frontispieces; but they seem to have regarded rather the form than the letter, and are by no means remarkable for accurate texts.

Elzevir Press.

Their golden age was in the second and third quarters of the seventeenth century, and among the most valuable of them are the "Cæsar" of 1635, the "Virgil" of 1636, and the undated "Thomas à Kempis" of a few years later. They are distinguished by numerous emblems; the most common being a sphere, and Minerva standing beneath an olive-tree, holding in one hand a branch, and in the other a scroll, inscribed "Ne extra oleas." Sometimes they published dangerous books, as at the time of the Jansenist controversy, under feigned names, such as Jean Sambix and Jacques le Jeune. They were as great pirates as the American publishers themselves, the French being the chief victims of their depredations; but, as Andrew Lang says of them, "It was worth while being pirated by the Elzevirs, who turned you out like a gentleman, with fleurons and red letter and a pretty frontispiece."

The dearest of all the 1,200 works of the Elzevirs is a worthless little French cookery book, called "Le Pastissier François," published

at Amsterdam in 1665, of which only about 30 copies seem to have escaped the hard fate of kitchen literature, and sell for more than £200 apiece. The last of the Elzevirs died in 1712, and the name of the famous press from that date is found no more on books.

Although the subject is inexhaustible, I shall only trouble you with a reference to one more foreign press, and that in somewhat fuller detail, for a special reason, which will appear as I proceed.

Plantin-Moretus Press.

In the year 1555 Christopher Plantin, a casket-maker of Antwerp, being run through the body and crippled for life by a party of drunken revellers, opened there a printing-house, to which trade he had already been apprenticed in Caen, and published his first book—a French translation from the Italian. Seven years later he fell under suspicion of heresy; his house was searched, three of his workmen arrested and condemned, and he himself thought it prudent to escape to Paris. He found means, however, to prove his orthodoxy, and, in 1563, returned to Antwerp, and recommenced business under the patronage of King Philip of Spain himself. In 1568 he undertook, with money help from the King, the publication of a Polyglot Bible in five languages, which took five years to complete. He became also the owner, for next to nothing, of the Alduses' monopoly to publish Missals and Breviaries in so far as Spain and its dependencies were concerned. Notwithstanding these privileges, his life

was by no means a happy one ; he found Philip a wretched paymaster, and suffered terribly in the War of Independence, and the awful sack of Antwerp, branded as the Spanish Fury, which forms the most lurid of all the lurid pictures in Motley's History of the time. However, in spite of all his troubles, Plantin managed to keep his head above water ; he removed to premises in the Marché du Vendredi, to which he carried with him the sign of the Golden Compasses, and there lived till his death in 1589. These, grasped in a hand emerging from a cloud, form the emblem to be found on the title-pages of his house, with the motto, "Labore et constantia"—which you may translate, "By hard work and sticking to it."

He left no son, but several daughters, all of them married to assistants or managers at his branch houses ; and his favourite son-in-law, John Mœrentorf, or Moretus, became the sole successor to the Antwerp business.

John contented himself with the exercise of his monopolies ; but his son, Balthasar, between 1610 and 1641, struck out in every direction. He was the friend of all the eminent men of his day ; Rubens painted his portrait and those of his family, and, with his pupils, illustrated, and illustrated magnificently, his books. After his death, son still succeeded father in unbroken succession, until, in 1876, the last of the house sold the whole concern—buildings, furniture, pictures, plant, engravings, and publications—to the Municipality of

Antwerp, who—and here is the point of the story—have dedicated it to the public as a monument of the past for ever.

To-day you can go to Antwerp, and walk into the noble pile of buildings where dwelt these old printers: everything has been arranged and preserved with the most reverent hand, and stands just as it stood while books were pouring from its presses in the zenith of its renown. One cannot but honour a public body which is actuated with such a lofty regard for the past—with such a far-seeing sense of what is good for the future. You wander through the stately chambers sacred to these illustrious dead, and may fancy yourself back in the printing-house with John Evelyn, when he visited it in October, 1643. That may be the footfall of Balthasar himself that meets you while his workmen are at their mid-day meal. There are the cumbrous presses that in an hour will be groaning again ; you see just where the proof-correctors left their copy ; here are the quaint old types which the compositors were busy at ere you entered ; here the library, where the publications of the house may be consulted by the poor student, for, note, these old printers were as conscious of their duties as of their privileges. Here is the little shop opening on the street, as the shopman left it to fetch you the book you asked for; there are blanks in the well-filled shelves whence M. le Burgomaster made his purchases this morning ; see here, the weighing-scales—the bad florin nailed to the counter. One

cannot but think of the legend of the Sleeping Beauty; nothing is wanting, save life; let but the destined lips kiss the bust of John Moretus that watches in the quadrangle, and surely everything will revive again, as though the spell of silence and rest had never fallen!

England. But it is time that we should come nearer home; for, after all, English books and their makers must possess for you a greater interest than these old-world foreign printers of classics and breviaries.

Caxton Press. As you all know, our first English printer was Caxton, who, in the course of a diplomatic mission to the Court of Burgundy, came in contact, in the Low Countries, with the new art, and saw its immense importance. He mastered its mystery while abroad, and himself translated and printed, at Bruges and Cologne, a French book of Raoul le Fevre, undated, but believed to be of the years 1465 to 1467. On his return to England he set up a printing-press at Westminster, and there printed the first English book, "Ye Game and Play of ye Chesse," in 1474. A second edition, with wood-cuts, published in 1480, was the first illustrated English book. His next publication requiring special mention was Chaucer's "Book of ye Tales of Caunterburye," in 1477; followed in the next year by Chaucer and Lydgate's minor poems, consisting of eight separate tracts bound up together. Let it be remembered of our first English printer that he paid such early honour to our first great English poet. Then

came his own great work, "The Cronicles of Englond and Discripcion of Britayne," in 1480, and later, a long list of books, comprising the "Confessio Amantis" of Gower, Chaucer's "House of Fame" and "Troylus and Creside," a "Book of the Noble Hystoryes of Kynge Arthur and of Certeyn of His Knyghtes," and "The Mirrour of the World," a copy of which was sold at Sotheby's, in December, for £335. He died in 1491, but not before he had seen other presses in full work around him, amongst them being that of Wynkyn de Worde, who published at Westminster, in 1495, a book called "De Proprietatibus Rerum," on English-made paper.

St. Albans Press.

One of the most interesting of the early English presses is that set up at St. Albans by a schoolmaster, about 1480. How he got his types is a mystery; but, after printing six Latin books, he began upon English, and produced "The Boke of St. Albans," by Dame Juliana Berners, a book which for centuries was one of the two or three that lay in the great hall-window of every gentleman's house in England. It contained three treatises, the first on hawking, the second on hunting, and the third on "cote-armour"; and, in a later edition from the press of De Worde, is added "The Treatise of Fishynge with an Angle."

Dame Juliana proves herself a thorough mistress of all her subjects, expounding the technical terms and practices of each science with equal accuracy and enthusiasm, and finally traces that of heraldry

up to Lucifer and his millions of angels, fixes the first use of coat-armour at the siege of Troy, and settles a whole code of behaviour for the opposite sex, which, as might be expected, makes a good deal for the advantage of her own.

From the time of Caxton and the schoolmaster of St. Albans, a succession of printers, among whom are De Worde, Pynson, and Nicholson, bridge over the interval ensuing before the year 1525, which is made memorable by the fact that the New Testament was then for the first time printed in English.

Bibles form of themselves a speciality in English Bibliography, and their collection the sole labour and end of many a life-time; and I should like to detain you for a few moments in consideration of this branch of my subject.

Testaments.

Tyndale's translation comes first in various editions, but it may be a surprise to you to know that all the early English Testaments were, and, indeed, had to be, printed abroad. The first edition, of 1525, is believed to have been begun at Cologne and finished at Worms. The translation bears traces of having been made while Tyndale was with Luther in Germany, and this circumstance is referred to by Sir Thomas More, in his "Dialogues," printed in 1530, as a reason for its being publicly burned. It contained woodcuts, but its very existence was a matter of doubt until the discovery of a fragment, which is now in the British Museum. Of the second edition, printed at Worms, only two copies are known to

exist. Of the other early editions stray copies are to be found here and there in great libraries only.

Bibles.

The first English Bible—that of Miles Coverdale—was also printed abroad, and bears date 1535. No quite perfect copy is known, but there are five or six nearly perfect. The second edition bears the imprint of "Southwarke, for Jas. Nycolson, 1537," and is rarer than the first. Next comes a Bible known as Taverner's, and then the Great, or Cromwell's Bible, the first authorized version, begun in Paris, interrupted by the Inquisition, and finished in London, in 1539. Then there is the Cranmer Bible, of Apryll, 1540, and after that Bibles were published thick and fast, and become far too numerous for discrimination in a lecture like this. I can only refer to a few editions which are noteworthy, or, at least, notorious, or derive their popular names from the frailties of that very early institution, the "printer's devil." Of these there are, unfortunately, all too many; take, as an instance of irrelevant illustration, the Bishops' Bible of 1572, many of the initials in which are subjects from Ovid's "Metamorphoses," while at the head of the Epistle to the Hebrews is a woodcut representing the story of Leda and the swan.

"Devilled" Bibles.

Matthew's Bible of 1551 has the unenviable distinction of being known as the "Bug" Bible, the passage, "Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night," being translated, "So that thou shalt not nede to be afraid of any Bugges by

night." This is reputed to be the best Bible to go to bed with under one's pillow.

Then there is the well-known "Breeches" Bible, the name given to the Genevan version, in which Adam and Eve are said to have made themselves breeches instead of aprons

In an edition of the Douay, or Roman Catholic Bible of 1609-10, "Is there no balm in Gilead, and is there no physician there?" is translated, "Is there no *rosin* in Gilead?"

In the Royal version, printed in the reign of Charles I., the fool is said to have said in his heart, "There is *a* God." This little mistake cost the printers a fine of £3,000.

According to a Bible of 1653 the *un*righteous are to inherit the Kingdom of God.

In the first Bible printed in Ireland, in 1716, "sin no more" is printed "sin *on* more." Then there is the well-known "Vinegar" Bible, printed at Oxford in the same year, in which the head-line of Luke xvi. reads "the parable of the Vinegar," instead of "the Vineyard."

In another Oxford Bible (of 1792), Philip is named in the Gospel of St. Luke as the Apostle who should deny Christ. In a third (of 1804) it is said that "the murderer shall surely be put *together*," instead of "to death," and in a fourth (of 1810), that 'if any man come to Me and hate not his father, yea, and his own *wife* (instead of life), he cannot be My disciple." This last is a Bible which can only be recommended to confirmed old bachelors.

Then there is the Bible which blesses the *place*-makers, instead of the peacemakers; and finally, the Bible which states very fairly its own case, as proved from the foregoing instances:— "the *printers*"—and not the princes—"have persecuted me without a cause."

In England we have had no great Houses of hereditary printers, like those foreign ones which I have mentioned, whose high and long-sustained excellence gave *éclat* to the works which they produced. From the time of Caxton and De Worde, among the most celebrated presses are those which have continued by reason of their affiliation to corporate bodies or societies, like the Clarendon and Pitt Presses at Oxford and Cambridge, and those which have been set up by wealthy amateurs, like that of Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill.

Clarendon's "History."

From the former have come many notable works, out of which I single the great one of the statesman whose name it bears,—"The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England," by Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, published in three folio volumes in 1702-3-4, with a portrait of the author as frontispiece to each volume, and beautiful initial letters and head and tailpieces to every chapter. This is the book that for half a century stood next to the Bible in the estimation of every descendant of the Cavaliers. Happy the man who could point in its pages to the credentials of his race! Depend on it, well nigh every copy of that first edition has had its own romance, and has been hallowed on the day of King Charles the

Martyr with tears of shame and pride. I am glad to have one myself, not for the sake of any sympathy with its politics, but because it has so distinct a personality of its own.

Strawberry Hill Press.

The publications of the would-be Mæcenas of Strawberry Hill are for the most part as fanciful and bizarre as himself and the gimcracks which he collected, and are indebted to this eccentricity for their not inconsiderable value. The only book of intrinsic merit which he printed was the first, in 1757, and was no other than the first edition of Gray's Pindaric Odes, in quarto,—a little pamphlet of twenty-one pages, priced at one shilling. Be sure to buy it at that figure,—when you can get it.

"The Shyppe of Fooles."

But I have gone ahead of my subject, and must revert to the sixteenth century to glance at a few, and a very few, of the most remarkable books that are prior in date to the Civil War. A most rare and remarkable book, published by Pynson in 1509, and by De Worde in 1517, is the "Shyppe of Fooles," by Sebastian Brant, translated by Alexander Barclay, priest, some of whose original poems are bound up with it in a later edition of 1570. "The design," says Lowndes, "was to ridicule the prevailing vices and follies of every rank and profession, under the allegory of a ship freighted with fools, and in his metrical translation Barclay has given a variety of characters drawn exclusively from his own countrymen, and added his advice to the various fools, which possesses at least the merits of good sense and sound morality."

Any copy of this book, when it comes into the

market at all, may be expected to fetch from fifty to a hundred pounds. With what feeling, then, save of unmitigated envy and disgust, can we regard the luck of Samuel Pepys, a great collector, whose bookseller offered him in 1688 a "Shipp of Fooles" for eight shillings, and said of it that, "though nott scarce, yett soe very fayre and perfect that seldome comes such another: the Prices you will find deare, yett I never sold it under 10s., and at this tyme can have it of a person of quality; butt without flattery, I love to find a rare book for you, and hope shortly to procure for you a perfect 'Hall's Chronicle.'" I have not the least doubt in my own mind that second-hand booksellers were always the same, and that the astute Pepys got it for 7s. 6d.

Skelton.

The books of John Skelton, satirist and poet-laureate of Henry VII., are now of very great value. They were, for the most part, originally printed as thin pamphlets, for which reason very few of them survive. Skelton was an extraordinary writer, and gave his little publications extraordinary titles; this is one of them, "Skelton, Laureate, agaynste a comely Coystrowne that curyowsly chawnted and curyshly cowntred and madly in hys Muskkys mokkyshly made agaynst the IX Musys of Polytyke Poems and Poettys matryculat."

Sidney's "Arcadia."

Then there is Sir Philip Sidney's "Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia," a book now far more celebrated than read, the first edition of which was published in 1590, and is worth nearly £50. I

was fortunate enough to get an early and fairly valuable edition, though, of course, not the first, in Swansea not long ago. The most interesting copy of this book is, perhaps, that which belonged to the Countess of Pembroke herself, and has the initials of her niece, the wife of Shakespeare's Earl of Montgomery, in the morocco binding.

Shakespeare.

But, of course, *the* books of the whole period, though they overlap it a little, are the Shakespeare plays and folios. Shakespeare Bibliography is a subject of enormous extent, as you will conceive when I tell you that Lowndes devotes to it alone 115 closely printed pages. It is very evident that I can but glance at the merest corner of such a field to-night, and will only refer to the four folios.

1st Folio.

The first was published in 1623, under the title of "Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies," at the price of £1. It contained all the plays except "Pericles" (thirty-six in number, seventeen of them being published for the first time)—a portrait, and a leaf containing ten lines "To the Reader," signed B. J. (Ben Jonson), which occur with slight variations of type in the other folios, and which, as they are probably not familiar to some of you, I venture to transcribe:—

"This Figure that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the grauer had a strife
With Nature to outdoo the life;
O, could he but have drawne his wit
As well in brasse as he hath hit
His face; the Print would then surpasse
All that was ever writ in brasse.
But since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke."

This first edition has been sold at all prices, ranging upwards from £10 in 1787; but I believe I am right in saying, though I speak subject to correction, that the culminating price was that reached in the Syston Park sale the other day of £590.

2nd Folio.

The second edition, published in 1632, contains the same plays, and was to be sold "at the signe of the Black Beare in Paul's Churchyard." One copy of this edition has, perhaps, as interesting a history as any in existence. It contains the autograph of Ben Jonson; then, in the handwriting of Charles I., the words "Dum spiro spero, C. R."; a Latin inscription by Sir Thomas Herbert, Groom of the Bedchamber, recording its gift to him by the King; afterwards it became the property of Stevens, the Shakespearian editor; it was bought at his sale for George III., whose autograph it also contains, and it is now at Windsor. But this is not all; for, says Lowndes, "it is the identical copy referred to by Milton in his 'Iconoclastes,' where he says: 'I shall not instance an abstruse writer, wherein the King might be less conversant, but one whom we well know was the closet companion of these his solitudes,—William Shakespeare.'" There is a book with a history!

3rd and 4th Folios.

The third edition in 1664, under the Restoration, contained "Pericles," and the six plays which are now considered spurious, and is especially rare, all the unsold copies having been burned in the Great Fire of London. The fourth folio, containing the same plays, is dated 1685.

The next edition was twenty-five years later, so, to use the stereotyped phrase, there seems to have been no great demand for the works of this esteemed author.

Commonwealth Books.

With the Commonwealth we come to a very different but almost as remarkable class of publications. Away with idle romancers and mouthing stage-players; make room for Gideon Fight-the-good-Fight, and all the shouting sons of thunder! The books of this period to be looked for are the quaint controversial pamphlets bound with and buried under reams of dreary sermons on the late troubles and the Man of Sin, preached before the Houses of Parliament or the General Assembly, and at them and all round them, and measured by hour-glasses which, like Tennyson's brook, ran on for ever. There is more chance of a lucky find among these bound Commonwealth books than remains now elsewhere in all English literature. I lit the other day on a thick, forbidding-looking quarto of endless Puritan sermons, which contained, however, these two little gems for the Bibliophile:—

"A Nosegay of Rank Smelling Flowers, such as grow in Mr. John Goodwin's Garden, Gathered upon occasion of his late lying Libell against M. Thomas Edwards, which he himselfe fitly styled Cretensis"—you will remember that the Cretans were *the* liars of antiquity—"for the foule lies therein contained, with sundry others exactly gathered and published by Thomas Ricraft, a well-willer to truth and unity, but an enemy to the

Hydra of Anarchie,—1646." And then the nail is driven home by two sledge-hammers of texts concerning the fate of liars, designed to give Mr. John Goodwin a very uncomfortable quarter of an hour indeed.

"Funebria Floræ"—that is, the Funeral of Flora, the goddess of flowers—"the Downfall of May Games, wherein is set forth the rudeness, prophaneness, stealing, drinking, fighting, dancing, whoring, misrule, mis-spence of precious time, contempt of God and godly magistrates and people, which oppose the rascality and rout, in this their open prophanenesse and Heathenish Customs . . . with an addition of some verses in the Cloze for the delight of the Ingenious Reader, by Tho. Hall, B.D., Pastor of King's Norton." This was the time of titles run mad. Here are two or three more of them, pamphlets of rarity and value :—"Rot among the Bishops, or a Terrible Tempest in the See of Canterbury, set forth in Lively Emblems to please the Judicious Reader,—1640."—"A Purge for Pluralities, showing the unlawfulnesse of men to have Two Livings ; or the Downefall of Double Benefices; being in the Clymactericall and fatall yeare of the Proud Prelates, but the year of Jubilee to all poor hunger-pinch'd Schollers,—1642." It is safe to conjecture that the author of this last was one of those who had no living at all.

Milton. I have not included the Milton editions with Commonwealth books, because his shorter poems were published earlier, and his great works later than that period.

The first edition of the "Paradise Lost" is remarkable for the fact that there are no less than eight different title-pages of the years 1667-8. The second edition was published in 1674, and the poem then appeared in twelve books, having been formerly divided into ten only. An edition edited by Richard Bentley, the great philologist, in 1732, is well worth having, for the sake of the extraordinary emendations which he suggested to the text, and as a striking instance of the pitiful inability of a mere great scholar to understand poetry. I know of no book which is so brimful of the most exquisite unconscious humour; it reminds one of nothing so much as of Mrs. Partington attempting to mop up the ocean.

But the sand in my hour-glass is dwindling rapidly, and you will be glad to know that I have no thought of playing the Puritan divine and reversing it.

I wish I could say something of the books of two great men whom we have all known from our cradles—of John Bunyan and Daniel de Foe; whose early editions, those of the latter in particular, are "distinctly precious:" of those of Sir Thomas Browne, the Norwich doctor, whose "Urn-burial" is perhaps the most eloquent piece of old prose in the English language: of those of Pope and Swift, and Goldsmith and Johnson; I can only assure you that you cannot imagine until you try, how very much better they all read in their early editions. But I must pass by all these; for I want to say a few words, before I have done,

about a few of the books and editions of the present century which are growing rare and valuable.

19th Century Books.

Leigh Hunt.

The early editions of the works of Leigh Hunt are amongst the number, and from one of them I can illustrate one special occasional element of the value of first editions.

"The Feast of the Poets," published in 1814, while the author was in prison for some reflections upon the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV., differs altogether from the reprinted versions, and the variations afford most curious evidence of the rise, in the interval, of the last great constellation of modern poets, and of the widened sympathies and matured judgment of Hunt's own mind. In the original text, the only poets admitted to dine with Apollo are Scott, Campbell, Moore, and Southey—Wordsworth being unmercifully roasted and dismissed the presence; while Scott is taken to task in this fashion:

> "A great deal's endured where there's measure and rhyme,
> But prose such as yours is a sheer waste of time;
> A singer of ballads unstrung by a cough,
> Who fairly walks on till his hearers walk off."

In the later editions all this is changed; he who cursed, blesses; and, instead of five, one more than the unlucky thirteen sit down to table. He says of Scott that

> "The famous ones all came together;
> His host overwhelmed him with thanks for his novels;"

and calls Wordsworth "the Prince of the Bards of his time."

You will readily understand how books which

throw such light as this on the mental development of distinguished authors come in time to be specially valuable.

Tennyson.

In 1827 was published a little book called "Poems by Two Brothers," followed in 1830 by "Poems chiefly Lyrical," and in 1832 by a "Second Series." All these books are now treasures indeed, for they contain the earliest poems (some of which have been discarded, and many rewritten) of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. It was against the last of these that the *Quarterly Review* launched that tremendous diatribe, which the *Standard* mischievously reproduced last year as a literary curiosity, and which so ludicrously enforces the advice that you should never prophecy unless you know. It is wonderfully instructive to study in these volumes the first forms of poems like "The Miller's Daughter," and "The Lotus-Eaters," and "The Lady of Shalott," and to follow the growth of delicate perception and deftness of fastidious finger-touches that have shaped from the rough cast the finished statue. Such books as these are cheap at any price; for they are the primers and text-books of literary style and excellence.

Pre-Raphaelites.

And next, I cannot but remark upon the significance of the fact that the tide of high prices in the book-market is steadily flowing in the direction of that revival of natural forms—that striving after simple beauty, that *abandon* of art, which has lately broken away from centuries of routine and convention, and riots in its newly recovered freedom. You may get a complete set of the first

editions of Byron for about the same money as you will have to give for any little volume of Keats or Shelley, the forerunners of the new Art-Faith. Look again at the books of Ruskin, its apostle. His "Modern Painters" and "Stones of Venice" are out of reach of all save a very long purse, and his minor books are in proportion.

Rossetti has not been dead two years; but any book which he has illustrated—and some of us might think inadequately illustrated—has already an abnormal value. The first editions of his poems have long since gone into guineas, and "The Germ," the little magazine of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, with its four scanty numbers, is as valuable as a fair-sized diamond. Even Mr. Whistler's dainty catalogues, with their brown-paper covers, and, like his lobster-pots, so little in them, will soon be past praying for. One thing is certain, and to the Bibliophile it is enough: we owe to the new School all the beautiful editions-de-luxe with which our presses are teeming, printed on rough hand-made paper, with uncut edges, dainty covers, and delicate pictures; for *it* has created and cultivated the taste which demands these things, and renders possible their production.

Cruikshank, etc.

But there is another class of books of the present day which are highly prized, although they are at the antipodes of pre-Raphaelitism, and are sacred to the genius of Caricature and Grotesque art. I refer, of course, to those illustrated by Rowlandson, Cruikshank, Leech, Phiz, Doyle,

and Thackeray. It is hardly necessary to point out that the superior charm of the first editions lies in the freshness and vividness of the impressions. Cruikshank's glance bit as deeply into human foibles and vices as his needle into the plate that he etched. Compare the wonderful designs in "Oliver Twist" and "The Tower of London" with those in his Sketch-books and Annuals. See how he commands alike comedy and tragedy—the ever-present wilfulness of exaggeration being but the result of absolute power—and you will not wonder that you have to pay dearly for the books that he has adorned. So with the others in a less degree. So happy was Phiz in having Dickens to illustrate, and Dickens in his artist, that one hardly knows how to apportion their laurels. Thackeray's books, again, are even dearer than Dickens's; many of his creations have the advantage of growing under his pencil as well as his pen; and Doyle's Elves and Sprites are the genuine fellows who never perform out of Fairyland.

Condition of books.

But I have as yet said nothing about certain elements of value in old and rare books, which are altogether unconnected with their edition or contents. You must not imagine that one copy of any edition is as good as any other; such is by no means the case. A very great deal depends upon its state, of which a book has as many as an engraving. Its first state I may describe as that of uncut edges and first covers, if the latter are of special design. By uncut edges is meant, not

that the pages have not been divided for reading, but that they have not been clipped by the binder. By taking away a quarter of an inch from the height of a book, its value may be reduced by pounds. Remember, therefore, that tall copies are especially desirable, and that the binders do not seem to be aware of it; also think twice, or even oftener, before parting with original covers of special design at all.

Bindings.

Its second state is when it returns to you bound; and this brings me to the subject of bindings in general, and to the wonderful repute of certain old bookbinders of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which, you see, I cannot get away from. The former was the period of the Renaissance—an outbreak of Art from the swaddling clothes of tradition, which we ourselves, as I have said, are seeing repeated. In the gay French Court of Francis I. princes and nobles were vying with each other in the splendour of the ornaments which they lavished upon their buildings, and the humbler semi-artistic trades and guilds transferred *their* patterns to their brass-work and book-covers. The Medici were fore-most in the patronage of these new industries; soon nothing became so fashionable for a noble-man or a lady translated to the footstool of the throne as to form a library, and, discarding sober sheepskin, to array his or her volumes in vellum or velvet or variegated leathers, embossed and chased with beautiful emblems and patterns wreathed round the arms or devices of their

French.

House—or their invention. These were the days of the great collectors and designers, Grolier and Maioli, and of the binders, Nicholas and Clovis Eve, who overtop their fellows by the head.

Again, in the seventeenth century, after a fluctuation of fashion and a relapse to older forms of ornament, the rage grew again, and Deromè, Padeloup, and other great binders rose with the occasion. *They* worked for Richelieu and Colbert, La Vallière and Maintenon and Pompadour, who all had their specific designs, by which it is easy to identify the waifs from their libraries, tossed as they have been over half Europe by the storms of the French Revolution.

English. Old English binders of repute are, comparatively, few in number, the name of Roger Payne being of highest renown. But to-day it is an easy matter to get books again bound beautifully. If you can afford it, the advice of George Augustus Sala is on all accounts well worth taking: after acquiring a book which you believe to be of actual or prospective value, spend forthwith three or four guineas on its binding, and patiently await the course of events.

In the foregoing states cleanness and general good condition are taken for granted. The third state of a book is in the absence of all these things, with margins cut away, damp soaking through the leaves, the mysterious bookworm riddling it through and through, until, at last, it grows a mere out-at-elbow vagrant and tatterdemalion of the twopenny box. Have pity on it

then, I beg of you; redeem it from its ignoble existence, and kindle reverentially and sorrowfully its funeral pyre.

What to collect.

And now, perhaps, you would say to me, if you were not an unfortunate audience doomed to silence;—"It is all very well; but *we* have no Fortunatus's purse in our pockets; were we ever so willing, what is there within our reach to collect?" To this I reply:—Although you cannot hope for Caxtons, you may come upon occasional Elzevirs. Among the lumber of the book-shops you may often find early editions of old authors, with quaint head and tail pieces and initial letters, of which those that seem to us so striking in the pages of the *English Illustrated Magazine* are simply reproductions. Ever and again you may come, as I have done, across some illustrious autograph, whose owner the booksellers don't know as well as you,—for I admit, in confidence, that I have found that even *they* sometimes nod,—or by a book-plate, pasted perhaps over an older one, you may trace its career through not undistinguished hands; or you may run upon old-world manuscript notes and elucidations which you could never have made or discovered for yourselves.

I am not at all sure but that one of the wisest collections that could be made nowadays would be of children's books. It is in the nature of their surroundings that they should become rare, and the poor little trivial tag-rag-and-bobtail nursery books that amused our baby great-grandfathers, published by Newberry, in Paul's Church-

yard, rank among the prizes of to-day. Then there are books of known value, which are not yet beyond the reach of moderate means; there are finds at quiet auctions, over which you keep dark as death until the hammer has fallen; and, finally, think of the field for the exercise of a fine judgment in buying the books which are of little value now, but will be the treasures of the future; only take care that the judgment be sound, or you will assuredly fall into the hands of Mr. Chamberlain's new Officials.

All this requires a diligent and careful improvement of opportunities—a watching of occasion. It will not do to rummage a bookstall once a month, or to leave a shelf unsearched because it looks unpromising. It is then the prizes come; it is there they hide themselves. To-morrow you will see something that you have missed or overlooked, in the hands of a friend, and be sure he will not spare you one of the pangs that are the counterpart of his happiness.

L'Envoi.

And now, Mr. Chairman, I must bring this lecture to a close, and I desire to conclude it with a few words in a different strain. First, I would caution all who hear me against one dangerous fascination attending this pursuit of old books. It is, alas! a common thing with book-collectors to be thoroughly conversant with title-pages, errata, and colophons,—to be experts of bindings,—and to be as innocent of all knowledge of the text as though it were written in the mysterious cypher of

that manuscript which Merlin had from his master :—

> "A square of text that looks a little blot,
> Writ in a language that has long gone by. . .
> And every margin scribbled, crost and cramm'd
> With comment, densest condensation. . .
> And none can read the text, not even I,
> And none can read the comment but myself."

Against this danger I warn you. All these things, intensely interesting as they are in my own experience, go after all but skin deep, and should be studied, not solely for themselves, but for the things that lie behind them. Unless they lead us to a knowledge of the times, men, and occasions that produced them—unless we use them as spells to conjure up their past—then is our labour half in vain. Above all, let it be remembered that book-collecting is no substitute for book-reading; that the head which mistakes and garners the husk for the grain—the dross for the gold—is but an empty one after all.

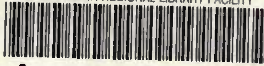
And, finally, I appeal to you, on grounds of sentiment, of common-sense, and of self-interest, take due care of books. Do not throw them about or illtreat them because they belong to yourself, or *only* to a library, nor scribble in them unless you have something sensible to say, for you may be quite sure that you are only making yourself a laughing-stock to the next intelligent reader. Waste and illtreatment of books are horribly common; the children tear them up in the nurseries, the elders store them in damp cellars, double

down their pages, break their backs, or draw off their covers by the fire. I say, without exaggeration, that you are, as often as not, destroying bank-notes,—that you are always committing sacrilege.

Do you remember how, in the preface to the great novel, "Gil Blas," two wandering scholars find, carved upon a stone by the roadside, the inscription, "Here lies buried the soul of Pedro Garcias, the licentiate"? One laughs and wonders and goes his way; the other loosens and removes the stone, and finds behind it a purse of gold. I tell you that in like manner, in all worthy books lie hidden inexhaustible treasures, deposits from the souls of men, that may be won for the seeking.

Honour, then, old books, if only for the sake of the dead, of whom they are the splendid inheritance;—and new books, because they are those which shall in their turn be old.

Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster Row.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