William Caxton, the first English printer: a biography / By Charles Knight.

KNIGHT'S
WEEKLY VOLUME
FOR ALL READERS

BOOK-CLUBS FOR ALL READERS.

(From the 'Penny Magazine' of May 11, 1844.)

One of the first attempts, and it was a successful one, to establish a cheap Book-Club was made by Robert Burns. He had founded a Society at Tarbolton, called the Bachelors' Club, which met monthly for the purposes of discussion and conversation. But this was a club without books; for the fines levied upon the members were spent in conviviality. Having changed his residence to Mauchline, a similar club was established there, but with one important alteration:—the fines were set apart for the purchase of books, and the first work bought was 'The Mirror,' by Henry Mackenzie. Dr. Currie, the biographer of Burns, in recording this fact, says, "With deference to the Conversation Society of Mauchline, it may be doubted whether the books which they purchased were of a kind best adapted to promote the interest and happiness of persons in this situation of life." The objection of Dr. Currie was founded upon his belief that works which cultivated "delicacy of taste" were unfitted for those who pursued manual occupations. He qualifies his objections, however, by the remark, that "Every human being is a proper judge of his own happiness, and within the path of innocence ought to be permitted to pursue it. Since it is the taste of the Scottish peasantry to give a preference to works of taste and of fancy, it may be presumed they find a superior gratification in the perusal of such works." This truth, timidly put by Dr. Currie, ought to be the foundation of every attempt to provide books for all readers. The great body of the people, if the best books are rendered accessible to them, will choose the best books. The very highest works of literature and art are addressed to the universal mind; those which aim at

exclusiveness are the perishable productions which have their little day of drawing-room fame, and can never reach the greatest of all honour, that of making the labourer forget his toil in his free and equal converse with minds that shed their radiance indifferently over the cottage and the palace. We are learning to correct the false opinions which, for a century or two, have been degrading the national character by lowering the general taste. Those who maintained that taste was the exclusive property of the rich and the luxurious, could not take away from the humble the beauty of the rose or the fragrance of the violet; they could not make the nightingale sing a vulgar note to "the swink'd hedger at his supper;" nor, speaking purely to a question of taste, did they venture to lower the noble translation of the Bible, which they put into the hands of the poor man, to something which, according to the insolent formula of those days, was "adapted to the meanest capacity." A great deal of this has passed away. It has been discovered that music is a fitting thing to be cultivated by the people; the doors of galleries are thrown open for the people to gaze upon Raffaelles and Correggios; even cottages are built so as to satisfy a feeling of proportion, and to make their inmates aspire to something like decoration. All this is progress in the right direction. It remains to be seen whether, by a few strenuous efforts, books of real value—the best books in their universality—may not be made as accessible to the great body of the people as the best music, and be as much their property as flowers and sunshine.

In the year 1825, Lord Brougham (then Mr. Brougham), in his 'Practical Observations upon the Education of the People,' very clearly explained a plan which has yet been only partially acted upon, and cannot, indeed, have been fairly tested, for reasons which we shall presently explain. "Book-Clubs or Reading Societies may be established by very small numbers of contributors, and require an inconsiderable fund. If the associates live near one another, arrangements may be easily made for circulating the books,

so that they may be in use every moment that any one can spare from his work. Here, too, the rich have an opportunity presented to them of promoting instruction without constant interference: the gift of a few books, as a beginning, will generally prove a sufficient encouragement to carry on the plan by weekly or monthly contributions; and with the gift, a scheme may be communicated to assist the contributors in arranging the plan of their association. I would here remark the great effect of combination upon such plans, in making the money of individuals go far. Three-halfpence a week, laid by in a whole family, will enable it to purchase in a year one of the cheap volumes of which I have spoken above; and a penny a week would be sufficient, were the publications made as cheap as possible. Now, let only a few neighbours join, say ten or twelve, and lend each other the books bought, and it is evident that, for a price so small as to be within the reach of the poorest labourer, all may have full as many books in the course of the year as it is possible for them to read, even supposing that the books bought by every one are not such as all the others desire to have." Simple in its working as such a plan would appear to be, the instances of these voluntary associations are really few. In Scotland Lending Libraries and Itinerating Libraries have, in some districts, been established successfully; but in England Lending Libraries are scarcely to be found, except in connection with schools, or under the immediate direction of the minister of a parish or of a dissenting congregation.

The principle of voluntary association for the purchase of books has scarcely been called into action; and the reason is pretty obvious. The machinery by which such associations are worked is too cumbrous. We have before us the rules of a Reading Society in a village some ten miles from London. Here we have all the array of president, vice-president, secretary, honorary members, and subscribing members. There are quarterly meetings and annual meetings, balloting for new members, minutes, notices of motion—in a

word, all the complex contrivances by which the management of such matters is kept in the hands of a directing few. But the great difficulty of all is the choice of books; and this is a difficulty which cannot be got over without some new arrangements. If a collection of books were published at a sufficiently rapid rate, and at so low a price as very soon of themselves to be capable of being the foundation of a library—always provided that such books were unexceptionable in their morality, interesting as well as instructive, and containing an abundant provision of truly national literature—it is evident that all the troublesome arrangements of proposing books and of approving books, to say nothing of the difficulty of getting the best books sufficiently cheap, would be effectually got rid of. If a subscription of a penny a week by twelve individuals would place at their command fifty-two volumes in the course of a year, in which, from the nature of the subjects and their modes of treatment, the majority should feel an interest, it is evident that no machinery would be required to set such a plan in action but the association of twelve such individuals, and the choice of one amongst them as secretary, who would receive the subscriptions quarterly, purchase the books week by week as they came out, paste within their covers the rules of the Club, with a list of the names of the members in alphabetical or other order, and then send a volume to the first person on the list, who should keep it for a limited time, passing it on to the next, till it had been circulated through the whole number, and returned to the custody of the secretary. A few books of reference might be purchased by a small extra subscription, and deposited in some place of common access. The books might form a permanent library, or be sold amongst the subscribers at the end of each year.

To meet this principle of association in forming libraries amongst the great body of the people, Messrs. Knight and Co. have issued the plan of a publication to be entitled 'KNIGHT'S WEEKLY VOLUME FOR ALL READERS.' They say, "The friends of popular instruc-

tion—the people generally—feel that the rapidly growing appetite for information has not yet been adequately supplied. There is a demand for BOOKS of standard value and universal interest, cheap enough to find their way into every cottage, so trustworthy in their facts, sound in their principles, and attractive in their subjects and their treatment, as to be welcome to the most instructed readers. This demand has yet to be met. Miscellanies, such as the 'Penny Magazine' and 'Chambers's Journal,' have their own sphere of usefulness; science has been well taught in special treatises; series of works, such as the 'Family Library,' the 'Library of Entertaining Knowledge,' 'Lardner's Cyclopædia,' have still numerous readers; the 'Penny Cyclopædia' has shown how the cheapest book of reference might also be the best. We have many modern reprints of standard works, as cheap as we could desire; but they are mostly close-printed pamphlets, which are easily destroyed: their form unfits them for circulation from hand to hand. There is a general desire to form *Libraries for all Readers*—not only libraries of reference, but extensive libraries of circulation. . . . . In every case there is a difficulty in the choice of fitting books, whether we regard the subject matter or the form and price. It is hoped that the difficulty may be obviated by the publication of 'KNIGHT'S WEEKLY VOLUME.'

"1st. As to the subject matter:

"We propose to place within the reach of all readers a series of books which shall ultimately comprehend something like that range of literature which well-educated persons desire to have at their command. In this series there will be no attempt at exclusiveness. We shall not take up the most false and dangerous opinion that the understandings of the masses should be written down to, nor will mere didactic instruction be only attempted. A taste for knowledge is not so induced. The recreation of genial and amusing reading should be offered in connection with what is solid and serious. The publishers possess many valuable

copyrights which may be readily adapted to this purpose. There is a great deal also to be done anew, in the way of judicious compilations, of translations from foreign works, and of original productions by authors of ability, conceived in a right spirit. We have many offers of assistance from writers of established reputation, who feel that the circulation of their thoughts in a cheap pocket volume is a tribute to their usefulness and their reputation. We have no want of materials to conduct this undertaking steadily and extensively.

"2nd. As to form and price:

"We propose to issue, every Saturday, a Volume, handsomely printed, of from 240 to 280 pages, containing as much matter as an ordinary octavo volume of 300 pages. Each volume will be essentially a book, not a tract—a book for the pocket and the library. Many of the volumes will be complete in themselves: some subjects will extend to two or more volumes. The price of each volume will be One Shilling, sewed, and Eighteenpence, bound.

"In proposing this series of unequalled cheapness and universality, we rely upon an extensive sale amongst the usual number of individual purchasers—a great body in these days. Some individuals will content themselves with selection; others will purchase the entire series. We also depend upon a large support from persons of wealth and influence, who are willing to render every aid in the formation of Lending Libraries. But we also see that *a new element of association* remains to be developed amongst the great body of the people; and we have especially adapted our plan to meet the formation of this medium of popular improvement, which requires only to be explained to be easily acted upon."

A few simple rules are necessary for the proper regulation of Book-Clubs for all Readers. The following are those of a "Cheap Lending Library," established in a country town in Ireland; and which have been promulgated in a very useful article on

'Country Lending Libraries,' in 'Chambers's Edinburgh Journal:'—

"1st. Subscriptions to be paid in advance at the time of subscribing, and at the commencement of every subsequent term.

"2nd. If a subscriber, through any cause whatever, detain a book or books beyond the time subscribed for, the subscription will continue open, and must be paid till the books are returned.

"3rd. If a book be written in, torn, or damaged, while in the possession of a subscriber, that book, or the set, if part of one, must be paid for at the cost price.

"4th. If a subscriber lend a book to a non-subscriber, he forfeits his subscription; nor will a transfer of books from one subscriber to another be allowed.

"5th. For the general convenience and accommodation of subscribers, every work will be accompanied by a notice, limiting a reasonable time for reading it, to which the strictest attention must be paid.

"6th. If a book be not returned on the day appointed, the subscriber shall pay a fine of one penny for every day the book shall be detained; and if not returned within fourteen days after the day fixed for its return, application shall be made to the subscriber for the same; and if it be not then returned, the subscriber shall pay the value thereof, or of the set to which it belongs."

*** We subjoin a form wnich ought to be pasted on the inner cover of each volume, when it is circulated amongst the members of a Book-Club. The Secretary appoints the number of days allowed for reading; the fine per day should be fixed by the Club. The first perusal of a book will be taken in turn, and the transmission from one member to another will follow in the order of the List. Where the Subscribers live very near each other, that order may be alphabetical; where their residences are distant from each other, the arrangement ought to have reference to local convenience.

_____ *Book-Club.*

Days allowed *Fine* *per day.*

Order of Circulation.	Received.	Forwarded.	Fines.


WXC

WILLIAM CAXTON,

THE

FIRST ENGLISH PRINTER:

A Biography.

By CHARLES KNIGHT.

LONDON:
CHARLES KNIGHT AND CO.,
LUDGATE-STREET.

1844.

London :—Printed by W. Clowes and Sons, Stamford Street.

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To avoid encumbering the following pages with foot-notes referring to particular passages, the author subjoins a list of the principal books which he has referred to, or consulted, in this imperfect sketch of the Life of the Father of English Printing :—

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WILLIAM CAXTON.

CHAPTER I.

The Weald of Kent.

In the first book printed in the English language, the subject of which was the 'Histories of Troy,' William Caxton, the translator of the work from the French, in his prologue or preface, says, by way of apology for his simpleness and imperfectness in the French and English languages, "In France was I never, and was born and learned mine English in Kent, in the Weald, where I doubt not is spoken as broad and rude English as in any place of England." The Weald of Kent is now a fertile district, rich in corn-land and pasture, with farm-houses and villages spread over its surface, intersected by good roads, and a railway running through the heart of it, bringing the scattered inhabitants closer and closer to each other. But at the period when William Caxton was born, and learnt his English in the Weald, it was a wild district with a scanty population; its inhabitants had little intercourse with the towns, the affairs of the busy world went on without their knowledge and assistance, they were more separated from the great body of their countrymen than a settler in Canada or Australia is at the present day. It is easy to understand therefore why they should have spoken a "broad and rude English" at the time of Caxton's

boyhood, during the reign of Henry V. and the beginning of that of Henry VI. William Lambarde, who wrote a hundred and fifty years after this period, having published his 'Perambulation of Kent' in 1570, mentions as a common opinion touching this Weald of Kent, "that it was a great while together in manner nothing else but a desert and waste wilderness, not planted with towns or peopled with men as the outsides of the shire were, but stored and stuffed with herds of deer and droves of hogs only;" and he goes on to say that, "although the property of the Weald was at the first belonging to certain known owners, yet it was not then allotted into tenancies." The Weald of Kent came to be taken, he says, "even as men were contented to inhabit it, and by piecemeal to rid it of the wood, and to break it up with the plough." In some lonely farm, then, of this wild district, are we, upon the best of evidence, his own words, to fix the birth-place and the earliest home of the first English printer.

The father of William Caxton was in all probability a proprietor of land. At any rate, he desired to bestow upon his son all the advantages of education which that age could furnish. The honest printer, many years after his school days, looks back upon that spring-time of his life with feelings that make us honour the simple worth of his character. In his 'Life of Charles the Great,' printed in 1485, he says, "I have emprised [undertaken] and concluded in myself, to reduce [translate] this said book into our English, as all along and plainly ye may read, hear, and see, in this book here following. Beseeching all them that shall find fault in the same to correct and

amend it, and also to pardon me of the rude and simple reducing. And though so be there no gay terms, nor subtle nor new eloquence, yet I hope that it shall be understood, and to that intent I have specially reduced it after the simple cunning that God hath lent to me, whereof I humbly and with all my heart thank Him, and also am bounden to pray for my father's and mother's souls, that in my youth set me to school, by which, by the sufferance of God, I get my living I hope truly. And that I may so do and continue, I beseech Him to grant me of His grace; and so to labour and occupy myself virtuously, that I may come out of debt and deadly sin, that after this life I may come to His bliss in heaven." Caxton seems to have had the rare happiness to have had his father about him to a late period of his life. According to a record in the accounts of the churchwardens of the parish church of St. Margaret's Westminster, in which parish the first printer carried on his business, it appears that one William Caxton, who is conjectured to have been the father, was buried on the 18th of May, 1480.

Some time before the period of Caxton's boyhood, a great change had taken place in the general system of education in England. In the time of Edward III., about half a century before the period of which we speak, the children in the grammar-schools were not taught English at all. It was the policy of the first Norman kings, long continued by their successors, to get rid of the old English or Saxon language altogether; and to make the people familiar with the Norman French, the language of the conquerors. The new statutes of the realm were written in French; so were the

decisions of the judges, and the commentaries on the laws in general. Ralph Higden, in a sort of chronicle which Caxton printed, says, "Children in schools, against the usage and manner of all other nations, be compelled for to leave their own language, and for to construe their lessons and their things in French; and so they have since Normans came first into England. Also gentlemen be taught for to speak French from the time that they rocked in their cradle, and can speak and play with a child's brooch [stick or other toy], and uplandish men [countrymen] will liken themselves to gentlemen, and delight with great business for to speak French, to be told of." John de Trevisa, the translator of Higden's 'Polychronicon,' writing somewhat later [in 1361], says, "This manner was much used before the Great Plague, and is since some deal changed; for Sir John Cornewaile, a master of grammar, changed the teaching in grammar-schools, and construction in French; and other schoolmasters use the same way now, in the year of our Lord 1385, the ninth year of King Richard II., and leave all French in schools, and use all construction in English. Wherein they have advantage one way:—that is, that they learn the sooner their grammar; and in another, disadvantage, for now they learn no French, which is hurt for them that shall pass the sea." It was this change of system, operating upon his early instruction, which caused Caxton, as a translator, to be so diffident of his own capacity to render faithfully what was before him out of French into English. Indeed, from his earliest youth to the close of his literary career, the English language was constantly varying, through the

introduction of new words and phrases; and there was a marked distinction between the courtly dialect and that of the commonalty. We have seen how he speaks of the broad and rude English of his native Weald. But towards the close of his life, in a book printed by him in 1490, he mentions the difficulty he had in pleasing "some gentlemen, which late blamed me, saying, that in my translations I had over curious terms, which could not be understood of common people, and desired me to use old and homely terms in my translations. And fain would I satisfy every man; and so to do, took an old book and read therein; and certainly the English was so rude and broad that I could not well understand it. And also my lord Abbot of Westminster did show to me late certain evidences written in old English, for to reduce it into our English now used, and certainly it was written in such wise that it was more like to Dutch than English; I could not reduce nor bring it to be understood. And certainly our language now used varieth far from that which was used and spoken when I was born; for we Englishmen be born under the domination of the moon, which is never stedfast, but ever wavering, waxing one season, and waneth and decreaseth another season; and that common English that is spoken in one shire varieth from another. Insomuch that in my days happened that certain merchants were in a ship in Thames, for to have sailed over the sea into Zealand, and for lack of wind they tarried at Foreland, and went to land for to refresh them; and one of them named Sheffelde, a mercer, came into an house and asked for meat, and especially he asked after *eggs;* and

the good wife answered, that she could speak no French; and the merchant was angry, for he also could speak no French, but would have had eggs, and she understood him not. And then at last, another said that he would have *eyren;* then the good wife said that she understood him well. Lo, what should a man in these days now write, *eggs* or *eyren?* certainly it is hard to please every man, by cause of diversity and change of language. For in these days, every man that is in any reputation in his country will utter his communication and matters in such manners and terms that few men shall understand them. And some honest and good clerks have been with me, and desired me to write the most curious terms that I could find. And thus between plain, rude, and curious, I stand abashed; but in my judgment, the common terms that be daily used be lighter [easier] to be understood than the old and ancient English." In these days, when the same language with very slight variations is spoken from one end of the land to the other, it is difficult to imagine a state of things such as Caxton describes, in which the "common English which is spoken in one shire varieth from another," and there was a marked distinction between plain terms and curious terms. Easy and rapid communication, and above all the circulation of books, newspapers, and other periodical works, all free from provincial expressions, have made the "over curious terms which could not be understood of common people" more familiar to them than the "old and homely terms" which their forefathers used in their several counties, according to the restricted meanings which they retained in their local use. When there were no

books amongst the community in general, there could be no universality of language. Of this want of books we may properly exhibit some details, chiefly to show one of the most remarkable differences which the lapse of four centuries has produced in our country.

We shall find it, we think, a more agreeable as well as more instructive course, to look at the general subject of the supply of books in connection with the orders of people who were to use them, rather than presenting a number of scattered facts, to exhibit the relative prices and scarcity of books in what are called the middle ages. We will first take the clergy, the scholars of those days. The mode in which books were multiplied by transcribers in the monasteries is clearly described by Richard de Bury, bishop of Durham, in his 'Philobiblon,' a treatise on the love of books, written by him in Latin in 1344:—"As it is necessary for a state to provide military arms, and prepare plentiful stores of provisions for soldiers who are about to fight, so it is evidently worth the labour of the church militant to fortify itself against the attacks of pagans and heretics with a multitude of sound books. But because everything that is serviceable to mortals suffers the waste of mortality through lapse of time, it is necessary for volumes corroded by age to be restored by renovated successors, that perpetuity, repugnant to the nature of the individual, may be conceded to the species. Hence it is that Ecclesiastes significantly says, in the 12th chapter, 'There is no end of making many books.' For as the bodies of books suffer continual detriment from a combined mixture of contraries in their composition, so a remedy is found out by

the prudence of clerks, by which a holy book paying the debt of nature may obtain an hereditary substitute, and a seed may be raised up like to the most holy deceased, and that saying of Ecclesiasticus, chapter 30, be verified, 'The father is dead, and as it were not dead, for he hath left behind him a son like unto himself.'" The invention of paper, about a century and a half before Richard de Bury wrote, and its general employment instead of vellum for manuscripts in ordinary use, was a great step towards the multiplication of books. Transcribers necessarily became more numerous; but for a long period they wholly belonged to the monastic orders, and the books were essentially for the use of the clergy. Richard de Bury says, with the most supreme contempt for all others, whatever be their rank, "Laymen, to whom it matters not whether they look at a book turned wrong side upwards or spread before them in its natural order, are altogether unworthy of any communion with books." But even to the privileged classes he is not sparing of his reproach, as to the misuse of books. He reprobates the unwashed hands, the dirty nails, the greasy elbows leaning upon the volume, the munching of fruit and cheese over the open leaves, which were the marks of careless and idle readers. With a solemn reverence for a book at which we may smile, but with a smile of respect, he says, "Let there be a mature decorum in opening and closing of volumes, that they may neither be unclasped with precipitous haste, nor thrown aside after inspection without being duly closed." The good bishop bestowed certain portions of his valuable library upon a company of scholars residing in a Hall at Oxford; and one of his chapters

is entitled 'A provident arrangement by which books may be lent to strangers,' meaning by strangers, students of Oxford not belonging to that Hall. One of these arrangements is as follows :— "Five of the scholars dwelling in the aforesaid Hall are to be appointed by the master of the same Hall, to whom the custody of the books is to be deputed. Of which five, three, and in no case fewer, shall be competent to lend any books for inspection and use only; but for copying and transcribing we will not allow any book to pass without the walls of the house. Therefore, when any scholar, whether secular or religious, whom we have deemed qualified for the present favour, shall demand the loan of a book, the keepers must carefully consider whether they have a duplicate of that book; and if so, they may lend it to him, taking a security which in their opinion shall exceed in value the book delivered." Anthony Wood, who in the seventeenth century wrote the lives of eminent Oxford men, speaks of this library which was given to Durham College (now Trinity College) as containing more books than all the bishops of England had then in their custody. He adds, "After they had been received they were for many years kept in chests, under the custody of several scholars deputed for that purpose." In the time of Henry IV. a library was built in that college, and then, says Wood, "the said books were put into pews, or studies, and chained to them." The statutes of St. Mary's College, Oxford, in the reign of Henry VI., are quoted by Warton, in his 'History of English Poetry,' as furnishing a remarkable instance of the inconveniences and impediments to study which must have been produced

by a scarcity of books: "Let no scholar occupy a book in the library above one hour, or two hours at most, so that others shall be hindered from the use of the same." This certainly shows the scarcity of books; but not such a scarcity as at an early period of the Church, when one book was given out by the librarian to each of a religious fraternity at the beginning of Lent, to be read diligently during the year, and to be returned the following Lent. The original practice of keeping the books in chests would seem to indicate that they could not be very frequently changed by the readers; and the subsequent plan of chaining them to the desks gives the notion that, like many other things tempting by their rarity, they could not be safely trusted in the hands of those who might rather covet the possession than the use. It was a very common thing to write in the first leaf of a book, "Cursed be he who shall steal or tear out the leaves, or in any way injure this book."

We have abundant evidence, whatever be the scarcity of books as compared with the growth of scholarship, that the ecclesiastics laboured most diligently to multiply books for their own establishment. In every great abbey there was a room called the Scriptorium, where boys and novices were constantly employed in multiplying the service-books of the choir, and the less valuable books for the library; whilst the monks themselves laboured in their cells upon bibles and missals. Equal pains were taken in providing books for those who received a liberal education in collegiate establishments. Warton says, "At the foundation of Winchester College, one or more transcribers were hired and employed by the founder to make books for the

Transcriber at Work.

library. They transcribed and took their commons within the college, as appears by computations of expenses on their account now remaining." But there are several indications that even kings and nobles had not the advantages of scholars by profession; and, possessing few books of their own, had sometimes to borrow of their more favoured subjects. We find it recorded that the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, had lent to King Henry V. the works of St. Gregory, and he complains that after the king's death the book had been detained by the prior of Shene. The same king had borrowed from the Lady Westmoreland two books that had not been returned, and a petition is still extant in which she begs his successors in authority to let her have them back again. Lewis XI. of France wishing to borrow a book from the Faculty of Medicine at Paris, they would not allow the king to have it till he had deposited a quantity of valuable plate in pledge,

and given a joint bond with one of his nobles for its due return. The books that were to be found in the palaces of the great, a little while before the invention of printing, were for the most part highly illuminated manuscripts, and bound in the most expensive style. In the wardrobe accounts of King Edward IV. we find that Piers Bauduyn is paid for "binding, gilding, and dressing" of two books, twenty shillings each, and of four books, sixteen shillings each. Now twenty shillings in those days would have bought an ox. But the cost of this binding and garnishing does not stop here; for there were delivered to the binder six yards of velvet, six yards of silk, laces, tassels, copper and gilt clasps, and gilt nails. The price of velvet and silk in those days was enormous. We may reasonably conclude that these royal books were as much for show as for use. One of the books thus garnished by Edward IV.'s binder is called 'Le Bible Historiaux' (The Historical Bible), and there are several copies of the same book in manuscript in the British Museum. In one of them the following paragraph is written in French: "This book was taken from the King of France at the battle of Poitiers; and the good Count of Salisbury, William Mountague, bought it for a hundred marks, and gave it to his lady Elizabeth, the good Countess. . . . . Which book the said Countess assigned to her executors to sell for forty livres." We learn from another source that the great not only procured books by purchase, but employed transcribers to make them for their libraries. We find from the manuscript account of the expenses of Sir John Howard, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, that in 1467 Thomas Lympnor, that is, Thomas the Limner, of Bury,

was paid the sum of fifty shillings and twopence for a book which he had transcribed and ornamented, including the vellum and binding. The Limner's bill is made up of a number of items,—for whole vignettes, and half vignettes, and capital letters, and flourishing, and plain writing. This curious account is printed in the 'Paston Letters,' the correspondence of a family of that name in the reign of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III. A letter of Sir John Paston, who is writing to his mother in 1474, shows how scarce money was in those days for the purchase of luxuries like books. He says, "As for the books that were Sir James's (the Priest's), if it like you that I may have them, I am not able to buy them, but somewhat would I give, and the remainder, with a good devout heart, by my troth, I will pray for his soul. . . . . If any of them are claimed hereafter, in faith I will restore it." The custom of borrowing books and not returning them was as old, we see, as the days of the Red and White Roses. John Paston left an inventory of his books, eleven in number, although some of the eleven contained various little tracts bound together. One of the items in this catalogue is, "A Book of Troilus, which William B——— hath had near ten years, and lent it to Dame Wingfeld, and there I saw it."

If the nobles and the higher gentry were so indifferently provided with books, we cannot expect that the yeomen had any books at all. The merchants and citizens were probably better provided. The labourers, who were scarcely yet fully established in their freedom from bondage to one lord, were probably, as a class, wholly unable to use books at all. Shakspere, in all likelihood, did not

much exaggerate the feelings of ignorant men, who at the same time were oppressed men, when he put these words in the mouth of Jack Cade when addressing Lord Say: "Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm, in erecting a grammar-school: and whereas, before, our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used; and, contrary to the king, his crown and dignity, thou hast built a paper-mill." The poet has a little deranged the exact order of events, as poets are justified in doing, who look at history not with chronological accuracy, but with a broad view of the connection between events and principles. The insurrection of Cade preceded the introduction of printing and paper-mills into England. Although during four centuries we have yet to lament that the people have not had the full benefit which the art of printing is calculated to bestow upon them, we may be sure that during its progress the general amelioration of society has been certain, though gradual. There can no longer be any necessary exclusiveness in the possession of books, and in the advantages which the knowledge of books is calculated to bestow on all men. The late Mr. Southey, a just and liberal thinker, but, like many others of ardent feelings, sometimes mistaken and oftener misrepresented, has truly pointed out the difference between the state of society when William Caxton was raised up to do his work amongst us and the present state. The following is an extract from his 'Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society:' "One of the first effects of printing was to make proud men look upon learning as disgraced, by being thus brought within reach of the common

people. Till that time learning, such as it was, had been confined to courts and convents, the low birth of the clergy being overlooked, because they were privileged by their order. But when laymen in humble life were enabled to procure books, the pride of aristocracy took an absurd course, insomuch that at one time it was deemed derogatory for a nobleman if he could read or write. Even scholars themselves complained that the reputation of learning, and the respect due to it, and its rewards, were lowered when it was thrown open to all men; and it was seriously proposed to prohibit the printing of any book that could be afforded for sale below the price of three soldi. This base and invidious feeling was perhaps never so directly avowed in other countries as in Italy, the land where literature was first restored; and yet in this more liberal island ignorance was for some generations considered to be a mark of distinction by which a man of gentle birth chose, not unfrequently, to make it apparent that he was no more obliged to live by the toil of his brain, than by the sweat of his brow. The same changes in society, which rendered it no longer possible for this class of men to pass their lives in idleness, have completely put an end to this barbarous pride. It is as obsolete as the fashion of long finger-nails, which in some parts of the East are still the distinctive mark of those who labour not with their hands. All classes are now brought within the reach of your current literature,—that literature which, like a moral atmosphere, is, as it were, the medium of intellectual life, and on the quality of which, according as it may be salubrious or noxious, the health of the public mind depends."

CHAPTER II.

The Mercer's Apprentice.

In a book which Caxton printed in 1483, 'The Booke callyd Cathon,' he says in his prologue or preface, "Unto the noble, ancient, and renowned city, the city of London in England, I, William Caxton, citizen and conjury [sworn fellow] of the same, and of the fraternity and fellowship of the Mercery, owe of right my service and good will; and of very duty am bounden naturally to assist, aid, and counsel, as farforth as I can to my power, as to my mother of whom I have received my nurture and living; and shall pray for the good prosperity and policy of the same during my life. For as me seemeth it is of great need, by cause I have known it in my young age much more wealthy, prosperous, and richer than it is at this day; and the cause is, that there is almost none that intendeth to the common weal, but only every man for his singular profit." It is the usual habit of the aged to look back upon the days of their youth as a period of higher prosperity and more exalted virtue, public and private, than they witness in their declining years. This is in most cases merely the mind's own colouring of the picture. But it is very possible that London, in the first year of Richard III., when Caxton wrote this preface, was really less prosperous, and its citizens less devoted to the public good, than half a century earlier, when Caxton was a blithe apprentice

within its walls. The country had passed through the terrible convulsion of the wars of the Roses; and it is the nature of civil wars, especially, not only to waste the substance and destroy the means of existence of every man, but to render all men selfish, grasping at temporary good, suspicious, faithless. The master of Caxton was Robert Large, a member of the Mercers' Company, who was one of the Sheriffs in 1430, and Lord Mayor in 1439—40. The date of Caxton's apprenticeship has not been ascertained; but it is considered by several of his biographers to have commenced about 1428. At this period, the sixth of Henry VI., a law was on the statute-book, and rigorously enforced, whose object was to prevent the sons of labourers in husbandry, and indeed of the poorer classes of the yeomanry, from rising out of the condition in which they were born, by participating in the higher gains of trade and handicraft. A law of the seventh of Henry IV., about two and twenty years before this conjectural period of Caxton's apprenticeship, recites that, according to ancient statutes, those who labour at the plough or cart, or other service of husbandry, till at the age of twelve years, should continue to abide at such labour, and not to be put to any mystery or handicraft;—notwithstanding which statutes, says the law of Henry IV., country people whose fathers and mothers have no land or rent are put apprentices to divers crafts within the cities and boroughs, so that there is great scarcity of labourers and other servants of husbandry. The law then declares, "That no man nor woman, of what estate or condition they be, shall put their son or daughter, of whatsoever age he or she be, to serve as ap-

prentice to no craft or other labour within any city or borough in the realm, except he have land or rent to the value of twenty shillings by the year at least, but they shall be put to other labours as their estates doth require, upon pain of one year's imprisonment." This iniquitous law was necessarily as demoralizing and as injurious to the national prosperity as the institution of castes in India. Yet, by a most extraordinary blindness to cause and consequence, the makers of the law provided in the most direct way for its overthrow; for the statute goes on to say, that although the husbandry labourer is always to be a labourer, "every man or woman, of what estate or condition they be, shall be free to set their son or daughter to take learning at any manner school that pleaseth them within the realm." The citizens of London, much to their honour, procured a repeal of this act in the eighth of Henry VI., about the period when Caxton was apprenticed. The probability is, that he would not have been affected by the exclusive character of this law; for his master was a rich and distinguished mercer—a member of that association which has always had pre-eminence amongst the livery companies of London. The dignified gravity, the prudence, and the prosperity of the citizens of that day have been well described by Chaucer:—

"A Merchant was there with a forkéd beard;
In motley, and high on horse he sat,
And on his head a Flaundrish beaver hat.
His bootés claspéd fair and fetisly;*
His reasons spake he full solemnély,
Sounding alway the increase of his winning:
He would the sea were kept† for any thing,

* Neatly. † Guarded.

Betwixen Middleburgh and Oréwell.
Well could he in exchanges shieldiés* sell,
This worthy man full well his wit beset;†
There wisté no wight that he was in debt,
So stedfastly did he his governance
With his bargains, and with his chevisance‡."

When we look at William Caxton as the apprentice to a London mercer, his position does not at first sight appear very favourable to that cultivation of a literary taste, and that love of books which was originally the solace, and afterwards the business, of his life. Yet a closer insight into the mercantile arrangements of those days will show us that he could not have been more favourably placed for attaining some practical acquaintance with books, in the way of his ordinary occupation. When books were so costly and so inaccessible to the great body of the people, there was necessarily no distinct trade of bookselling. There were indeed stationers, who had books for sale, or more probably executed orders for transcribing books. Their occupation is thus described by Mr. Hallam, in his 'Literature of Europe:'—"These dealers were denominated stationarii, perhaps from the open stalls at which they carried on their business, though statio is a general word for a shop, in low Latin. They appear by the old statutes of the university of Paris, and by those of Bologna, to have sold books upon commission; and are sometimes, though not uniformly, distinguished from the librarii; a word which, having originally been confined to the copyists of books, was afterwards applied to those who traded in them. They sold parchment and other materials of writing, which,

* French crowns, which were stamped with a shield.
† Employed. ‡ An agreement for borrowing money.

with us, though, as far as I know, nowhere else, have retained the name of stationery, and naturally exercised the kindred occupations of binding and decorating. They probably employed transcribers." The mercer in those days was not a dealer in small wares generally, as at an earlier period; nor was his trade confined to silken goods—such an one as Shakspere describes, "Master Threepile, the mercer," who had thrown a man into prison for "some four suits of peach-coloured satin." The mercer of the fifteenth century was essentially a merchant. The mercers in the time of Edward III. were the great wool-dealers of the country. They were the merchants of the Staple, in the early days of our woollen manufacture; and the merchant adventurers of a later period were principally of their body. In their traffic with other lands, and especially with the Low Countries, they were the agents by which valuable manuscripts found their way into England; and in this respect they were something like the great merchant princes of Italy, whose ships not unfrequently contained a cargo of Indian spices and of Greek manuscripts. John Bagford, who wrote a slight life of Caxton about 1714, which is in manuscript in the British Museum, says, "Kings, queens, and noblemen had their particular merchants, who, when they were ready for their voyage into foreign parts, sent their servants to know what they wanted, and among the rest of their choice many times books were demanded, and there to buy them in those parts where they were going." Caxton tells us in the 'Book of Good Manners,' which he translated from the French and printed in 1487, that the original French work was delivered to him by a

"special friend, a mercer of London, named William Praat." This commerce of books could not have been very great; but it might have been so far carried on by Robert Large, the wealthy master of Caxton, that a lad of ability might thus possess opportunities for improvement which were denied to the great body of his fellow-apprentices. At this particular period there appear to have been but few opportunities even for the sons of parents of some substance to obtain the rudiments of knowledge. There is a petition presented to parliament in the twenty-fifth year of Henry VI., 1446, which exhorts the Commons "to consider the great number of grammar-schools that sometime were in divers parts of this realm, besides those that were in London, and how few there are in these days." The petitioners, who are four clergymen of the city, go on to say that London is the common concourse of this land, and that many persons, for lack of schoolmasters in their own country, resort there to be informed of grammar; and then they proceed thus: "Wherefore it were expedient that in London were a sufficient number of schools and good informers in grammar; and not, for the singular avail of two or three persons, grievously to hurt the multitude of young people of all this land. For where there is great number of learners and few teachers, and all the learners be compelled to go to the few teachers, and to none others, the masters wax rich of money, and the learners poorer in cunning, as experience openly showeth, against all virtue and order of weal public." These benevolent clergymen accomplished the object of their petition, which was that in each of their parishes they might "ordain,

create, establish, and set a person sufficiently learned in grammar to hold and exercise a school in the same science of grammar, and there to teach to all that will learn." One of the schools thus established exists to this day, in connection with the Mercers' Company, and is commonly known as the Mercers' School. We are a little anticipating the period of our narrative, for this petition belongs to Caxton's mature life; but we mention it as an evidence of the extreme difficulty which must have existed in those days for the children of the middle classes to obtain the rudiments of knowledge. It is evident that Caxton belonged to the more fortunate portion, upon whom the blessings of education fell like prizes in a lottery. The evil has not been wholly corrected even during four centuries; but it is devoutly to be hoped that the time is not far distant when, to use the words of the benevolent clergymen who knew the value of knowledge at that comparatively dark period, there shall be in every place a school, and a competent person "there to teach to all that will learn."

The writer of the life of Caxton in the 'Biographia Britannica,' a famous antiquarian of the name of Oldys, says, speaking of Robert Large, the master of Caxton, "The same magistrate held his mayoralty in that which had been the mansion-house of Robert Fitzwalter, anciently called the Jews' Synagogue, at the north corner of the Old Jewry." This Old Jewry appears to have been in earlier times an accustomed place of residence for the mercers; for there are records still extant of legal proceedings in the time of Henry III. against four mercers of that place, for a violent assault upon two Lombard merchants, whom they

regarded as rivals in trade. In the days of their retail dealings they occupied a portion of Cheapside which went by the name of the Mercery. In the fourteenth century their shops were little better

Costume of the People in the time of Henry VI.

than sheds, and Cheapside, or more properly Cheap, was a sort of market, where various trades collected round the old Cross, which remained there till the time of the Long Parliament. When the mercers became large wholesale dealers in woollen cloths and silk, the haberdashers took up

their standing in the same place. In the ballad of 'London Lickpenny,' written in the time of Henry VI., the scene in the Cheap is thus described:—

> "Then to the Cheap I began me drawn,
> Where much people I saw for to stand;
> One offered me velvet, silk, and lawn,
> Another he taketh me by the hand,
> 'Here is Paris thread, the finest in the land.'"

The city apprentice in the days of Caxton was a staid sober youth, who, although of gentle blood (as the regulations for the admittance of freemen required him to be), was meanly clothed, and subjected to the performance of even household drudgery. We learn from a tract called the 'City's Advocate,' printed in 1628, that the ancient habit of the apprentices was a flat round cap, hair close cut, narrow falling bands, coarse side-coats (long coats), close hose, close stockings, and other such severe apparel. They walked before their masters and mistresses at night, bearing a lantern, and wearing a long club on their necks. But the mercer's apprentice had some exceptions which set him above his fellows: "Anciently it was the general use and custom of all apprentices in London (mercers only excepted, being commonly merchants and a better rank as it seems) to carry water-tankards to serve their masters' houses with water fetched either from the Thames or the common conduits." But, with all his restraints, the city apprentice was ever prone to frolic, and too often to mischief. The apprentices were a formidable body in the days of the Tudors, sometimes defying the laws, and raising tumults which have more than once ended in the prison and the halter. Chaucer, writing

some few years before the term of Caxton's service, describes the love of sight-seeing which was characteristic of the London apprentice:—

> "When there any ridings were in Cheap,
> Out of the shop thither would he leap;
> And till that he had all the sight yseen,
> And danced well, he would not come again."

Cheap was the great highway of processions; and London was the constant theatre of triumphs and pageants, by which the wealthy citizens expressed their devotion to the ruling authorities. In the fifteenth century, when the very insecurity of the tenure of the crown demanded a more ardent display of public opinion, the London apprentice had "ridings" enough to look upon, where the pageantry was a real expression of power and magnificence, and not a tawdry mockery, as that which now disgraces the city of London once a year. Froissart describes the riding of Henry IV. to his coronation: "The Duke rode through London with a great number of lords, every lord's servant in their master's livery; all the burgesses and Lombards, merchants in London, and every craft with their livery and device; thus he was conveyed to Westminster. He was attended by 6000 horse, and the streets hung with tapestry as he passed by, and the same day and the next there were in London running seven conduits with wine, white and red." The entry of his illustrious son into London after the battle of Agincourt was another of these remarkable ridings: "The mayor of London, and the aldermen, apparelled in orient-grained scarlet, and four hundred commoners clad in beautiful murrey, well mounted, and trimly horsed, with rich collars and great chains,

met the king on Blackheath, rejoicing at his return; and the clergy of London, with rich crosses, sumptuous copes, and massy censers, received him at St. Thomas of Watering with solemn procession. The king, like a grave and sober personage, and as one remembering from whom all victories are sent, seemed little to regard such vain pomp and shows, as were in triumphant sort devised for his welcoming home from so prosperous a journey, insomuch that he would not suffer his helmet to be carried with him, whereby might have appeared to the people the blows and dents that were to be seen in the same; neither would he suffer any ditties to be made and sung by minstrels of his glorious victory, for that he would wholly have the praise and thanks altogether given to God." This, which was an occasion of real enthusiasm, took place in Caxton's childhood. But in 1432, when he is held to have been an apprentice, the boy king, Henry VI., upon his return from being crowned King of France, entered London with a magnificence which chroniclers and poets have vied in recording. Robert Fabyan, an alderman of London, who wrote in the reign of Henry VII., describes this ceremonial with such an admiration of the pomp, as only one could be supposed to feel who was born, as Chaucer says,

"To sitten in a guildhall on the dais."

On this occasion we may imagine that William Caxton had liberty to see all the sight—the mighty giant standing with a sword drawn on London Bridge—the tower upon the bridge, out of which suddenly appeared three ladies richly clad, who were named Nature, Grace, and Fortune,—and

above all the fourteen virgins, who sang a roundel with a heavenly melody, beginning "Sovereign Lord, welcome to your city." Surely he pressed among the crowd at the entry of Cornhill, where was a tabernacle of curious work in which stood Dame Sapience, and about her the seven arts or sciences liberal. We may even believe that he tasted of the outpouring of the conduit in Cheap, where were ordained divers wells, as the well of Mercy, the well of Grace, and the well of Pity, and at every well a lady standing that ministered the water of every well to such as would ask it,

Portrait of Henry VI.

and that water turned into good wine. To look forward to such occasions of pomp was a satisfaction to the people, who knew nothing of the real workings of public affairs, and saw only the outward indications of success or misfortune. The reign of Henry VI. was an unhappy one for the citizens of London. Violent contests for authority, insurrections, battles for the crown, left their fearful traces upon the course of the next thirty years. But during Caxton's boyhood the evil days seemed distant.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNG MERCER'S BOOK-KNOWLEDGE

In the books of the Brewers' Company, which, like all other records, were for the most part in Norman French, there is a curious entry in the reign of Henry V., which records a great change in the habits of the people. The entry is in Latin, and is thus translated: "Whereas our mother-tongue, to wit, the English language, hath in modern days begun to be honourably enlarged and adorned, for that our most excellent lord King Henry the Fifth hath in his letters missive, and divers affairs touching his own person, more willingly chosen to declare the secrets of his will; and for the better understanding of his people hath, with a diligent mind, procured the common idiom (setting aside others) to be commended by the exercise of writing; and there are many of our craft of brewers who have the knowledge of writing and reading in the said English idiom, but in others, to wit, the Latin and French, before these times used, they do not in any wise understand; for which causes, with many others, it being considered how that the greater part of the lords and trusty commons have begun to make their matters to be noted down in our mother-tongue, so we also in our craft, following in some manner their steps, have decreed in future to commit to memory the needful things which concern us, as appeareth in the following."

The assertion of the Brewers' Company, in the reign of Henry V., that "the English language hath in modern days begun to be honourably enlarged and adorned," rested, we apprehend, upon broader foundations than the "letters missive" of the king in the common idiom. Great writers had arisen in our native tongue, with whose productions the nobler and wealthier classes at any rate were familiar. The very greatest of these,—the greatest name even now in our literature, with one exception,—must have furnished employment to hundreds of transcribers. The poems of Geoffrey Chaucer were familiar to all well educated men, however scanty was the supply of copies and dear their cost. That Caxton himself was acquainted in his youth with these great works we cannot have a doubt. When it became his fortunate lot to multiply editions of the Canterbury Tales, and to render them accessible to a much larger class of the people than in the days when he himself first knew the solace and the delight of literature, he applied himself to the task with all the earnestness of an early love. In his preface to the second edition of the Canterbury Tales he thus delivers himself, with more than common enthusiasm: "Great thanks, laud, and honour ought to be given unto the clerks, poets, and historiographs that have written many noble books of wisdom of the lives, passions, and miracles of holy saints, of histories, of noble and famous acts and faits [deeds], and of the chronicles sith [since] the beginning of the creation of the world unto this present time; by which we are daily informed and have knowledge of many things, of whom we should not have known if they had not left to us their monuments written.

Amongst whom, and in especial before all other, we ought to give a singular laud unto that noble and great philosopher Geoffrey Chaucer, the which, for his ornate writing in our tongue, may well have the name of a laureat poet. For before that he, by his labour, embellished, ornated, and made fair our English, in this royaume [kingdom] was had rude speech and incongrue [incongruous], as yet it appeareth by old books, which at this day ought not to have place nor be compared among nor to his beauteous volumes and ornate writings, of whom he made many books and treatises of many a noble history, as well in metre as in rhyme and prose; and them so craftily made, that he comprehended his matters in short, quick, and high sentences; eschewing prolixity, casting away the chaff of superfluity, and shewing the picked grain of sentence, uttered by crafty and sugared eloquence." Again, in his edition of Chaucer's Book of Fame he says, "Which work, as me seemeth, is craftily made, and worthy to be written and known: for he toucheth in it right great wisdom and subtle understanding; and so in all his works he excelleth in mine opinion all other writers in our English; for he writeth no void words, but all his matter is full of high and quick sentence, to whom ought to be given laud and praising for his noble making and writing. For of him all other have borrowed sith, and taken in all their well saying and writing." There is another passage in the second edition of the Canterbury Tales which we quote here, not for the purpose of showing Caxton's honourable character as a printer, for that belongs to a subsequent period—but to point out that manuscripts of Chaucer were in private hands,

varying indeed in their text, as books must have varied that were produced by different transcribers, but still keeping up the fame of the poet, and highly valued by their possessors: "Of which book so incorrect was one brought to me six year passed, which I supposed had been very true and correct, and according to the same I did imprint a certain number of them, which anon were sold to many and divers gentlemen: of whom one gentleman came to me, and said that this book was not according in many places unto the book that Geoffrey Chaucer had made. To whom I answered, that I had made it according to my copy, and by me was nothing added nor diminished. Then he said he knew a book which his father had and much loved, that was very true, and according unto his own first book by him made; and said more, if I would imprint it again, he would get me the same book for a copy. How be it, he wist well his father would not gladly part from it; to whom I said, in case that he could get me such a book true and correct, that I would once endeavour me to imprint it again, for to satisfy the author: whereas before by ignorance I erred in hurting and defaming his book in divers places, in setting in some things that he never said nor made, and leaving out many things that he made which are requisite to be set in it. And thus we fell at accord; and he full gently got me of his father the said book, and delivered it to me, by which I have corrected my book."

There was another poet of considerable popularity who was contemporary with Chaucer. With the works of Gower Caxton must have been familiar. His principal poem, 'Confessio Amantis,'

Chaucer.

that is to say in English, the 'Confession of the Lover,' was printed by Caxton in 1483, and is said to have been the most extensively circulated of all the books that came from his press. The poem is full of stories that were probably common to all Europe, running on through thousands of lines with

wonderful fluency, but little force. He was called the "moral Gower" by Chaucer. The play of Pericles, ascribed to Shakspere, is founded upon one of these stories. Gower himself shows us what was the general course of reading in those days:

> "Full oft time it falleth so,
> Mine ear with a good pittance
> Is fed of reading of romance,
> Of Idoyne, and of Amadas,
> That whilom* weren† in my case,
> And eke of other many a score,
> That loveden‡ long ere I was bore."§

The romances of chivalry, the stories of "fierce wars and faithful loves," were especially the delight of the great and powerful. When the noble was in camp, he solaced his hours of leisure with the marvellous histories of King Arthur or Launcelot of the Lake; and when at home, he listened to or read the same stories in the intervals of the chace or the feast. Froissart, the historian, tells in his own simple and graphic manner how he presented a book to King Richard the Second, and how the king delighted in the subject of the book: "Then the king desired to see my book that I had brought for him; so he saw it in his chamber, for I had laid it there ready on his bed. When the king opened it, it pleased him well, for it was fair illumined and written, and covered with crimson velvet, with ten buttons of silver and gilt, and roses of gold in the midst, with two great clasps, gilt, richly wrought. Then the king demanded me whereof it treated, and I showed him how it treated matters of love, whereof the king was glad, and

* Formerly. † Were. ‡ Loved. § Born.

looked in it, and read it in many places, for he could speak and read French very well." Froissart was a Frenchman and wrote in French; but even Englishmen wrote in French at that period, and some of Gower's early poems are in French. According to his own account, the long poem of the 'Confessio Amantis,' which was written in English, was executed at the command of the same King Richard:

"He hath this charge upon me laid,
And bad me do my business,
That to his high worthiness
Some new thing I should book,
That he himself it might look,
After the form of my writing."

Gower.

Chaucer and Gower lived some time before the period of Caxton's youth in London. But there was a poet very popular in his day, whom he can

scarcely have avoided having seen playing a conspicuous part in the high city festivals. This was John Lydgate, monk of Bury, who thus describes himself—

> "I am a monk by my profession,
> Of Bury, called John Lydgate by my name,
> And wear a habit of perfection,
> Although my life agree not with the same."

Thomas Warton has thus exhibited the nature of his genius: "No poet seems to have possessed a greater versatility of talents. He moves with equal ease in every mode of composition. His hymns and his ballads have the same degree of merit: and whether his subject be the life of a hermit or a hero, of Saint Austin or Guy Earl of Warwick, ludicrous or legendary, religious or romantic, a history or an allegory, he writes with facility. His transitions were rapid from works of the most serious and laborious kind to sallies of levity and pieces of popular entertainment. His muse was of universal access, and he was not only the poet of his monastery, but of the world in general. If a disguising was intended by the company of goldsmiths, a mask before his majesty at Eltham, a May game for the sheriffs and aldermen of London, a mumming before the lord mayor, a procession of pageants from the creation for the festival of Corpus Christi, or a carol for a coronation, Lydgate was consulted and gave the poetry." A fine illuminated drawing in one of Lydgate's manuscripts, now in the British Museum, represents him presenting a book to the Earl of Salisbury. Such a presentation may be regarded as the first publication of a new work. The royal or noble person at whose command it was written

Lydgate presenting a book to the Earl of Salisbury.

bestowed some rich gift upon the author, which would be his sole pecuniary recompense, unless he received some advantage from the transcribers, for the copies which they multiplied. Doubtful as the rewards of authorship may be when the multiplication of copies by the press enables each reader to contribute a small acknowledgment of the benefit which he receives, the literary condition must have

been far worse when the poet, humbly kneeling before some mighty man, as Lydgate does in the picture, might have been dismissed with contumely, or his present received with a low appreciation of the labour and the knowledge required to produce it. The fame, however, of a popular writer reached his ears in a far more direct and flattering manner than belongs to the literary honours of modern days. There can be little doubt that the narrative poems of Chaucer and Gower and Lydgate were familiar to the people through the recitations of the minstrels. An agreeable writer on the Rise and Progress of English Poetry, Mr. George Ellis, says, "Chaucer, in his address to his Troilus and Cressida, tells us it was intended to be read 'or elles sung,' which must relate to the chanting recitation of the minstrels, and a considerable part of our old poetry is simply addressed to an audience, without any mention of readers. That our English minstrels at any time united all the talents of the profession, and were at once poets and reciters and musicians, is extremely doubtful; but that they excited and directed the efforts of their contemporary poets to a particular species of composition, is as evident as that a body of actors must influence the exertions of theatrical writers. They were, at a time when reading and writing were rare accomplishments, the principal medium of communication between authors and the public; and their memory in some measure supplied the deficiency of manuscripts, and probably preserved much of our early literature till the invention of printing." We may thus learn, that although the number of those was very few whose minds by reading could be lifted out of the grovelling thoughts and petty cares

of every-day life, yet that the compositions of learned and accomplished men, who still hold a high rank in our literature, might be familiar to the people through the agency of a numerous body of singers or reciters. There has been a good deal of controversy about the exact definition of the minstrel character—whether the minstrels were themselves poets and romance writers, or the depositaries of the writings of others and of the traditional literature of past generations. Ritson, a writer upon this subject, says "that there were individuals formerly who made it their business to wander up and down the country chanting romances, and singing songs and ballads to the harp, fiddle, or more humble and less artificial instruments, cannot be doubted." They were a very numerous body a century before Chaucer; and most indefatigable in the prosecution of their trade. There is a writ or declaration of Edward the Second, which recites the evil of idle persons, under colour of minstrelsy, being received in other men's houses to meat and drink; and then goes on to direct that to the houses of great people no more than three or four minstrels of honour should come at the most in one day, "and to the houses of meaner men that none come unless he be desired, and such as shall come to hold themselves contented with meat and drink, and with such courtesy as the master of the house will show unto them of his own good-will, without their asking of any thing." Nothing can more clearly exhibit the general demand for the services of this body of men; for the very regulation as to the nature of their reward shows clearly that they were accustomed to require liberal pay-

ment, approaching perhaps to extortion; and then comes in the state to say that they shall not have a free market for their labour. They struggled on, sometimes prosperous and sometimes depressed, according to the condition of the country, till the invention of printing came to make popular literature always present in a man's house. The *book* of ballads or romances, which was then to be bought, was contented to abide there without any meat or drink. In the words of Richard de Bury, whom we quoted in the first chapter, books "are the masters who instruct us without rods, without hard words and anger, without clothes and money. If you approach them, they are not asleep; if investigating you interrogate them, they conceal nothing; if you mistake them, they never grumble; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you." One of the later minstrels, to whom is ascribed the preservation, and by some the composition, of the old ballad of Chevy Chase, thus humbles himself in a most unpoetical and undignified manner to those who fed him for his services:—

"Now for the good cheer that I have had here,
I give you hearty thanks with bowing of my shanks,
Desiring you by petition to grant me such commission—
Because my name is Sheale, that both for meat and meal
To you I may resort some time for my comfort.
For I perceive here at all times is good cheer,
Both ale, wine, and beer, as it doth now appear;
I perceive, without fable, ye keep a good table.
I can be content, if it be out of Lent,
A piece of beef to take my hunger to aslake,
Both mutton and veal is good for Richard Sheale;
Though I look so grave, I were a very knave
If I would think scorn, either evening or morn,
Being in hunger, of fresh salmon or congar.

I can find in my heart, with my friends to take a part
Of such as God shall send; and thus I make an end.
Now, farewell, good mine host, I thank you for your cost,
Until another time, and thus do I end my rhyme."

But even such a humiliated ballad-maker, or ballad-singer, as poor old Richard Sheale, was the depositary of treasures of popular fiction, many of which have utterly perished, but of which a great portion of those which are still preserved are delightful even to the most refined reader. For, corrupted as they are by transmission from mouth to mouth through several centuries, they are full of high and generous sentiments, of deep pathos, of quiet humour; they carry us back into a state of society wholly different from our own, when knowledge was indeed scanty, and riches not very plentiful, but when the feelings and affections were not so wholly under the direction of worldly wisdom, and men were brave and loving, and women tender and confiding, with something more of earnestness than belongs to the discreeter arrangements of modern social life. The minstrels had indeed something to call up the tear or the smile in every class of auditor. For the earls and barons, the knights and squires, there were romances and songs of chivalrous daring, such as moved the noble heart of Sir Philip Sidney, even in the days when the minstrel was a poor despised wanderer: "Is it the Lyric that most displeaseth, who with his tuned lyre, and well accorded voice, giveth praise, the reward of virtue, to virtuous acts? who giveth moral precepts and natural problems? who sometimes raiseth up his voice to the height of the heavens, in singing the lauds of the immortal God? Certainly I must confess mine own barbarousness, I never heard the

old song of Percy and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet, and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style." For those of meaner sort there were the ballads of Robin Hood, "of whom the foolish vulgar make lewd entertainment, and are delighted to hear the jesters and minstrels sing them above all other ballads." So wrote a Scottish historian in the middle of the fourteenth century.

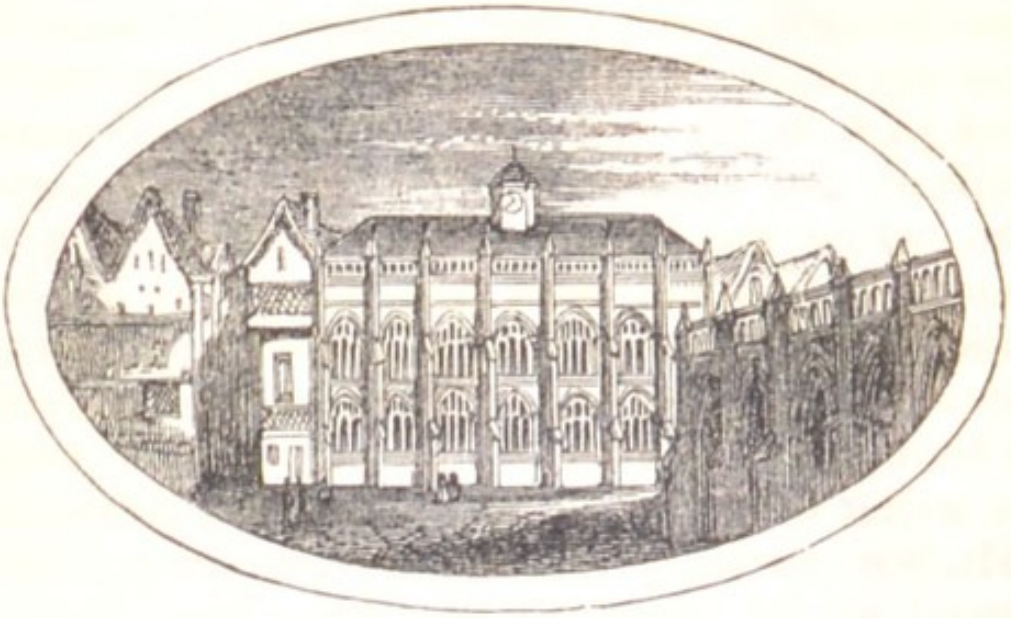
We have thus briefly recapitulated the popular modes of acquiring something of a literary taste in the early days of William Caxton. Books were rare, and difficult to be obtained except by the wealthy. The drama did not exist. The preachers, indeed, were not afraid to address an indiscriminate audience with the conviction that although the majority were unlettered, they had vigorous understandings, and did not require the great truths of religion and of private and of social duty to be adapted to any intellectual weakness or infirmity. The national poetry, which was heard at the high festivals of the city traders, and even descended to as lowly a popularity as that of the village circle upon the ale-bench under the spreading elm on a summer's eve, had no essentials of vulgarity or childishness, such as in later days have been thought necessary for general comprehension. We were ever a thoughtful people, a reasoning people, and yet a people of strong passions and unconquerable energy. A popular literature was kept alive and preserved, however imperfectly, before the press came to make those who had learnt to read self-dependent in their intellectual gratifications; and what has come down to us of the old

minstrelsy, with all its inaccuracy and occasional feebleness, shows us that the people of England, four or five centuries ago, had a common fund of high thought upon which a great literature might in time be reared. The very existence of a poet like Chaucer is the best proof of the vigour, and to a certain extent of the cultivation, of the national mind, even in an age when books were rarities.

Minstrels.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MERCER ABROAD.



Mercers' Hall.

Robert Large, the master of Caxton, became Lord Mayor of London in 1439—40. He died in 1441. That he was a man of considerable substance appears by the record of his bequests, in Stow's Survey of London: "Robert Large, mercer, mayor 1440, gave to his parish church of St. Olave, in Surrey, two hundred pounds; to St. Margaret's, in Lothbury, twenty-five pounds; to the poor, twenty pounds; to London-bridge, one hundred marks; towards the vaulting over the watercourse of Walbrook, two hundred marks; to poor maids' marriages, one hundred marks; to

poor householders, one hundred pounds."* By his last will he bequeathed to his servant, William Caxton, twenty marks, a considerable sum in those days. From this period it would seem that Caxton resided abroad. In the first book he translated, the "Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye," which bears upon the title to have been "ended and finished in the holy city of Cologne, the 19th day of September, the year of our Lord one thousand, four hundred, sixty, and eleven," he says, "I have continued by the space of thirty year for the most part in the countries of Brabant, Flanders, Holland, and Zealand." The Rev. John Lewis, who wrote the life of Master William Caxton, about one hundred years ago, says, "It has been guessed that he was abroad as a travelling agent or factor for the Company of Mercers, and employed by them in the business of merchandise." Oldys, the writer of his life in the Biographia Britannica, adds, but certainly without any authority, "It is agreed on by those writers who have best acquainted themselves with his story, he was deputed and intrusted by the Mercers' Company to be their agent or factor in Holland, Zealand, Flanders, &c., to establish and enlarge their correspondents, negociate the consumption of our own, and importation of foreign manufactures, and otherwise promote the advantage of the said corporation in their respective merchandise." This, indeed, was a goodly commission, if we can make out that he ever re-

* We believe that the text of Stow, "St. Olave in *Surrey*," is a mistake for "St. Olave in *Jewry*,"—for Robert Large was buried in St. Olave in the Jewry, where a plated stone in the ground, in the south aisle, recorded his death on the 24th of April, 1441.

ceived such,—an employment which seems to speak of free and liberal intercourse between two countries, each requiring the commodities of the other, and conducting their interchange upon the sound principles of encouraging mutual consumption, and thus producing mutual profit. Doubtless, we may believe, upon a superficial view of the matter, that the agent of the Mercers' Company was conducting his operations with the full authority of the government at home, and with the hearty support of the rulers of the land in which he so long lived. The real fact is, that for twenty of those years in which Caxton describes himself as residing in the countries of Brabant, Holland, and Zealand, there was an absolute prohibition on both sides of all commercial intercourse between England and the Duchy of Burgundy, to which those countries were subject; and for nearly the whole period, no English goods were suffered to pass to the continent, except through the town of Calais; and "in France," says Caxton, "I was never." If Caxton had any mercantile employment at all from his Company, it was, in all probability, for the purpose of finding channels in trade that were closed up by the blind policy of the respective governments. He could not have conducted any mercantile operation in those countries, except in violation of the absurd commercial laws which would not allow the people to seek their own interest in their own way. It is by no means improbable, however, that by the connivance of the royal personages who wanted for themselves rich commodities which they could only obtain by that exchange which they denied their subjects, William Caxton was in truth an accredited smuggler

for law-makers who attempted to limit the wants, and the means of satisfying the wants, of the people they governed, in deference to the prejudices of those who thought that trade could only exist under a system of the most stringent prohibition. It may unfold to us a few notions, and not unprofitable ones, of what the commerce of England was four hundred years ago, if we open the statute-book, and see how a merchant was then hemmed round by a triple wall of obstructions—raised, no doubt, in many instances, by his own cupidity—against carrying out the great commercial principle of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest.

The whole course of early commercial legislation, and the course, indeed, of much modern legislation, is to make laws for the attainment of some good which, if there be any principle of good in the thing itself, will be attained without the laws. The statute of the 8th of Henry VI., 1429, says that the price of wool and tin sold at Calais shall "not be abated, but augmented and put to greater increase and advantage," and further for these commodities "the whole payment be made in hand." What could any noble English merchant desire better from a law? High prices, ready money! One little year is quite enough to test the power of the law-makers; for in the 9th of the same king it is found out that by this law of high prices and ready money "the English merchants have not sold, or cannot sell, nor utter their cloths to merchants aliens, whereby the king has lost his customs which he ought to have had if the said cloths had been sold as they were and were wont heretofore." And so, says the considerate law, the merchants

may sell, if they can, for six months' credit. Year after year the law goes on enacting that no goods shall leave England, but for the staple at Calais. "All the wools," say the trade regulators, "woolfells, hides, lead, and tin, and divers other merchandises passing out of the realm of England, the lands of Ireland, Wales, and Berwick-upon-Tweed, ought to repair to the staple at Calais, and to none other place beyond the sea." But, good lack, according to the same statute, "a great substance of the merchandises which ought to repair to the said staple do repair into Flanders, Holland, Zealand, and Brabant, without custom or other charge; and moreover, the same wools and merchandises be sold in the same parts at so low price that the merchants aliens be so greatly enstored of the same, that they come not to Calais to buy their merchandises." What is the remedy? That the goods shall be forfeit, whenever the exporters are detected. But they are not detected. Penalties are useless; the contraband trade goes on and flourishes; and then, eight years afterwards, the king, "considering how divers persons by divers imaginations of deceit carry and bear away wool and wool-fells out of this realm, to other places than to the staple of Calais," declares that every person so offending shall be adjudged to be a felon. Will this do? The fear of the halter stops no more the course of trade than the fear of the fine. The laws begin to relax. Those who sent their merchandise to the staple of Calais were not to get the money for it themselves, but there was to be a sort of partition according to the laws of the staple, in which no doubt the governors of the staple got a lion's share. And so two years afterwards the merchants were

to be allowed to receive the price of what they sold, by themselves or by their attorneys. But Calais itself of course flourishes amongst all these privileges and prohibitions? The statute of the 27th of Henry VI. most piteously recites its complete decay. It says that King Edward III., by great deliberation, ordered his whole staple of merchandise to be at Calais; that great revenues came to him therefrom, even to the extent of sixty-eight thousand pounds a year; that now the annual revenue from Calais was only twelve thousand pounds; and so, continues the statute with most ludicrous solemnity, because the wool has been sold in Brabant and other places to such men as were wont to be accustomed to buy their wool at the staple at Calais (the said men preferring to buy their wool at their own doors to going a hundred miles to fetch it overland), the Commons of England are not enriched by their wools and other merchandises as they were wont to be, and the merchants greatly minished in number as well as in goods. On the other hand, the Duke of Burgundy, seeing this pouring of English goods by a shorter road than the staple of Calais into his dominions of Brabant, Holland, and Zealand, makes an ordinance, in 1448, that no woollen cloths at all shall come in. The king of England is naturally very indignant at this, although he has done all in his power to prevent the subjects of the Duke of Burgundy receiving the English goods by the shortest road and at the cheapest rate. And so, he says, that this ordinance is "to the intolerable damage of all the commons of this realm;" damages the weavers, fullers, and dyers, the websters, carders, and spinners; causeth them to live idly, and pro-

voketh them to sin and evil life. And what doth the king of England do for remedy or mitigation of the evil? He does what we have been accustomed to do up to this hour; he will not let our people buy, because another potentate will not let our people sell:—no manner of merchandises or goods of the growing or workmanship of the lands and parts which the said duke holdeth or occupieth shall come in the said realm of England, upon pain of the forfeiture of the merchandises so brought in. Such was the state of things when William Caxton was, as he is supposed to have been, a merchant in the dominions of the Duke of Burgundy.

If the ordinances of the government rendered the foreign dealings of Caxton insecure and unprofitable, or forced him to seek for profit in channels which the government in vain attempted to close up, his position, and that of all other merchants, must have also been rendered uncomfortable by the dishonest spirit that had already begun to manifest itself through excessive competition. It is a curious thing that, four hundred years ago, the very same complaint of the deterioration of English goods that we hear at this hour was made the subject of parliamentary enactment. A statute of 1441 says, "Whereas worsted was sometime a good merchandise, and greatly desired and loved in the parts beyond the sea; now because that it is a false work, and a false stuff, no man thereof taketh regard, which is great damage to the king's customs," &c. The makers of broadcloth would seem to have been equally culpable with the makers of worsted; for a statute of 1464 says, "Whereas many years past, and now at this day, the workmanship of cloth, and things requi-

site to the same, is, and hath been, of such fraud, deceit, and falsity, that the said cloths in other lands and countries be had in small reputation, to the great shame of this land." But mark the logic of the lawgivers. By reason of the badness of our native cloths, according to the statute, "a great quantity of cloths of other strange lands be brought into this realm, and there sold at an high and excessive price, evidently shewing the offence, default, and falsehood of the making of woollen cloths of this land." If the foreign cloths had been brought in without such restraints as compelled them to be sold at an excessive price, the competition of the foreigner would have amended the quality of the native manufacture much more surely than any act of parliament. The very same statute of the 4th of Edward IV. enacts, "that all manner of woollen cloths made in any other region brought into this realm of England, and set to sale within any part of this realm, shall be forfeit to our sovereign lord the king." No surer method, indeed, could be found to encourage and perpetuate the fraud of the native manufacture. The statute of 1464 says that because our cloths are bad, the foreign cloths are sold at high prices. The prices were high because the trade in foreign cloths was a smuggling trade, as was the greater part of our own export trade. The whole tendency of legislation was, under some pretence or other of the people's good, to prevent them from trading at all. We open these old statutes, and see how little the course of the world has altered during four hundred years. We there are told in the fifteenth century, as we are told in the nineteenth, that

"the labourers and occupiers of husbandry within this realm be daily grievously endamaged by bringing of corn out of other lands and parts into this realm, when corn of the growing of this realm is at a low price." We are told that "it was shewed in the Parliament by the spinsters of silk, within the city of London, that divers Lombards and other alien strangers, imagining to destroy their crafts and all such virtuous occupations for women within this land, to the intent to enrich themselves and to put such occupations into other lands, bring now daily into this realm wrought silk, thrown ribbons, and laces, falsely and deceitfully wrought." And lastly, we are told, "Whereas to the said Parliament, by the artificers of manual occupations, men and women, inhabiting and resident in the city of London, and other cities, towns, boroughs, and villages within this realm of England and Wales, it hath been piteously shewed and complained, how that they all in general, and every of them, be greatly impoverished, and much hindered and prejudiced of their worldly increase and daily living, by the great multitude of divers commodities and wares pertaining to their mysteries and occupations being fully wrought, and ready made to sale, as well by the hands of strangers being the king's enemies as other, in this realm, and Wales, fetched and brought from beyond the sea, as well by merchants strangers as denizens and other persons, whereof the greatest part in substance is deceitful, and nothing worth in regard of any man's occupation or profit; by which occasion the said artificers cannot live by their mysteries and occupations, as they have done in times past, but divers of them, as well house-

holders as hirelings, and other servants and apprentices in great number, be at this day unoccupied, and do hardly live, in great idleness, poverty, and ruin." The penalty against bringing these divers commodities and wares into the realm, was an absolute forfeiture of one-half to the king, and one-half to him who first seized the same; and we may well believe that, when the hand of every man was thus armed against his neighbour, a pretty scuffling must have been daily going forward to vindicate the laws of commercial restriction. The catalogue of prohibited wares in this statute is exceedingly curious, as shewing the progress which had been made in the social demand for articles of secondary necessity and of positive luxury. In addition to woollen cloth and caps, laces, ribbons, and fringes, there are saddles, stirrups, spurs, bridles, andirons, gridirons, locks, hammers, fire-tongs, dripping-pans, dice, tennis-balls, purses, gloves, girdles, leather, buskins, shoes, goloshes, corks, knives, daggers, bodkins, shears, scissors, razors, sheaths, playing-cards, pins, pattens, pack-needles, painted ware, caskets, chaffing-dishes, sacring-bells, candlesticks, curtain-rings, ladles, skimmers, basins, ewers, hats, brushes, cards for wool, and blanch iron thread, commonly called white wire. This is a considerable list of things with which England now supplies the world; and the question would naturally arise whether the absolute prohibition of foreign goods did give such an impulse to the native manufacture, as prohibitors in all ages have contended, and still contend, is the good of prohibition. One thing is quite certain, that the prohibition at home engendered prohibition abroad, and that we were

consequently obliged, laboriously and painfully, to produce many things for native consumption which we could more readily have obtained by exchange, and that there was a reciprocal barring out of those things which we did produce easily and abundantly from the use of the people of other countries who could not produce them. The inconsistency of such regulations was never more clearly exhibited than in the preambles of these ancient statutes, which have not the cunning to conceal the false principle under a veil of expediency. The Duke of Burgundy, as we have said, had gone on prohibiting the cloths of England to come into the Low Countries; and England had gone on in the same way prohibiting the wares of the Low Countries coming into England. Within a year of this prodigious enactment of Edward the Fourth, beginning with wool, and ending with white wire, the Duke of Burgundy puts out a declaration, "evermore to endure, and never to be repealed," that all English cloth and wool that came into his lands should be banished and burnt, banished (or banned) meaning that the yarn and the cloth were accursed things. Our tender-hearted King Edward, who had been in the same way legislating against the foreign makers of every article, from a hat to a shoe, from a hammer to a pin, is amazingly surprised at the cruelty of the Duke of Burgundy, "whereby, by all likelihood, the makers of woollen cloths within this realm of England, as weavers, fullers, dyers, spinners, carders, and winders of yarn, and other persons exercising the cloth-making, and also the buyers and sellers of the same, should be destitute of occupations and become so idle, that it should provoke

them to sin and evil life, which God defend." And so the merciful King Edward spreads the same destitution through the lands of the Duke of Burgundy, by ordaining that any manner of merchandises of the Duke brought into England shall be seized and forfeited, "one-half thereof to him that first shall seize the same goods and merchandise, in whose hands soever they shall be found."

Nothing, we apprehend, but the energy of the English character could have made us what we are as a commercial people during centuries of such enactments. It was not only foreign commerce that was subjected to regulations, which were either so stringent as almost to have annihilated commerce, or so absurd as to have carried their own remedy with them, like the Milan and Berlin decrees of Bonaparte,—but the domestic trade of the country was hemmed round and fettered by laws against extravagance in dress, which had always been a favourite subject for the experimentalizing of barbarous legislation. An act of 1463 recites that the Commons pray their lord the king to remember that in the times of his noble progenitors, ordinances and statutes were made for the apparel and array of the Commons, as well of men as of women, so that none of them should use or wear any inordinate or excessive apparel, but only according to their degrees. However, we find that all these ordinances had been utterly fruitless; so the Parliament make new ordinances. The nobles, according to these, may wear whatever they please; knights and their wives were to wear no cloth of gold, or fur of sables; no person under the state of a lord to wear any purple silk; no esquires or gentlemen and their wives any silk at all; no persons

not having possessions of the yearly value of forty pounds any fur; and, what is cruel indeed, no widow but such as hath possessions of the value of forty pounds, shall wear any fur, any gold or silver girdle, or any kerchief that had cost more than three shillings and fourpence; persons not having forty shillings a year were denied the enjoyment of fustian and scarlet cloth; the yeoman was to have no stuffing in his doublet; nor servants in husbandry, broadcloth of a higher price than two shillings a yard. The length of gowns, jackets, and cloaks was prescribed by the same statute; and the unhappy tailor who exceeded the length by the breadth of his nail, was to be mulcted in the same penalties as those who flaunted in skirts of more than needful longitude. The men and women of the mystery and workmanship of silk prefer their piteous complaint to Parliament, that silk-work ready wrought is brought into the realm. If it had occurred to them to petition that the gentlemen and their wives might be permitted to wear satin, as well as the lords, their piteous complaint of want of occupation might have been more easily redressed than by foreign prohibition. Sumptuary laws have long been abolished; but to them succeeded the laws of custom, which prescribed one sort of dress to one condition of people, and another to another. We cannot doubt which state gives most employment to manufacturers, the law of exclusiveness or the law of universality. If the labourer and artificer were still restricted, by enactment or by custom, to the wearing of cloth of a certain price per yard, we may be quite sure that the manufacture of the finer cloths would be in no flourishing condition; and if the servant-maid

could not put on her Sunday gown of silk, we may be equally clear that the silk-trade would continue to be the small thing that it was half a century ago, when it had the full benefit of restriction, instead of being, as it is now, one of the great staple trades of the country.

While Edward the Fourth, and Charles the Good, Duke of Burgundy, were launching against each other ordinance and enactment to prevent their subjects becoming exchangers for the better supply of their respective wants, some politic understanding between these princes led them eventually to adopt a wiser system. It is pretty clear that William Caxton was one of the agents, and a principal one, in putting an end to a policy which the Duke of Burgundy said was "evermore to endure." In 1464 Edward the Fourth issued a commission to his trusty and well-beloved Richard Whitehill and William Caxton, to be his especial ambassadors, procurators, nuncios, and deputies to his most dear cousin the Duke of Burgundy, for the purpose of confirming an existing treaty of commerce, or, if necessary, for making a new one. In 1466, this commission being dated in October, 1464, a treaty was concluded with the Duke of Burgundy, by which the commerce between his dominions and England, which had been interrupted for twenty years, was restored; and a port of Flanders was subsequently appointed to be a port of the English staple, as well as Calais. It is pleasant to us to believe that this extension of a principle which must eventually bind all nations in a common brotherhood was effected by the good sense of a mercer of London; who was afterwards to bestow upon his country the blessings of an art which has been

the great instrument of that country's progress in real greatness and prosperity, and before which all impediments to the continued course of that prosperity—all prejudices amongst her own children, or amongst other peoples, that make the great family of mankind aliens and enemies, and keep them from the enjoyment of the advantages which each might bestow upon the other,—will utterly perish. It is pleasant to us to believe that William Caxton, the first English printer, in his day opened the ports of one great trading community to another great trading community. When he, the mercer's apprentice, stamped the merchant's mark upon his master's bales, he knew not, he could not have divined, that by this process of stamping, carried for-

Merchant's Marks.

ward by the ingenuity of many men into a new art, there would arise consequences which would change the face of the world. He could not imagine that he, whose education had consisted in learning to buy wool and measure cloth, should by the natural course of his commercial life be thrown into a society where a great wonder was to fill the minds of all men with astonishment—the multiplication of manuscripts by some new and secret process, as if by magic; and which some men, and he probably

amongst the number, must have regarded with a higher feeling than wonder,—with something like that prophetic view of its consequences which have been described by the novelist, who, perhaps more than any man, has employed that art to the delight of all classes in every country. There are many who will remember the passage in Sir Walter Scott's Quentin Durward, where Louis the Eleventh of France, and Martivalle Galeotti, the astrologer, speak of the invention of printing :—

"'You are engaged, father,' said the king, 'and, as I think, with this new-fashioned art of multiplying manuscripts by the intervention of machinery. Can things of such mechanical and terrestial import interest the thoughts of one before whom Heaven has unrolled her own celestial volumes?'

"'My brother,' replied Martivalle, 'for so the tenant of this cell must term even the king of France, when he deigns to visit him as a disciple,—believe me that, in considering the consequences of this invention, I read with as certain augury, as by any combination of the heavenly bodies, the most awful and portentous changes. When I reflect with what slow and limited supplies the stream of science hath hitherto descended to us,—how difficult to be obtained by those most ardent in its search—how certain to be neglected by all who regard their ease,—how liable to be diverted, or altogether dried up, by the invasions of barbarism,—can I look forward without wonder and astonishment to the lot of a succeeding generation, on whom knowledge will descend like the first and second rain, uninterrupted, unabated, unbounded, fertilizing some grounds, and overflowing others;

changing the whole form of social life; establishing and overthrowing religions; erecting and destroying kingdoms—'

"'Hold, Galeotti,' said Louis; 'shall these changes come in our time?'

"'No, my royal brother,' replied Martivalle."

CHAPTER V.

THE NEW ART.

Blocks and Stencil Instruments.

In the list which we gave in the last chapter of foreign goods forbidden to be imported into this country, the reader might be surprised to find that playing-cards were of sufficient importance, from their general use, to require that the native manufactories should be protected in the production of them. Playing-cards were known in France for more than a hundred years before this statute of Edward IV.; so that the common notion that they were invented to furnish amusement to an insane king, Charles VI. of France, about 1393, is a popular error. It is clear that both in France and Spain at that period cards were the amusement not only of the royal and noble inmates of palaces, but of the burghers and the working people. The King of Castile, in 1387, prohibited

cards altogether; and they appear, with other games of skill and chance, to have interfered so much with the regular labour of the artificers of Paris, that the provost of that city, in 1397, forbade all working-people to play at tennis, bowls, nine-pins, dice, or cards, on working-days. The earliest cards were probably painted by means of a stencil, by which name we call a piece of pasteboard or plate of thin metal pierced with apertures, by which a figure is formed upon paper or other substance beneath it when fluid colour is smeared over its surface with a brush. But it has also been conjectured, from their being in the hands of the working-people, that their cheapness must have been produced by some rude application of a wood-engraving to form the outline which the stencilling process filled up with colour. There can be no doubt that cards were *printed* before the middle of the fifteenth century; for there is a petition extant from the Venetian *painters* to their magistracy, dated 1441, setting forth that the art and mystery of card-making and of *printing* figures, which were practised in Venice, had fallen into total decay, through the great quantity of foreign playing-cards and coloured printed figures which were brought into the city. The Germans were the great card-makers of this period; and the name by which a wood-engraver is still called in Germany, *Formschneider*, meaning figure-cutter, occurs in the town books of Nuremburg as early as 1441. Some of the early cards were very rude. Here is the Knave of Bells—for spades, diamonds, hearts, and clubs were not then the universal symbols. Others called forth the skill of very clever artists, such as he who is known as "the

Knave of Bells.

master of 1466," whose knave is a much more human knave than the traditionary worthy whom we look upon to this hour. When Caxton, therefore, was abroad for thirty years, he would unquestionably have seen every variety of these painted bits of paper; some rich with crimson and purple, oftentimes painted on a golden ground, and calling forth, like the missals, the highest art of the limner; others impressed with a rude outline, and daubed by the stenciller. It appears that the impressions

Knave, of Master of 1466.

of the engraved cards, as well as of most of the earlier block-prints, were taken off by friction. This is the mode by which, even at the present day, wood-engravers take off the specimen impressions of their works called proofs. The Chinese produce their block-books in a similar manner, without the aid of a press.

But there was another application of engraved blocks, about the same period, which was approaching still nearer to the art of printing. The representations of saints and of scriptural histories, which the limners in the monasteries had for several centuries been painting in their missals and bibles, were copied in outline; and being divested of their

brilliant colours and rich gilding, presented figures exceedingly rude in their want of proportion, and grotesque in their constrained and violent attitudes. But they were nevertheless highly popular; and as the pictures were accompanied with a few sentences from Scripture, they probably supplied the first inducement to the laity to learn to read, and thus prepared the way for that diffusion of knowledge which was to accompany the invention of printing from moveable types. In the collection of Earl Spenser there is a very curious print from a wood-block, representing St. Christopher carrying the infant Saviour. This print bears the date 1423. It is probably not the earliest specimen of the art; but it is the earliest undoubted document which determines with precision the period when wood-engraving was generally applied to objects of devotion. In a very few years from the date of this print the art was carried onward to a more important object,—that of producing a *book*.

Several of such books are now in existence, and are known as block-books. One of them is commonly called 'Biblia Pauperum,' the Bible of the Poor. But an ingenious writer on the progress of wood-cutting, in the valuable book on that subject published by Mr. John Jackson, has shown very clearly that this was not the original title of the book; and he adds that it was rather a book for the use of preachers than the laity:—"A series of skeleton sermons ornamented with wood-cuts to warm the preacher's imagination, and stored with texts to assist his memory." This very rare book consists of forty leaves of small folio, each of which contains a cut in wood, with extracts from the Scriptures, and other illustrative sentences. Of other block-books

The Wise Men's Offering.

the most remarkable is called 'Speculum Salutis,' —the Mirror of Salvation. In this performance the explanations of the text are much fuller than in the 'Biblia Pauperum.' In addition to these works, wooden blocks were also used to print small manuals of grammar, called Donatuses, which were used in schools. We present a fac-simile of a wood-cut from one of the early block-books.

The use of carved blocks for the multiplication of copies of playing-cards and devotional pictures gave birth to a principle which has effected, and is still effecting, the most important changes in the world. These devotional pictures had short legends or texts attached to them; and when a text had to be printed, it was engraved in a solid piece, as well as the picture. The first person who seized upon the idea that the text or legend might be composed of separate letters capable of re-arrangement after the impressions were taken off, so as to be applied, without new cutting, to other texts and legends, had secured the principle upon which the printing art was to depend. It was easy to extend the principle from a few lines to a whole page, and from one page to many, so as to form a book; but then were seen the great labour and expense of cutting so many separate letters upon small pieces of wood or metal, and another step was required to be made before the principle was thoroughly worked out. This step consisted in the ready multiplication of the separate letters by casting metal in moulds. Lastly, instead of using the old Chinese mode of friction to produce impressions, a *press* was to be perfected. All these gradations

were undoubtedly the result of long and patient experiments carried on by several individuals, who each saw the importance of the notion they were labouring to work out. It is this circumstance which has given rise to interminable controversies as to the inventors of printing, some claiming the honour for Coster of Haarlem, and some for Guttenberg of Mentz; and, as is usual in all such disputes, it was represented that the man to whom public opinion had assigned the credit of the invention had stolen it from another, who, as is also usual in these cases, thought of it in a dream, or received it by some other mysterious revelation. The general consent of Europe now assigns the chief honour to Guttenberg. The following account of the invention is given by an ancient German chronicler of the name of Trithemius, who appears to have personally known one of the three persons who clearly seem to have the best title to be called the inventors of printing:—

"At this time, in the city of Mentz on the Rhine in Germany, and not in Italy, as some have erroneously written, that wonderful and then unheard-of art of printing and characterizing books was invented and devised by John Guttenberger, a citizen of Mentz, who having expended almost the whole of his property in the invention of this art, and on account of the difficulties which he experienced on all sides, was about to abandon it altogether; when, by the advice, and through the means, of John Fust [or Faust], likewise a citizen of Mentz, he succeeded in bringing it to perfection. At first they formed [engraved] the characters or letters in written order on blocks of wood, and in

this manner they printed the vocabulary called a 'Catholicon.' But with these forms [blocks] they could print nothing else, because the characters could not be transposed in these tablets, but were engraved thereon, as we have said. To this invention succeeded a more subtle one, for they found out the means of cutting the forms of all the letters of the alphabet, which they called matrices, from which again they cast characters of copper or tin of sufficient hardness to resist the necessary pressure, which they had before engraved by hand. And truly, as I learned thirty years since from Peter Opilio (Schoeffer) de Gernsheim, citizen of Mentz, who was the son-in-law of the first inventor of this art, great difficulties were experienced after the first invention of this art of printing, for in printing the Bible, before they had completed the third quaternion (or gathering of four sheets), 4000 florins were expended. This Peter Schoeffer, whom we have above mentioned, first servant and afterwards son-in-law to the first inventor, John Fust, as we have said, an ingenious and sagacious man, discovered the more easy method of casting the types, and thus the art was reduced to the complete state in which it now is. These three kept this method of printing secret for some time, until it was divulged by some of their workmen, without whose aid this art could not have been exercised; it was first developed at Strasburg, and soon became known to other nations. And thus much of the admirable and subtle art of printing may suffice — the first inventors were citizens of Mentz. These three first inventors of Printing, (videlicet) John Guttenberger, John Fust, and

Peter Schoeffer, his son-in-law, lived at Mentz, in the house called Zum Jungen, which has ever since been called the Printing-office."

Guttenberg, Fust, and Schoeffer.

The invention of Schoeffer, which, whatever might have been its first mechanical imperfections, undoubtedly completed the principle of printing, is more particularly described in an early document, which is given in several learned works on typography, as proceeding from a relation of Fust. It is as follows:—"Peter Schoeffer of Gernsheim, perceiving his master Fust's design, and being himself ardently desirous to improve the art, found out (by the good providence of God) the method of cutting (*incidendi*) the characters in a matrix, that the letters might each be singly cast, instead of being cut. He privately cut matrices for the whole alphabet; and, when he showed his master the letters cast from these matrices, Fust was so

pleased with the contrivance, that he promised Peter to give him his only daughter Christina in marriage; a promise which he soon after performed. But there were as many difficulties at first with these letters, as there had been before with wooden ones; the metal being too soft to support the force of the impression: but this defect was soon remedied by mixing the metal with a substance which sufficiently hardened it." John Schoeffer, the son of Peter, who was also a printer, confirms this account, adding, "Fust and Schoeffer concealed this new improvement by administering an oath of secrecy to all whom they intrusted, till the year 1462, when, by the dispersion of their servants into different countries, at the sacking of Mentz by the Archbishop Adolphus, the invention was publicly divulged."

During the summer of 1837 a statue of John Guttenberg, by the great sculptor Thorwalsden, was erected at Mentz (or Mayence), and on the 14th of August and the following days a festival was held there, upon the occasion of the inauguration of the monument. Abundant evidence, in addition to what we have stated, has been brought forward of late years to show that Guttenberg deserves all the honours of having conceived, and in great part perfected, an art which has produced the most signal effects upon the destinies of mankind. At that festival of Mentz, at which many hundred persons were assembled, from all parts of Europe, to do honour to the inventor of printing, no rival pretensions were put forward; although many of the compatriots of Coster of Haarlem were present. The fine statue of Guttenberg was

opened amidst an universal burst of enthusiasm. Never were the shouts of a vast multitude raised on a more elevating occasion;—never were the triumphs of intellect celebrated with greater fervour. The statue of Guttenberg, who had won for his city the gratitude of the world, was opened with demonstrations of popular feeling such as have been wont only to greet the car of the conqueror. The poor printer of Mentz indeed achieved a conquest; the fruits of his bloodless victory are imperishable; but it is honourable beyond comparison to the present generation of the citizens of Mentz to have felt that this victory of mind, which has made all future victories of the same nature permanent, was deserving of a trophy as enduring almost as the invention which it celebrates.

Passing his life amidst the ceaseless activity that belongs to the commerce of literature in London, the writer of this volume felt no common interest in the enthusiasm which the festival in honour of Guttenberg called forth throughout Germany; and he determined to attend that celebration. The fine statue which was to be opened to public view on the 14th of August, had been erected by a general subscription, to which all Europe was invited to contribute. We apprehend that the English, amidst the incessant claims upon their attention for the support of all sorts of undertakings, whether of a national or individual character, had known little of the purpose which the good citizens of Mentz had been advocating with unabated zeal for several years;—and perhaps the object itself was not calculated to call forth any very great liberality on the

part of those who are often directed in their bounties as much by fashion as by their own convictions. Be that as it may, England literally gave nothing towards the monument of a man whose invention has done as much as any other single cause to make England what she is. The remoteness of the cause may also have lessened its importance; and some people, who, without any deserts of their own, are enjoying a more than full share of the blessings which have been shed upon us by the progress of intellect (which determines the progress of national wealth), have a sort of instinctive notion that the spread of knowledge is the spread of something inimical to the pretensions of mere riches. We met with a lady on board the steamboat ascending the Rhine, two days before the festival of Mentz, who, whilst she gave us an elaborate account of the fashionable dulness of the baths of Baden and Nassau, and all the other German watering-places, told us by all means to avoid Mentz during the following week, as a crowd of low people from all parts would be there, to make a great fuss about a printer who had been dead two or three hundred years. The low people did assemble in great crowds: it was computed that at least fifteen thousand strangers had arrived to do honour to the first printer.

The modes in which a large population displays its enthusiasm are pretty much the same throughout the world. If the sentiment which collects men together be very heart-stirring, all the outward manifestations of the sentiment harmonize with its real truth. Thus, processions, and orations, and public dinners, and pageantries which in

themselves are vain and empty, are important when the persons whom they collect together have one common feeling which for the time is all-pervading. We never saw such a popular fervour as prevailed at Mentz at the festival of August, 1837. The statue was to be opened on Monday the 14th; but on the Sunday evening the name of Guttenberg was rife through all the streets. In the morning all Mentz was in motion by six o'clock; and at eight a procession was formed to the Cathedral, which, if it was not much more imposing than some of the processions of trades in London and other cities, was conducted with a quiet precision which evidenced that the people felt they were engaged in a solemn act. The fine old Cathedral was crowded;—the Bishop of Mentz performed High Mass;—the first Bible printed by Guttenberg was displayed. What a field for reflection was here opened! The First Bible, in connexion with the imposing pageantries of Roman Catholicism—the Bible, in great part a sealed book to the body of the people; the service of God in a tongue unknown to the larger number of worshippers;—but that first Bible the germ of millions of Bibles that have spread the light of Christianity throughout all the habitable globe! The Mass ended, the procession again advanced to the adjacent square, where the statue was to be opened. Here was erected a vast amphitheatre, where, seated under their respective banners, were deputations from all the great cities of Europe. Amidst salvos of artillery the veil was removed from the statue, and a hymn was sung by a thousand voices. Then came orations;—then dinners—balls—oratorios—boat-races—processions

by torch-light. For three days the population of Mentz was kept in a state of high excitement; and the echo of the excitement went through Germany,—and Guttenberg! Guttenberg! was toasted in many a bumper of Rhenish wine amidst this cordial and enthusiastic people.

And, indeed, even in one who could not boast of belonging to the land in which printing was invented, the universality of the mighty effects of this art, when rightly considered, would produce almost a corresponding enthusiasm. It is difficult to look upon the great changes that have been effected during the last four centuries, and which are still in progress everywhere around us, and not connect them with printing and with its inventor. The castles on the Rhine, under whose ruins we travelled back from Mentz, perished before the powerful combinations of the people of the towns. The petty feudal despots fell, when the burghers had acquired wealth and knowledge. But the progress of despotism upon a larger scale could not have been arrested had the art of Guttenberg not been discovered. The strongholds of military power still frown over the same majestic river. The Rhine has seen its petty fortresses crumble into decay;—Ehrenbreitstein is more strong than ever. But even Ehrenbreitstein will fall before the power of mind. The Rhine is crowded with steam-boats, where the feudal lord once levied tribute upon the frail bark of the fisherman; and the approaches to the Rhine from France and Belgium are becoming a great series of railroads. Such communications will make war a game much more difficult to play; and when mankind are thoroughly

civilized, it will never be played again. Seeing, then, what intellect has done and is doing, we may well venerate the memory of Guttenberg of Mentz.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COURT OF BURGUNDY.

Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy.

THE "most dear" Duke of Burgundy, with whom Caxton was appointed to negotiate in 1464, was Philip, surnamed the Good. He was a wise and peaceful prince, and honourably earned his title. We know not whether Caxton was in immediate attendance upon the court of Philip from

the commencement of his mission until the death of the duke in 1467; but the evidence is subsequently clear that he was about the court in some office of trust after the succession to the dukedom of the eldest son of Philip, the Count of Charolois. The character of this prince was entirely opposed to that of his father; and he acquired the name of Charles le Téméraire, or the Rash. Philip de Comines, a celebrated historian or annalist of those times, who was employed in the service of Charles, thus paints his character, after describing the battle of Montlhéry, in which Charles, at the head of some of the great princes and nobles who were bound to do fealty to the crown of France, took the field against Louis XI., in that confederation which was called the "League of the Public Weal:" —"All that day the Count de Charolois kept the field, rejoicing extremely, and imputing the whole honour of this action to himself alone; which cost him dear since, for after that he was governed by no counsel but his own: and whereas before he was altogether averse and unfit for the war, and took delight in nothing that belonged to it; his thoughts were so strangely altered upon this, that he spent the remainder of his life in wars, in which he died, and which were the occasion, if not quite of the ruin of his family, at least of the misery and desolation of it. Three illustrious and wise princes (his predecessors) had advanced it to that height of strength and grandeur, that few monarchs, except the king of France, were more powerful than he, and in large and fair towns none of them exceeded him. No man ought, but especially a prince, to assume too much upon himself, but freely to acknowledge, that 'tis God alone that

crowns all our actions with success. However, two things I dare boldly say of him, by way of commendation: the one is, that I believe no man ever endured more fatigues in all sorts of bodily labour and exercise when the occasion required it, than he; and the other is, that in my opinion I never knew a person of greater valour and intrepidity; I never heard him complain of being weary, nor betray the least signs of fear, during the whole seven years I was in his service in the wars, though he was constantly every summer in the field, and sometimes winter and summer. In short, his designs and enterprises were always so bold and daring, that nothing less than an Almighty power was able to accomplish them, being far beyond the reach of human capacity to do it." This fiery prince, whose influence in that warlike age was perhaps greater than the benignant power of his father, was not likely to have looked very favourably upon an envoy from Edward of England; for he was allied by blood on his mother's side to the house of Lancaster, and was consequently opposed to the fortunes of the house of York. The court of Burgundy was the resort of many of the adherents of that unhappy house, who had fled from England after many a vain struggle with the triumphant Edward. These fugitives are described by Comines "as young gentlemen whose fathers had been slain in England, whom the Duke of Burgundy had generously entertained as his relations of the house of Lancaster." Comines adds, "Some of them were reduced to such extremity of want and poverty before the Duke of Burgundy received them, that no common beggar could have been in greater; I saw one of them, who was Duke

of Exeter (but he concealed his name), following the Duke of Burgundy's train bare-foot and bare-legged, begging his bread from door to door: this person was the next of the house of Lancaster; had married King Edward's sister; and being afterwards known, had a small pension allowed him for his subsistence. There were also some of the family of the Somersets, and several others, all of them slain since, in the wars." But the policy of Charles of Burgundy, after his accession to the dukedom, led him to consider the ties of ancient friendship as of far less importance than the strengthening of his hand by an alliance with the successful house of York. Within a year of his accession he married Margaret, sister of Edward IV. Comines says this marriage "was principally to strengthen his alliance against the king of France, otherwise he would never have done it, for the love he bore to the house of Lancaster." The establishment of Margaret as Duchess of Burgundy gave a direction to the fortunes of William Caxton, and was in all likelihood the proximate cause that *he* was our first English printer.

Margaret Plantagenet was married to Charles of Burgundy, at the city of Bruges, on the 3rd of July, 1468. We have the distinct evidence of Caxton that he was residing at Bruges some months previous to the marriage; that he had little to do; and that he employed his leisure in literary pursuits. In his 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' it is stated in the title-page, "which said translation and work was begun in Bruges, in the county of Flanders, the first day of March, the year of the Incarnation a thousand, four hundred, sixty and eight." The prologue begins as follows:—"When

I remember that every man is bounden by the commandment and counsel of the wise man to eschew sloth and idleness, which is mother and nourisher of vices, and ought to put myself unto virtuous occupation and business, then I, having no great charge or occupation, following the said counsel, took a French book and read therein many strange marvellous histories, wherein I had great pleasure and delight, as well for the novelty of the same, as for the fair language of the French, which was in prose so well and compendiously set and written, methought I understood the sentence and substance of every matter. And for so much as this book was new and late made and drawn into French, and never had seen it in our English tongue, I thought in myself it should be a good business to translate it into our English, to the end that it might be had as well in the royaume of England as in other lands, and also for to pass therewith the time, and thus concluded in myself to begin this said work, and forthwith took pen and ink, and began boldly to run forth, as blind Bayard, in this present work."

Philip de Comines, speaking of the prosperity of the people at the time of the accession of Charles, says, "The subjects of the house of Burgundy lived at that time in great plenty and prosperity, grew proud and wallowed in riches. . . . The expenses and habits both of women and men were great and extravagant; their entertainments and banquets more profuse and splendid than in any other place that I ever saw." The city of Bruges was then the great seat of this wealth and luxury. The Flemish nobles lived here in mansions of striking architecture, some traces of which still re-

main. The merchants vied with the nobles in tasteful magnificence. The canals of Bruges were crowded with boats laden with the richest treasures of distant lands. It was commerce that made the inhabitants of Bruges, of Ghent, and the other great Flemish towns so rich and powerful; and the same commerce was the encourager of art, which even at this early period displayed itself amongst a people naturally disposed for its cultivation. Charles the Rash destroyed much of this prosperity by his aptitude for war. But in the onset of his career he fought with all the pomp and graces of the old chivalry, and his court was the seat of such romantic pageantries that John Paston, an Englishman who went over with Margaret of York, writes, "As for the duke's court, as for lords, ladies, and gentlewomen, knights, esquires, and gentlemen, I heard never of none like to it save King Arthur's court." It was here, without doubt, that William Caxton, the yeoman's son of the Weald of Kent, and afterwards the mercer's apprentice of the city of London, acquired that love for the literature of chivalry which he displays on many occasions in his office of translator and printer. Here he made acquaintances that led him to the study of the romance writers, as for example of a worthy canon of whom he writes, "Oft times I have been excited of the venerable man Messire Henry Bolomyer, canon of Lausanne, for to reduce for his pleasure some histories, as well in Latin and in romance as in other fashion written; that is to say, of the right puissant, virtuous, and noble Charles the Great, King of France, and Emperor of Rome, son of the great Pepin, and of his princes and barons, as Rowland, Oliver, and other." His

zeal for this species of literature left him not in his latest years: for in his translation of 'The Book of the Order of Chivalry,' which was printed by him about 1484, he rises into absolute eloquence in his address at the conclusion of the volume: "Oh, ye knights of England, where is the custom and usage of noble chivalry that was used in those days? What do ye now, but go to the baynes [baths] and play at dice? And some, not well advised, use not honest and good rule, against all order of knighthood. Leave this, leave it! and read the noble volumes of St. Graal, of Lancelot, of Galaad, of Trystram, of Perse Forest, of Percyval, of Gawayn, and many more: there shall ye see manhood, courtesy, and gentleness. And look in latter days of the noble acts sith the Conquest, as in King Richard days Cœur de Lion, Edward I., and III. and his noble sons, Sir Robert Knolles, Sir John Hawkwode, Sir John Chandos, and Sir Gueltiare Manny. Read Froissart; and also behold that victorious and noble King Harry V., and the captains under him, his noble brethren the earls of Salisbury, Montagu, and many other, whose names shine gloriously by their virtuous noblesse and acts that they did in the honour of the order of chivalry. Alas, what do ye but sleep and take ease, and are all disordered from chivalry?" Caxton was dazzled, as many others were, with the bravery and the generosity of the chivalric character. He did not see the cruelty and pride, the oppression and injustice, that lurked beneath the glittering armour and the velvet mantle. Yet he was amongst those who first helped to destroy the gross inequality upon which chivalry was founded, by raising up the middle classes to

the possession of knowledge. There were scenes transacting at Bruges, even at the very hour when Margaret of York came to give her hand to Charles of Burgundy, that must have shown him what fearful passions were too often the companions of the courage and graces of knighthood. The whole course of this marriage presents so striking a picture of the times to which the first invention of printing belongs, that we may not improperly employ a short space in its exhibition.

At the midsummer of 1468 Bruges presented a scene of magnificence that was probably unequalled in those days of costly display. On the occasion of the approaching marriage, the nobility of Charles's extensive dominions arrived from every quarter. Ambassadors were there from all Christian powers. It looked like an occasion on which men should forget that there was such a thing as war in the world; and when despotism should put on its blandest smile and its most courteous reverence for all orders of men. The Duke of Burgundy anxiously desired the presence of the Count de St. Pôl, the great Constable of France. The constable arrived, surrounded with every pomp that his pride could devise,—with trumpets and banners, with pages on foot and crowds of horsemen, and a naked sword borne before him as the symbol of sovereignty. Charles was irritated beyond measure, and refused to receive the great lord, who from that hour became his deadliest enemy. But there was something more tragic to be enacted in the midst of a population looking only for high triumphs and royal pleasures. One of the chamberlains of the Duke of Burgundy was an illegitimate son of the Lord of Condé; he was very

young, of exceeding beauty, and the most agreeable manners. He had fought by the side of the duke at the battle of Montlhéry, and was one of his most especial favourites. The youth, with that ferocious self-abandonment which was not incompatible with the gentlest manners in courts and the noblest honours in camps, committed a murder under circumstances of extraordinary aggravation. He was playing at tennis, and the fairness of a stroke being doubtful, a bystander was called upon to decide. Deciding against the Bastard of Condé, the young man swore that he would be revenged. The bystander, who was a canon of the church, fled to his home, and the furious youth pursued him. The canon escaped, but his brother encountered the madman. Some victim must be offered up to appease his selfish rage, and the brother was in his path. The wretched man fell on his knees, and clasping his hands, begged for mercy. Those uplifted hands were cut off in an instant, and the sword, that had been honourably drawn at Montlhéry, pierced the breast of an unoffending citizen. Such a murder could not pass unnoticed; and yet the young man's friends did not doubt that he would go unpunished, for he had committed the crime in his father's lordship. Such crimes were often committed with impunity by the great and the powerful; and even the commonalty were unprepared to expect any heavier punishment than a pecuniary recompense to the relations of the murdered man. The duke, however, had taken his determination. The Bastard of Condé was held in arrest at the house of the gatekeeper of the city of Bruges. Charles was solicited on every side for pardon, and even the relations of the deceased,

having been moved by suitable presents, supplicated his release; but the duke kept the matter in suspense till Bruges was filled with his subjects from every part of his dominions, and especially with the most powerful of his nobles. At the instant that he was ready to depart to meet the Lady Margaret at the neighbouring port of Ecluse, he commanded that the young man should be taken to the common prison, and the next morning led to execution. Even the magistrate of the city to whom this demand was intrusted thought it impossible that the duke should execute one so highly connected, as if he were a common offender. The execution was delayed several hours by the magistrate in the hope that the duke would relent; but no respite came. The youth was carried through the city to the place of execution, amidst the tears of the people, who forgot his crime in his beauty. He was beheaded, and his body divided into four quarters. The Lord of Condé and his adherents left the city vowing vengeance. The nobles assembled felt themselves outraged by this exercise of absolute power. Even the citizens attributed the stern decree of the duke to his indomitable pride rather than to his love of justice. Such was the prelude to the bridal festivities of the court of Burgundy.

John Paston, the Englishman whom we have already mentioned, describes this marriage festival in a quaint and homely manner, which is not without its effect, in a letter addressed to his mother from Bruges, July 8, 1468:—"As for the guiding here in this country, it is as worshipful as all the world can devise, and there were never Englishmen had so good cheer out of England that ever I heard of.

As for tidings here, but if (unless) it be of the feast, I can none send you; saving that my Lady Margaret was married on Sunday last past, at a town that is called The Dame, three miles out of Bruges, at five of the clock in the morning; and she was brought the same day to Bruges to her dinner; and there she was received as worshipfully as all the world could desire; as with procession with ladies and lords, best beseen of any people that ever I saw or heard of. Many pageants were played in her way in Bruges to her welcoming, the best that ever I saw; and the same day my lord the Bastard took upon him to answer twenty-four knights and gentlemen within eight days at justs of peace; and when that they were answered, they twenty-four and himself should tourney with other twenty-five the next day after, which is on Monday next coming; and they that have justed with him into this day have been as richly beseen, and himself also, as cloth of gold, and silk, and silver, and goldsmith's work, might make them; for of such gear, and gold, and pearl, and stones, they of the duke's court, neither gentlemen nor gentlewomen, they want none; for without (unless) that they have it by wishes, by my truth I heard never of so great plenty as here is." More graphic historians than John Paston have fully described the "worshipful guiding" on this occasion. One who wrote an especial description in Latin says, "The sun never shone upon a more splendid ceremony since the creation of the world." Our old chronicler Hall, who delights in recording the ceremonials of princely state, shrinks as if overpowered by the gorgeousness of this especial ceremony: "What abundant fare and delicate viand was served at the

feast; with how rich hangings the house was garnished and trimmed; with how many cupboards of gold and silver the palace was adorned; with how many garnish of silver vessels the companies were served; what justs, what tourneys, what banquets, and what desports were at this nuptial-feast —I neither dare nor will write." But the annalists of Burgundy have dealt less in generalities than the English chronicler. Charles and Margaret were affianced at Ecluse, where the duchess remained a week. She was then conveyed in a richly decorated barge by the canal to Damme, where the marriage took place at five o'clock in the morning. She was afterward borne to Bruges in a litter surrounded by sixty ladies of England and Burgundy, mounted on hackneys. Entering by the gate of St. Croix, she passed through the streets, which were hung with tapestries, and in which scaffolds were placed at intervals for the representation of such mysteries as Adam receiving Eve, or Cleopatra offering her hand to Antony. After the dinner the court repaired to the lists, which were set out on the Grande Place. Anthony, Count de la Roche, the celebrated Bastard of Burgundy, was a principal performer in a grand exercise of chivalry formed upon an ancient legend of the Tree of Gold. Early in the morning a poursuivant at arms, in the livery of the Tree of Gold, presented to the duke a letter from the Princess of the Unknown Isle, in which she promised her grace and favour to the knight who would deliver the giant that she had committed to the care of her dwarf. And there, indeed, within the lists was a large gilded tree, at whose foot was a dwarf with a giant chained in the middle of his

body. Knight after knight arrived to accomplish the adventure of the Tree of Gold. Loud were the trumpets and clarions, and lengthy were the harangues which they addressed to the duchess. At length they engaged in the jousts; but the Bastard of Burgundy was the hero of the field. He broke the greatest number of lances, accomplished the adventure, and carried off the ring of gold. Then came the evening banquet, more splendid than the dinner. There were entries of a golden lion that sung songs in honour of the beautiful shepherdess of England; and a mighty unicorn that bore a golden leopard carrying the English banner. For eight days went on these feasts and jousts; and the marvellous tales of chivalry were dramatized in machinery set in motion by the most ingenious skill of the artisans of Bruges. On the last day of the festival there rolled into the hall a whale, sixty feet long. The whale's body was so large that a man on horseback could have hidden in it. He moved his tail and his fins with prodigious alacrity. His eyes were two great mirrors; and when he opened his enormous throat, out came a group of syrens, who sung harmoniously, and a dozen marine knights, who danced and fought with the utmost grace. In the midst of all these prodigious follies the Duke of Burgundy was panting for the real business of his royal vocation, that of overcoming his arch enemy of France, either by war or subtilty. John Paston, who writes to his mother of the gossip of the court, without knowing much of its real movements, says, "We depart the sooner, for the duke hath word that the French king is purposed to make war upon him hastily, and that he is within

four or five days' journey of Bruges, and the duke rideth on Wednesday next following to meet him." The duke did indeed take a hasty leave of the duchess, and of the lords and ladies who had accompanied her from England; but it was not to fight with Louis. It was to receive that wily prince in the castle of Peronne; and there, having discovered a new treachery, to be shaken with almost more than mortal passion in his struggle with the desire to rid himself for ever of the enemy who had fallen into his power. Comines says, "I am of opinion that if he had had then such persons about him as would have fomented his passion, and encouraged him to any violence upon the king's person, he would certainly have done it." But why refer to Comines? These scenes have been painted with a power which renders the real historical narrative flat and insipid. However inaccurate in details, we can never think of the great drama which was enacted in the castle of Peronne, without seeing the actors as they are marshalled, and live and move at the bidding of the author of 'Quentin Durward.'

CHAPTER VII.

A ROYAL SERVICE.

Female Costume of the Period.

THERE can be no doubt that Caxton was in the direct employ of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy. What he has told us himself of his position in her court, is far more interesting than all the conjectures which his biographers have exercised upon the

matter. He was in an honourable position, he was treated with confidence, he was grateful. We have already given an extract from the prologue to his 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' which shows when and under what circumstances he commenced the translation of that work. Remembering his simpleness and unperfectness in the French and English languages (which passage we have already noticed), he continues: "When all these things came before me, after that I had made and written five or six quires, I fell in despair of this work, and purposed no more to have continued therein, and the quires laid apart; and in two years after laboured no more at this work, and was fully in will to have left it. Till on a time it fortuned that the right high, excellent, and right virtuous princess, my right redoubted lady, my Lady Margaret"—and then he gives her a host of titles—"sent for me to speak with her good grace of divers matters, among the which I let her highness have knowledge of the aforesaid beginning of this work; which anon commanded me to shew the said five or six quires to her said grace. And when she had seen them, anon she found defaute [fault] in mine English, which she commanded me to amend, and moreover commanded me straightly [immediately] to continue and make an end of the residue then not translated. Whose dreadful commandment I durst in no wise disobey, because I am a servant unto her said grace, and receive of her yearly fee, and other many good and great benefits, and also hope many more to receive of her highness; but forthwith went and laboured in the said translation after my simple and poor cunning, all so nigh as I can following mine author,

meekly beseeching the bounteous highness of my said lady, that of her benevolence list to accept and take in gree [take kindly] this simple and rude work." The picture which Caxton thus presents to us of his showing his translation with an author's diffidence to the "dreadful" duchess, her criticism of his English, and her very flattering command that in spite of all his faults he should make an end of his work, is as interesting as Froissart's account of his literary recreations with Gaston de Foix:—"The acquaintance of him and of me was because I had brought with me a book, which I made at the contemplation of Winceslaus of Bohemia, Duke of Luxembourg and of Brabant, which work was called 'Meliador,' containing all the songs, ballads, rondeaux, and virelays which the gentle duke had made in this time, which by imagination I had gathered together; which book the Count of Foix was glad to see. And every night after supper I read therein to him; and while I read there was none durst speak any word, because he would I should be well understood, wherein he took great solace." In both cases the men of letters were received on a free and familiar footing in the courtly circles. In the case of Caxton, this was even more honourable to the Lady Margaret, than the welcome which Gaston de Foix gave to the accomplished knight Sir John Froissart. Caxton had no knightly honours to recommend him; he was a plain merchant: but he was unquestionably a man of modesty and intelligence; he had travelled much; he was familiar with the most popular literature of his day; and he desired to extend the knowledge of it by translations into his native language. It is difficult to

say what was his exact employment in the court of the Lady Margaret. He was somewhat too old to partake of its light amusements, to mingle in its gallantries, or even to prompt my lady's fool with

Court Fool.

some word of wisdom. We have seen that four months before Margaret of York came to Bruges he had "no great charge or occupation," and he undertook the translation of a considerable work "for to pass therewith the time." It has, however, been maintained of late years, that Caxton was at

this very time a printer. The question is a curious one, and we may bestow a little space upon its examination.

Mr. Hallam, in his 'Literature of Europe,' noticing the progress of printing, says that several books were printed in Paris in 1470 and 1471, adding, "But there seem to be unquestionable proofs that a still earlier specimen of typography is due to an English printer, the famous Caxton. His 'Recueil des Histoires de Troye' appears to have been printed during the life of Philip, Duke of Burgundy, and consequently before June 15, 1467. The place of publication, certainly within the duke's dominions, has not been conjectured. It is, therefore, by several years the earliest printed book in the French language. A Latin speech by Russell, ambassador of Edward IV. to Charles of Burgundy, in 1469, is the next publication of Caxton. This was also printed in the Low Countries." The authority upon which the learned and accomplished historian of the Middle Ages relies for this statement is that of Mr. Dibdin, in his 'Typographical Antiquities.' The French edition of the 'Recueil des Histoires de Troye' bears no printer's name, date, or place. It purports to have been composed by Raoul le Fevre, chaplain to Duke Philip de Bourgoyne, in the year 1464. The evidence that this book was printed by Caxton was summed up by Mr. Bryant, and communicated by him to Mr. Herbert, the first editor of Ames's 'Typographical Antiquities.' The Rev. Mr. Dibdin, the second editor, says that these memoranda of Mr. Bryant's "clearly prove it to have been the production of Caxton." The argument is too long for us to transcribe; but it rests upon these points:

that the French and English editions of Le Fevre's work have an exact conformity and likeness throughout, for not only the page itself, but the number of lines in a page, the length, breadth, and intervals of the lines, are alike in both, and the letters, great and small, are of the same magnitude. It corresponds too with 'The Game of the Chess,' printed by Caxton in England, in 1474. "These considerations," says Mr. Bryant, "settle who the printer was." We venture to doubt this. Mr. Bryant has himself shown how this resemblance might be produced between books printed by Caxton, and books supposed to be printed by him, without Caxton being the actual printer. "Mentz was taken by the Duke of Saxony in the year 1462, and most of the artificers employed by John Fust, the great inventor, were dispersed abroad. I make no doubt but Caxton, who was at no great distance from Mentz, took this opportunity of making himself a master of the mystery, which he had been at much trouble and expense to obtain. This I imagine he effected by taking into pay some of Fust's servants, and settling them for a time at Cologne. Of this number probably were Pinson and Rood, Mechlin, Lettou, and Wynkyn de Worde. With the help of some of these, he printed the book [which Wynkyn de Worde says Caxton printed] 'Bartholomeus de Prop. Rerum,' and the translation of the 'Recueil;' and probably many other books, which, being either in French or Latin, were not vendible in our country, and consequently no copies are extant here. Of all the books he printed in England, I do not remember above one in a foreign language." The calamity which drove the printers of Mentz from their homes, the storm-

ing of the city by Adolphus of Nassau would naturally disperse their types, as well as break up their workshops. The resemblance between the doubtful books, and books undoubtedly printed by Caxton, was the resemblance of types cast in the same matrices; the spaces between the lines, as well as the form and magnitude of the letters, were produced by the letters being cast in the same mould. The resemblance would have been equally produced whether the types were used by one and the same printer, or by two printers. The typographical antiquarians say that the same types are used in the French and English works of Le Fevre and in Caxton's 'Game of Chess;' and Mr. Herbert adds, that the types are the same as those used by Fust and Schoeffer, the partners of Guttenberg. If the resemblance of types were sufficient to determine the printer of two or more books, then Fust and Schoeffer ought to be called the printers of the French 'Recueil,' as well as of the English translation which Caxton says he printed at Cologne. There can be little doubt that when Caxton went to Cologne to be a printer in 1471, he became possessed of the types and matrices with which he printed his translation of Le Fevre, and subsequently brought to England to print his 'Game of Chess.' Another printer might have preceded him in their possession, and might have received them direct from Fust and Schoeffer. When the art ceased to be a mystery, a profit might arise from selling the types or multiplying the matrices. Upon these considerations we wholly demur to the assertion, resting solely upon this resemblance, that Caxton was a printer during the life of Philip le Bon. The belief is wholly op-

posed to his own statement, that shortly after the death of this prince he was completely at leisure, and set about a translation to while away his time. To be a printer in those days was a mighty undertaking. We shall subsequently see that he declares that he had practised and learnt the art at great charge and expense. It is wholly unlikely, also, that so gossiping a man, who makes a familiar friend of his readers, telling them of almost every circumstance that led to the printing of every book, that he in his translation should not have said one word of being the printer of the original work. The other book, the Latin speech by Russell, in 1469, which has been called the second publication of Caxton, is attributed to him absolutely upon no other grounds than the same resemblance of type. John Russell, the ambassador to the Duke of Burgundy, was Garter king-at-arms, and brought the Order of the Garter from Edward the Fourth to his brother-in-law. A writer in the 'Censura Literaria' was the first to claim this tract as the production of Caxton's press; and his arguments are ingenious enough: "At a ceremony, not only of English origin, but performed by Englishmen, a natural presumption arises that Caxton would of course be present; and that, as he was then engaged in various literary pursuits, out of compliment to his countryman John Russell, the orator, and acting under the immediate sanction and patronage of the duchess, he would produce a specimen of his art, either as a curiosity of itself, or in compliment to the ceremony, and perpetuating an eulogium upon an Order of which her brother and his royal master was sovereign. The types are similar with those used by Caxton in printing

'The Dictes and Sayeings of the Philosophers,' and expressly the same + is used as appears at the conclusion of some of the sentences in that work." Dr. Dibdin, who copies this argument, adds, "although no printer's name is affixed to this oration, a glance upon the annexed plate will convince those who are conversant with early typography, that it is undoubtedly the production of Caxton's press; and that the types are the same with which the 'Jason,' the 'Dictes and Sayeings,' the 'Virgil,' and the greater number of his books, were printed." Assuredly we cannot receive the fact of resemblance as conclusive of Caxton being the printer either in this case or in that of the preceding. We firmly believe that if Caxton had been a printer in 1469, when this oration was delivered and most probably printed, we should assuredly have heard something of the matter from his own pen, when he tells us that in 1470 he was a servant receiving yearly fee from the Duchess of Burgundy, and completed an extensive work at her command, which he simply began "to eschew sloth and idleness," and to put himself "unto virtuous occupation and business." When he did fairly become a printer, he left sufficiently clear indications of his habitual industry. We have no question how he filled up his time when the press at Westminster was at work.

It was in the autumn of 1470, when Master William Caxton would appear to have been busily at work in some silent turret of the palace at Bruges, upon his translation of Raoul le Fevre, that an event occurred, of all others the most calculated to spread consternation in the court of Burgundy, and to make the bold duke feel that in

abandoning his family alliance with the house of Lancaster he had not done the politic thing which he anticipated. Edward IV., who had sat for some years with tolerable quiet upon the English throne, to which he had fought his way in many a battle-field with prodigious bravery, suddenly arrived at Bruges, in the October of 1470, a discrowned fugitive. He made his escape from the overwhelming inroad of the power of Warwick, "attended," says Comines, "by seven or eight hundred men without any clothes but what they were to have fought in, no money in their pockets, and not one in twenty of them knew whither they were going." He, the most beautiful man of the time, as Comines describes him,—who for twelve or thirteen years of prosperity had lived a life of the most luxurious gratification,—he arrived at Bruges, after being chased by privateers, and with difficulty rescued from their hands, so poor that he "was forced to give the master of the ship for his passage a gown lined with martens." At Bruges, then, did this fugitive remain nearly five months, when he again leaped into his throne, in the following April, with a triumphant boldness which has only one parallel in modern history,—that of the march of Napoleon from Elba. In May, 1471, he addressed a letter in French to the nobles and burgomasters of Bruges, thanking them for the courtesy and hospitality he had received from them during his exile. Edward was of a sanguine temper; and, however depressed in fortune, was not likely, during those five months of humiliation, to have doubted that in good time he should regain the throne. He was of an easy and communicative disposition; and would naturally confer with his sister and her con-

fidential servants upon his plans and prospects. Comines says, "King Edward told me that in all the battles which he had gained, his way was, when the victory was on his side, to mount on horseback, and cry out to save the common soldiers, and put the gentry to the sword." We mention this to show that he was not indisposed to talk of himself and his doings with those whom he met during his exile. It is more than probable, then, that he had the same sort of free communication with his countryman Caxton. It was at this period that the progress of the art of printing must have been a subject of universal interest. The merchants of Bruges had commercial intercourse with all the countries of Europe; and they would naturally bring to the court of Burgundy some specimens of that art which was already beginning to create a new description of commerce. From Mentz, Bamberg, Cologne, Strasburg, and Augsburg, they would bring some of the Latin and German bibles which, from 1461 to 1470, had issued from the presses of those cities. The presses of Italy, and especially of Rome, of Venice, and of Milan, had, during the same period, sent forth books, and more particularly classical works, in great abundance. The art had made such rapid progress in Italy, that in the first edition of St. Jerome's Epistles, printed in 1468, the Bishop of Aleria thus addresses Pope Paul II.: "It was reserved for the times of your holiness for the Christian world to be blessed with the immense advantages resulting from the art of printing; by means of which, and with a little money, the poorest person may collect together a few books. It is a small testimony of the glory of your holiness, that the volumes which

formerly scarcely an hundred golden crowns would purchase, may now be procured for twenty and less, and these well written and authentic ones." It is pretty clear that Caxton, when he began his translation of the 'Histories of Troye,' had some larger circulation in view than could be obtained by the medium of transcription: "I thought in myself it should be a good business to translate it into our English, to the end that it might be had as well in the royaume of England as in other lands." It is also probable that he was moving about in search of the best mode of printing it; for he says, at the end of the second book of the 'Recueil,' "And for as much as I suppose the said two books be not had before this time in our English language, therefore I had the better will to accomplish the said work; which work was begun in Bruges, and continued in Gaunt [Ghent], and finished in Cologne, in time of the troublous world, and of the great divisions being and reigning as well in the royaumes of England and France as in all other places universally through the world, that is to wit, the year of our Lord one thousand, four hundred, and seventy-one." But he further says, with reference to his translation of the third book, which he doubted about doing, "because that I have now good leisure, being in Cologne, and have none other thing to do at this time in eschewing of idleness, mother of all vices, I have deliberated in myself of the contemplation of my said redoubted lady, to take this labour in hand." We shall presently see when Caxton became, or at any rate avowed himself to have become, a printer. Up to this point we see him only as a translator, a man of leisure, and not one learning a new and

difficult craft. But we see him moving about from Bruges to Ghent, from Ghent to Cologne, without any distinct or specified object. There can be little doubt, we believe, that he was endeavouring to make himself acquainted with the new art, still in great measure a secret art, the masters of which required to be approached with considerable caution. That the presence of Edward IV. in Flanders, during a period when Caxton might readily have had access to his person, might have led him to believe that the time would come when, under the patronage of the restored prince, he might carry the art to London, is not an improbable conjecture. Amongst the companions of Edward's exile was his brother-in-law, the celebrated Lord Rivers. This brave and accomplished young nobleman subsequently translated a book called 'The Dictes and Sayings of Philosophers,' which Caxton printed at Westminster, in 1477. The printer has added an appendix to this translation, from which we collect that the noble author and his literary printer were upon terms of mutual confidence and regard: "At such time as he had accomplished this said work, it liked him to send it to me in certain quires to oversee. . . . . And so afterward I came unto my said lord, and told him how I had read and seen his book, and that he had done a meritorious deed in the labour of the translation thereof. . . . . Then my said lord desired me to oversee it, and where, as I should find fault, to correct it, wherein I answered unto his lordship that I could not amend it. . . . . Notwithstanding he willed me to oversee it." Earl Rivers, then Lord Scales, was also at Bruges upon the occasion of the Lady Margaret's marriage. Employed, therefore, by the Duchess of Burgundy, the sister of Edward IV.,

and honoured with the confidence of Earl Rivers, his brother-in-law, we may reasonably believe that the presence of Edward at Bruges in 1470–71 might have had some influence upon the determination of Caxton to learn and practise the new art of printing, and to carry it into England, if the "troublous times" could afford him occasion. We have distinct evidence that Edward IV. gave a marked encouragement to the labours of Caxton as a translator, in a book printed by him without any date, 'The Life of Jason,' written, as were the 'Histories of Troy,' by Raoul le Fevre, in which Caxton says in his prologue, "For as much as late by the commandment of the right high and noble princess, my Lady Margaret, &c., I translated a book out of French into English, named 'Recueil,' &c. . . . . Therefore, under the protection and sufferance of the most high, puissant, and Christian king, my most dread natural liege, Lord Edward, &c., I intend to translate the said book of the 'Histories of Jason.'" The expression "forasmuch as late by the commandment, &c.," brings the date of the 'Histories of Jason' close to that of the 'Histories of Troy,' and points out the probability that the protection and sufferance of Edward was afforded to Caxton when the king was a fugitive at the court of Burgundy. In the 'Issues of the Exchequer' there is the following entry of a payment on the 15th of June, in the 19th of Edward IV., "To William Caxton, in money paid to his own hands, in discharge of twenty pounds which the lord the king commanded to be paid to the same William for certain causes and matters performed by him for the said lord the king." This is eight years after the period of Edward's exile, being in 1479. But as the productions of

Caxton's press were very prolific at this time, we may believe that the payment of such a large sum for certain causes and matters performed for the king, was in some degree connected with his labours in the introduction of printing into England,—a payment not improbably postponed for obligations incurred, and promises granted, at an earlier period.

Edward IV.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SOJOURN IN COLOGNE.

At the end of the third book of Caxton's translation of the 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' which we have so often quoted, is the following most curious passage: "Thus end I this book, which I have translated after mine author, as nigh as God hath given me cunning, to whom be given the laud and praises. And for as much as in the writing of the same my pen is worn, mine hand weary and not stedfast, mine eyen dimmed with overmuch looking on the white paper, and my courage not so prone and ready to labour as it hath been, and that age creepeth on me daily and feebleth all the body; and also because I have promised to divers gentlemen and to my friends to address to them as hastily as I might this said book, therefore I have practised and learned, at my great charge and dispense [expense], to ordain this said book in print, after the manner and form as you may here see; and is not written with pen and ink, as other books are, to the end that every man may have them at once. For all the books of this story named the 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' thus imprinted as ye here see, were begun in one day, and also finished in one day. Which book I presented to my said redoubted lady as afore is said, and she hath well accepted it and largely rewarded me." It was customary for the

first printers, which is not according to the belief that they wanted to palm their printed books off as manuscripts, to state that they were not drawn or written with a pen and ink. Udalricus Gallus, who printed at Rome about 1470, says, "I, Udalricus Gallus, without pen or pencil have imprinted this book." But he further says of himself at the end of one of his books,—"I printed thus much in a day; it is not written in a year." It has been held that Caxton uses a purely marvellous and hyperbolical mode of expression, when he says, "All the books of this story, thus imprinted as ye here see, were begun in one day and finished in one day." Dr. Dibdin inquires, what Caxton meant "by saying that the book was begun and finished in one day? Did he wish his countrymen to believe that the translation of Le Fevre's book was absolutely printed in twenty-four hours?" Dr. Dibdin truly holds the thing to be impracticable, because the book consisted of seven hundred and seventy-eight folio pages. Such feats have been done with the large capital and division of labour of modern times; but to begin and finish such a book in one day in the fifteenth century was certainly an impossibility. We venture to think that Caxton says nothing of the sort. He puts with great force and justice the chief advantages of printing,—the rapidity with which many copies could be produced at once. He promised, he says, to divers gentlemen and friends to address to them as hastily as he might this book. There were many who wanted the book. The transcribers could not supply their wants. He could not multiply copies himself with his pen, for his hand was weary and his eyes dim. He learned, therefore, to

ordain the book in print, to the end that all his friends might have the books at the same time,—that every man might have them at once; and, to explain this, he says, all the books thus imprinted were begun in one day. If he printed a hundred copies, each of the hundred copies was begun at the same time; a hundred sheets, each sheet forming a portion of each copy, were printed off in one day,—and, in the same way, were they also finished in one day. He does not say, as Dr. Dibdin interprets the passage, that *the book* was begun and finished in one day,—one and the same day,—but that *all* the books were begun on one day, and all the books were finished on another day. His expression is not very clear, but his meaning is quite apparent. This was the end that he sought to obtain at great charge and expense; this is the end which has been more and more obtained at every step forward in the art of printing,—the rapid multiplication of copies, so that all men may have them at once.

The place where Caxton learned the art of printing, and the persons of whom he first learned it, are not shown in any of his voluminous prologues and prefaces. But an extraordinary statement was published in the year 1664, by a person of the name of Richard Atkyns, who sought to prove that printing was a royal prerogative, because, as he says, the art was first brought into England at the cost of the crown. His narrative is held to be altogether a fiction; for the document upon which he rests it was never forthcoming, and no person has ever testified to the knowledge of it, except Richard Atkyns himself, who laboured hard to obtain a patent from the crown for the sole print-

ing of law books, upon the ground which he attempts to take of the crown having brought printing into England. "Thomas Bourchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, moved the then king, Henry VI., to use all possible means for procuring a Printing-mould, for so it was then called, to be brought into this kingdom. The king, a good man, and much given to works of this nature, readily hearkened to the motion; and taking private advice how to effect this design, concluded it could not be brought about without great secresy, and a considerable sum of money given to such person or persons as would draw off some of the workmen from Haarlem in Holland, where John Guttenberg had newly invented it, and was himself personally at work. It was resolved that less than one thousand marks would not produce the desired effect; towards which sum the said archbishop presented the king with three hundred marks. The money being now prepared, the management of the design was committed to Mr. Robert Turnour, who then was of the robes to the king, and a person most in favour with him of any of his condition. Mr. Turnour took to his assistance Mr. Caxton, a citizen of good abilities, who, trading much into Holland, might be a creditable pretence, as well for his going as staying in the Low Countries. Mr. Turnour was in disguise, his beard and hair shaven quite off, but Mr. Caxton appeared known and public. They having received the sum of one thousand marks, went first to Amsterdam, then to Leyden, not daring to enter Haarlem itself; for the town was very jealous, having imprisoned and apprehended divers persons, who came from other parts for the same purpose. They staid

till they had spent the whole one thousand marks in gifts and expenses. So as the king was fain to send five hundred marks more, Mr. Turnour having written to the king that he had almost done his work, a bargain, as he said, being struck between him and two Hollanders for bringing off one of the workmen, who should sufficiently discover and teach the new art. At last, with much ado, they got off one of the under workmen, whose name was Frederick Corsells, or rather Corsellis; who late one night stole from his fellows in disguise, into a vessel prepared before for that purpose; and so the wind, favouring the design, brought him safe to London. It was not thought so prudent to set him on work at London, but by the archbishop's means, who had been Vice-chancellor and afterwards Chancellor of the University of Oxon, Corsellis was carried with a guard to Oxon, which constantly watched to prevent Corsellis from any possible escape, till he had made good his promise, in teaching how to print. So that at Oxford printing was first set up in England." This is certainly an extraordinary story, and one which upon the face of it has traces of inconsistency, if not of imposture. Richard Atkyns says that a certain worthy person "did present me with a copy of a record and manuscript in Lambeth House, heretofore in his custody, belonging to the See, and not to any particular Archbishop of Canterbury. The substance whereof was this; though I hope, for public satisfaction, the record itself in its due time will appear." The record itself did never appear, and though diligently sought for could never be found. But Atkyns further stated that the same most worthy person

who gave him the copy of the record, trusted him with a book "printed at Oxon, A.D. 1468, which was three years before any of the recited authors [Stow and others] would allow it [printing] to be in England." He does not mention the book; but there is such a book, and it is entitled 'Expositio Sancti Ieronimi in Simbolum, ad Papam Laurentiam;' and at the end, 'Explicit Expositio, &c., Impressa Oxonie, et finita Anno Dom. MCCCCLXVIII, xvii die Decembris.' Anthony Wood repeats the story of Atkyns in his 'History of the University of Oxford;' and he adds, "And thus the mystery of printing appeared ten years sooner in the University of Oxford than at any other place in Europe, Haarlem and Mentz excepted. Not long after there were presses set up in Westminster, St. Alban's, Worcester, and other monasteries of note. After this manner printing was introduced into England, by the care of Archbishop Bourchier, in the year of Christ 1464, and the third of King Edward IV." Wood's version of the story makes it a little, a very little, more credible, for it brings it nearer to the time when the newly discovered art of printing might have attracted some attention in England. But even in 1464 there were, with scarcely more than one exception, no printed books known in Europe but the first productions of the press at Mentz. The story of Caxton going to Haarlem in the time of Henry the Sixth, that is, in some year previous to 1461, must altogether be a fabrication, or a mistake. The accounts that would ascribe the invention of printing to Laurence Coster, of Haarlem, set up a legendary story that John Fust, or John Guttenberg (not the real Guttenberg, but an elder brother), stole the invention

from Coster, and carried it to Mentz in 1442. If Caxton, therefore, went to Haarlem in Holland, with a companion in disguise, to learn the art of printing, he must have gone there before 1442; for the story holds that Coster was not only robbed of his secret, but of his types, and gave up printing in despair to his more fortunate spoiler. Bourchier was not Archbishop of Canterbury till 1454. We may be sure, therefore, that wherever Caxton went to learn the art of printing at an earlier period than is generally supposed, he did not go to Haarlem in Holland. Substitute Mentz for Haarlem, and Atkyns's story is more consistent. It is by no means improbable that Henry the Sixth and Cardinal Bourchier might have seen the magnificent Latin bible, called the Mazarine bible, which was printed by Guttenberg, Schoeffer, and Fust, and is held to have appeared about 1455. Of this noble book Mr. Hallam says, "It is a very striking circumstance, that the high-minded inventors of this great art tried at the very outset so bold a flight as the printing an entire bible, and executed it with astonishing success. It was Minerva leaping on earth in her divine strength and radiant armour, ready at the moment of her nativity to subdue and destroy her enemies." The king and the archbishop might have desired that England should learn the art of executing so splendid a work as the first bible. At that period we know that Caxton was residing abroad, and he was a fit person to be selected for such a commission. But kings at that day were scarcely better supplied with money than their subjects; and if Henry the Sixth had sent to Mr. Robert Turnour or Mr. William Caxton seven hundred marks at one time and five

hundred at another, the gifts must have been registered with all due formality. We have the Exchequer registers of Henry the Sixth and his great rival; and although we learn that Edward the Fourth gave Caxton twenty pounds, neither his name nor that of Mr. Turnour, nor even of the archbishop, is associated with any bounty of Henry the Sixth. We may, therefore, safely conclude, with Dr. Conyers Middleton, with regard to all this story, that "Mr. Atkyns, a bold vain man, might be the inventor of it, having an interest in imposing upon the world, to confirm his argument that printing was of the prerogative royal, in opposition to the stationers; against whom he was engaged in expensive law-suits, in defence of the king's patents, under which he claimed some exclusive powers of printing." The date of 1468 on the Oxford book is reasonably concluded to have been a typographical error. There are niceties in the printing of that book which did not belong to the earliest stages of the art; and the same type and manner of printing are seen in Oxford books printed immediately after 1478. The probability therefore is, that an X was omitted in the Roman numerals.

We could scarcely avoid detailing this story, apocryphal as the whole matter is upon the face of it, because the claims of Oxford to the honour of the first printing-press were once the subject of a fierce controversy. The honest antiquarian Oldys complains most bitterly of Richard Atkyns, "How unwarrantably he robbed Master Caxton of the honour, wherewith he had long been, by the suffrage of all learned men, undeniably invested, of first introducing and practising this most scien-

tifical invention among us." But had this story been true, Caxton would not have been robbed of his glory. He would still have been what Leland, writing within half a century of his death, calls him, "Angliæ Prototypographus"—the first printer of England. For it is not the man who is the accidental instrument of introducing a great invention, and then pursues it no further, who is to have the fame of its promulgation. It is he who by patient and assiduous labour acquires the mastery of a new principle, sees afar off the high objects to which it may be applied, carries out its details with persevering courage, is not deterred by failure nor satisfied with partial success, works for a great purpose through long years of anxiety, is careless of honours or rewards, and finally does accomplish all and much more than he proposed, planting the tree, training it, rejoicing in its good fruit, —he it is that is the real first introducer and practiser of a great scientific invention, even though some one may have preceded him in some similar attempt—an experiment, but not a perfect work. We may well believe that, for some ten years of his residence abroad, the knowledge that a new art was discovered, promising such mighty results as that of printing, must have excited the deepest interest in the mind of Caxton. He says himself, in his continuation of the Polychronicon, "About this time [1455] the craft of imprinting was first found in Mogunce in Almayne." During his residence at the court of Burgundy he would see the art multiplying around him. Italy, where it most extensively flourished before 1470, was too distant for his personal inspection. Bamberg, Augsburg, and Strasburg brought it nearer to

him. But Cologne, where Conrad Winters set up a press about 1470, was very near at hand. A few days' journey would place him within the walls of the holy city of the Rhine. Cologne, we have no doubt, fixed the employment of the remainder of his life; and made the London mercer, whose name, like the names of many other good and respectable men, would have held no place in the memory of the world but for the art he learnt in his latter years,—Cologne rendered the name of Caxton a bright and venerable name;—a name that even his countrymen, who are accustomed chiefly to raise columns and statues to the warlike defenders of their country, will one day honour amongst the heroes who have most successfully cultivated the arts of peace, and by high talent and patient labour have rendered it impossible that mankind should not steadily advance in the acquisition of knowledge and virtue, and in the consequent amelioration of the lot of every member of the family of mankind, at some period, present or remote.

The provost of the city of Mentz, on the occasion of the festival of Guttenberg, published an address full of German enthusiasm, at which we are apt to smile, but which it would be well if, in the higher concerns of our being, we could engraft upon the practical good sense on which we pride ourselves. He says, "If the mortal who invented that method of fixing the fugitive sounds of words which we call the alphabet, has operated upon mankind like a divinity, so also has Guttenberg's genius brought together the once isolated inquirers, teachers and learners—all the scattered and divided efforts for extending God's kingdom over the whole civilized earth—as though beneath

one temple. Guttenberg's invention, not a lucky accident, but the golden fruit of a well considered idea—an invention made with a perfect consciousness of its end—has above all other causes, for more than four centuries, urged forward and established the dominion of science; and what is of the most importance, has immeasurably advanced the mental formation and education of the people. This invention, a true intellectual sun, has mounted above the horizon, first of the European Christians, and then of the people of other climes and other faiths, to an ever-enduring morning. It has made the return of barbarism, the isolation of mankind, the reign of darkness, impossible for all future times. It has established a public opinion, a court of moral judicature common to all civilized nations, whatever natural divisions may separate them, as much as for the provinces of one and the same state. In a word, it has formed fellow-labourers at the never-resting loom of Christian European civilization in every quarter of the world, in almost every island of the ocean."

Filled with some such strong belief, although perhaps a vague belief, of the blessings which printing might bestow upon his own country, we may view William Caxton proceeding, about the end of 1470, to the city of Cologne, resolved to acquire the art of which he had seen some of the effects, without stint of labour or expense. That he was an apt and diligent scholar his after works abundantly prove.

CHAPTER IX.

A TRADE TO BE LEARNT.

THE first book printed in the English language, the 'Recueil of the Histories of Troy,' which we have so often noticed, does not bear upon the face of it when and where it was printed. That it was printed by Caxton we can have no doubt, because he says, "I have practised and learned, at my great charge and dispense, to ordain this said book in print." He tells us, too, in the title-page, that the *translation* was finished at Cologne, in September, 1471. That Caxton printed at Cologne we have tolerably clear evidence. There is a most curious book of Natural History, originally written in Latin by Bartholomew Glanvill, a Franciscan friar of the fourteenth century, commonly known as Bartholomæus. A translation of this book, which is called 'De Proprietatibus Rerum,' was printed in England by Wynkyn de Worde, who was an assistant to Caxton in his printing-office at Westminster, and there succeeded to him. In some quaint stanzas which occur in this edition, and which appear to be written either by or in the name of the printer, are these lines, which we copy, in the first instance, exactly following the orthography and non-punctuation of the original:

"And also of your charyte call to remembraunce
The soule of William Caxton first prȳter of this boke
Jn laten tonge at Coleyn hȳself to auaũce
That euery well disposyd man may theron loke."

That we are asked to call to remembrance the soul of William Caxton is perfectly clear; but how are we to read the subsequent members of the sentence? The most obvious meaning appears to be that William Caxton was the first printer of this book in the Latin tongue; that he printed it at Cologne; and that his object in printing it was to advance or profit himself, in addition to his desire that every well disposed man might look upon it. But there is another interpretation of these words, which is certainly not a forced one;—that William Caxton was the first printer of this book, the English book, and that the object of his printing it was to advance himself in the Latin tongue at Cologne. "This book" would appear then to be, this English book, this same book. If a copy of this book, whether in Latin or English, printed at Cologne at so early a period, could be found, the question would be set at rest. There is a Latin edition printed at Cologne, in 1481, by John Koelhoff; and there is an edition in Latin without date or place. The first English edition known is that by Wynkyn de Worde, and that translation was made much earlier than the time of Caxton, by John de Trevisa. Caxton could scarcely have been said to have desired to have advanced himself in the Latin tongue, unless he had translated the book as well as printed it. The mere fact of superintending workmen who set up the types in Latin would have done little to advance his knowledge of the language. We believe, therefore, that we must re-

ceive the obscure lines of Wynkyn de Worde as evidence that Caxton did print at Cologne, and that he undertook the Latin edition of Bartholomæus as a commercial speculation, "himself to advance," or profit.

And, indeed, when we look at the state of England after the return of Edward IV. from his exile,—the "great divisions" of which Caxton himself speaks,—we may consider that he acted with discretion in conducting his first printing operations in a German city. It must be also borne in mind that this was by far the readiest mode to obtain a competent knowledge in the new art. Had he come over to England with types and presses, and even with the most skilful workmen, the probability is that the man of letters who, two or three years before, had little or nothing to do in his attendance upon the Burgundian court, would have ill succeeded in so complicated and difficult a commercial enterprise. Lambinet, a French bibliographical writer, tells us that Melchior de Stamham, wishing to establish a printing-office at Augsburg, engaged a skilful workman of the same town, of the name of Sauerloch. He employed a whole year in making the necessary preparations for his office. He bought five presses, of the materials of which he constructed five other presses. He cast pewter types, and having spent a large sum, seven hundred and two florins, in establishing his office, began working in 1473. He died before he had completed one book; heart-broken, probably, at the amount of capital he had sunk; for his unfinished book was sold off at a mere trifle, and his office broken up. This statement, which rests upon some ancient testimony, shows us something of the diffi-

culties which had to be encountered by the early printers. They had to do everything for themselves; to construct the materials of their art, types, presses, and every other instrument and appliance. When Caxton began to print at Cologne, he probably had the means of obtaining a set of moulds from some previous printer,—what are called strikes from the punches that form the original matrices. The writers upon typography seem to assume the necessity of every one of the old printers cutting his punches anew, and shaping his letters according to his own notions of proportionate beauty. That the great masters of their art, the first inventors, the Italian printers, the Alduses, the Stephenses, pursued this course is perfectly clear. But when printing ceased to be a mystery, about 1462, it is more than probable that those who tried to set up a press, especially in Germany, either bought a few types of the more established printers, or obtained a readier means of casting types than that of cutting new punches,—a difficult and expensive operation. Thus we believe the attempts to assign a book without a printer's name to some printer whose types that book resembles, can be little relied upon. Caxton's types are held to be like the type of this printer and the type of that; and it is said that he copied the types, with the objection added that he did not copy the best models. What should have prevented him buying the types from the continent, as every English printer did until the middle of the last century? or at any rate what should have prevented him buying copies of the moulds which other printers were using? The bas-relief upon Thorwalsden's statue of Guttenberg exhibits the

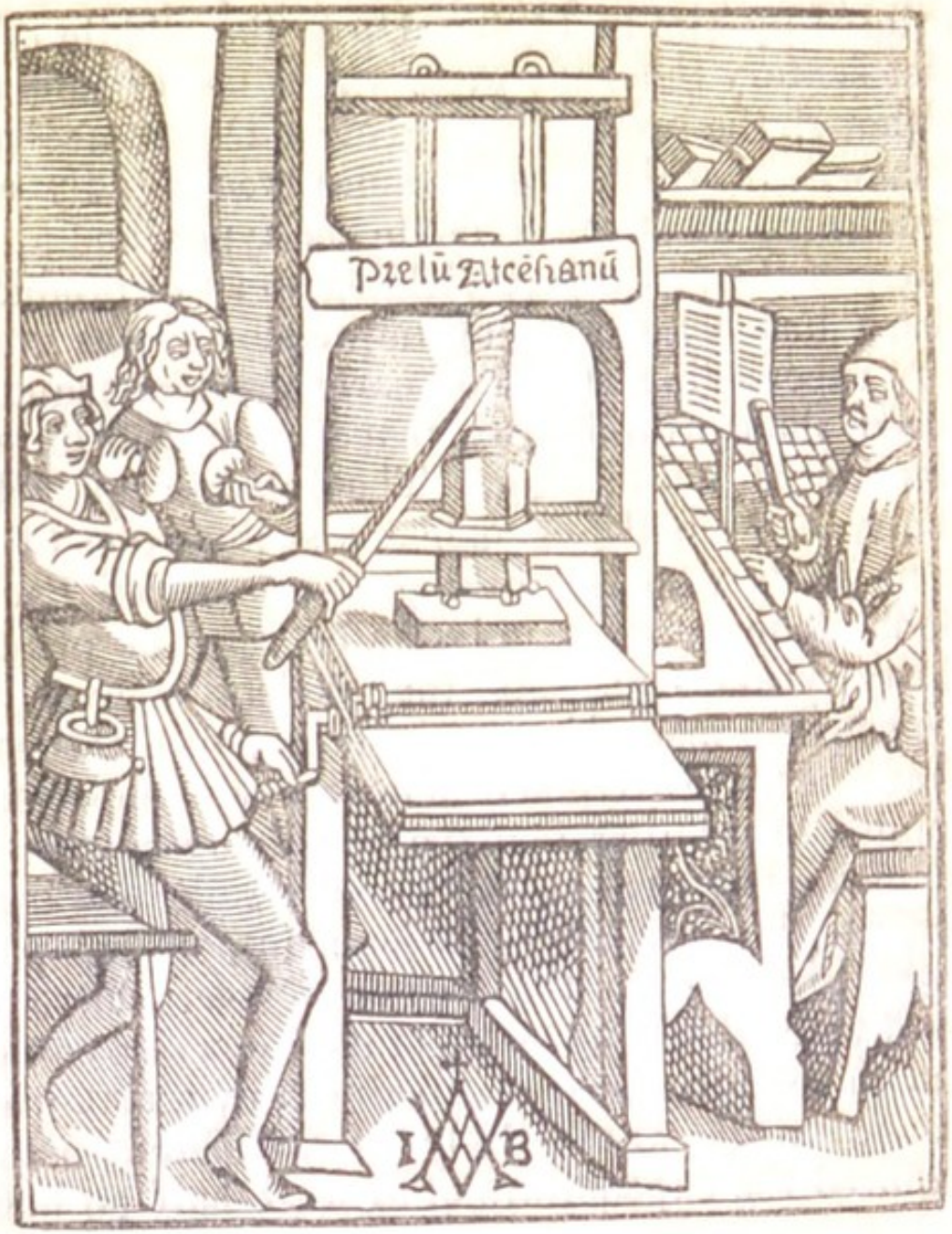
first printer examining a matrix. But all the difficulties in the formation of the first matrix overcome, we may readily see that, at every stage, the art of making fusile types would become easier and simpler, till at length the division of labour should be perfectly applied to type-making, and the mere casting of a letter, as each letter is cast singly, exhibit one of the most rapid and beautiful pieces of handiwork that the arts can show.

But the type obtained, Caxton would still have much to do before his office was furnished. We have seen how Melchior of Augsburg set about getting his presses: "He bought of John Schuesseler five presses, which cost him seventy-three Rhenish florins: he constructed with these materials five other smaller presses." To those who know what a well-adjusted machine the commonest printing-press now in use is, it is not easy at first to conceive what is meant by saying that Melchior bought five presses, and made five other presses out of the materials. The solution is this:—in all probability this printer of Augsburg bought five old wine-presses, and using the screws, cut them down and adapted them to the special purpose for which he designed them. The earliest printing-press was nothing more than a common screw-press,—such as a cheese-press or a napkin-press,—with a contrivance for running the *form* of types under the screw after the *form* was inked. It is evident that this mode of obtaining an impression must have been very laborious and very slow. As the screw must have come down upon the types with a dead pull, that is, as the table upon which the types were placed was solid and unyielding, great care

must have been required to prevent the pressure being so hard as to injure the face of the letters.

A famous printer, Jodocus Badius Ascensianus, has exhibited his press in the title-page of a book printed by him in 1498. Up to the middle of the last century this rude press was in use in England; although the press of an ingenious Dutch mechanic, Blaew,—in which the pressure was rapidly communicated from the screw to the types, and all the parts of the press were yielding so as to produce a sharp but not a crushing impression,—was gradually superseding it. The early printers manufactured their own ink, so that Caxton had to learn the art of ink-making. The ink was applied to the types by balls, or dabbers, such as one of the men holds who is working the press of Badius. Such dabbers were universally used in printing thirty years ago. As the ancient weaver was expected to make his own loom, so, even this short time since, the division of labour was so imperfectly applied to printing, that the pressman was expected to make his own balls. A very rude and nasty process this was. The sheep-skins, called pelts, were prepared in the printing-office, where the wool with which they were stuffed was also carded; and these balls, thus manufactured by a man whose general work was entirely of a different nature, required the expenditure of at least half an hour's labour every day in a very disagreeable operation, by which they were kept soft.

There were many other little niceties in the home construction of the materials for printing which Caxton would necessarily have to learn. But in the earlier stages of an art requiring such



Ancient Press.

nice arrangement, both in the departments of the compositor, or setter-up of the type, and of the pressman, it is quite clear that many things which, by the habit of four centuries, have become familiar and easy in a printing-office, would be exceedingly difficult to be acquired by the first printers. Rapidity in the work was probably out of the question. Accidents must constantly have occurred in wedging up the single letters tightly in pages and sheets; and when one looks at the regularity of the inking of these old books, and the beautiful accuracy with which the line on one side of a page falls on the corresponding line on the other side (called by printers 'register'), we may be sure that with very imperfect mechanical means an amount of care was taken in working off the sheets which would appear ludicrous to a modern pressman. The higher operation of a printing-office, which consists in reading the proofs, must have been in the first instance full of embarrassment and difficulty. A scholar was doubtless employed to test the accuracy of the proofs; probably some one who had been previously employed to overlook the labours of the transcribers. Fierce must have been the indignation of such a one during a course of painful experience, when he found one letter presented for another, letters and even syllables and words omitted, letters topsy-turvy, and even actual substitutions of one word for another. These are almost unavoidable consequences of the mechanical operation of arranging moveable types, so entirely different from the work of the transcriber. The corrector of the press would not understand this; and his life would not be a pleasant one. Caxton

was no doubt the corrector of his own press; and well for him it was that he brought to his task the patience, industry, and good temper which are manifest in his writings.

But the ancient printer had something more to do before his manufacture was complete. He was a bookbinder as well as a printer. The ancient books, manuscript as well as printed, were wonderful specimens of patient labour. The board, literally a wooden board, between which the leaves were fastened, was as thick as the panel of a door. This was covered with leather, sometimes embossed with the most ingenious devices. There were large brass nails, with ornamented heads, on the outside of this cover, with magnificent corners to the lids. In addition, there were clasps. The back was rendered solid with paste and glue, so as to last for centuries. Erasmus says of such a book, "As for Thomas Aquinas's Secunda Secundæ, no man can carry it about, much less get it into his head." An ancient wood-cut shows us the binder hammering at the leaves to make them flat, and a lad sewing the leaves in a frame very like that still in use. Above are the books flying in the air in all their solid glory.

But the most difficult labour of the ancient printer, and that which would necessarily constitute the great distinction between one printer and another, was yet to come. He had to sell his books when he had manufactured them, for there was no division of the labour of publisher and printer in those days. His success would of course much depend upon the quality of his books; upon their adaptation to the nature of the demand for

books; upon their accuracy; upon their approach to the beauty of the old manuscripts. But he had to incur the risk common to all copying processes, whether the thing produced be a medal or a book, of expending a large certain sum before a single copy could be produced. The process of printing, compared with that of writing, is a cheap process as ordinarily conducted; but the condition of cheapness is this,—that a sufficient number of copies of any particular book may be reckoned upon as saleable, so as to render the proportion of the first expense upon a single copy inconsiderable. If it were required even at the present time to print a single copy, or even three or four copies only, of any literary work, the cost of printing would be greater than the cost of transcribing. It is when hundreds, and especially thousands, of the same work are demanded, that the great value of the printing-press in making knowledge cheap is particularly shown. It is probable that the first printers did not take off more than two or three hundred, if so many, of their works; and, therefore, the earliest printed books must have been still dear, on account of the limited number of their readers. Caxton, as it appears by a passage in one of his books, was a cautious printer; and required something like an assurance that he should sell enough of any particular book to repay the cost of producing it. In his 'Legend of Saints' he says, "I have submysed [submitted] myself to translate into English the 'Legend of Saints,' called 'Legenda aurea' in Latin; and William, Earl of Arundel, desired me—and promised to take a reasonable quantity of them—and sent me a worship-

Ancient Bookbinder.

ful gentleman, promising that my said lord should during my life give and grant to me a yearly fee, that is to note, a buck in summer and a doe in winter." Caxton, with his sale of a reasonable quantity, and his summer and winter venison, was more fortunate than others of his brethren, who speculated upon a public demand for books without any guarantee from the great and wealthy. Sweynheim and Pannartz, Germans who settled in Rome, and there printed many beautiful editions of the Latin Classics, presented a petition to the Pope, in 1471, which contains the following passage:—"We were the first of the Germans who introduced this art, with vast labour and cost, into your holiness' territories, in the time of your predecessor; and encouraged by our example other printers to do the same. If you peruse the catalogue of the works printed by us, you will admire how and where we could procure a sufficient quantity of paper, or even rags, for such a number of volumes. The total of these books amounts to 12,475,—a prodigious heap,—and intolerable to us, your holiness' printers, by reason of those unsold. We are no longer able to bear the great expense of house-keeping, for want of buyers; of which there cannot be a more flagrant proof than that our house, though otherwise spacious enough, is full of quire-books, but void of every necessary of life." For some years after the invention of printing, many of the ingenious, learned, and enterprising men who devoted themselves to the new art which was to change the face of society, were ruined, because they could not sell cheaply unless they printed a considerable number of a book; and there were not readers enough to take off the stock

which they thus accumulated. In time, however, as the facilities for acquiring knowledge which printing afforded created many readers, the trade of printing books became one of less general risk; and dealers in literature could afford more and more to dispense with individual patronage, and rely upon the public demand.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRESS AT WESTMINSTER.

Westminster Abbey.

THE indications of the period at which Caxton first brought the art of printing into England, are not very exact. Several of his books, supposed to have been amongst the earliest, are without date or place of impression. The first in the title of which a date or a place is mentioned is 'The Dictes and Sayinges of Philosophres,' translated by the Earl of Rivers from the French. This bears upon the title "Enprynted by me William Caxton,

at Westminster, the yere of our Lord M.CCCC. lxxvij." Another imprint, three years later, is more precise. It is in the 'Chronicles of Englond,' which book the printer says was "Enprynted by me, William Caxton, in thabbey of Westmynstre by london &c., the v day of Juyn, the yere of thincarnacion of our lord god M.CCCC. lxxx." In 1485 'A Book of the Noble Hystoryes of Kynge Arthur' was "by me deuyded into xxi bookes chapytred and enprynted, and fynysshed, in thabbey Westmestre." The expression "in the Abbey of Westminster" leaves no doubt that beneath the actual roof of some portion of the abbey Caxton carried on his art. Stow, in his 'Survey of London,' says "In the Eleemosynary or Almonry at Westminster Abbey, now corruptly called the Ambry, for that the alms of the abbey were there distributed to the poor, John Islip, Abbot of Westminster, erected the first press of book-printing that ever was in England, and Caxton was the first that practised it in the said abbey." The careful historian of London here committed one error; John Islip did not become abbot of Westminster till 1500. John Esteney was made abbot in 1474, and remained such until his death in 1498. His predecessor was Thomas Milling. In Dugdale's 'Monasticon' we find, speaking of Esteney, "It was in this abbot's time, and not in that of Milling, or in that of Abbot Islip, that Caxton exercised the art of printing at Westminster. He is said to have erected his office in one of the side chapels of the abbey, supposed by some of our historians to have been the Ambry or Eleemosynary." Oldys says, "Whoever authorized Caxton, it is certain that he did there, at the entrance of the abbey, ex-

ercise the art, from whence a printing-room is to this day called a chapel." When we consider the large extent of building that formed a portion of the abbey of Westminster, before the house was shorn of its splendour by Henry the Eighth, we may readily believe that Caxton might have been accommodated in a less sacred and indeed less public place than a side chapel of the present church. There were buildings attached to that church, which were removed to make room for the Chapel of Henry the Seventh. It has been conjectured that the ancient Scriptorium of the Abbey, the place where books were transcribed, might have been assigned to Caxton, to carry on an art which was fast superseding that of the transcriber. Nor are there wanting other examples of the encouragement afforded to printing by great religious societies. As early as 1480, books were printed at St. Alban's; and in 1525 there was a translation of Boetius printed in the monastery of Tavistock, by Dan Thomas Richards, monk of the same monastery. That the intercourse of Caxton with the Abbot of Westminster was on a familiar footing, we learn from his own statement, in 1490: "My Lord Abbot of Westminster did shew to me late certain evidences written in Old English, for to reduce it into our English now used."

Setting up his press in this sacred place, it is somewhat remarkable how few of Caxton's books are distinctly of a religious character.* Not more than five or six can be held strictly to pertain to theological subjects. Bibles he could not print, as we shall presently notice.

* See the list in the Postscripts.

There is no breviary or book of prayers found to have issued from his press. The only book distinctly connected with the church is 'Liber Festivalis,' or Directions for keeping Feasts all the year. It is highly probable that many of such books have perished. But what furnishes a curious example of the accidents by which the smallest things may be preserved, there is now existing, preserved in Mr. Douce's collection in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, a hand-bill precisely such as a publisher of the present day might distribute, printed in Caxton's largest type, inviting the people to come to his office and buy a certain book regulating the church service. "If it plese any man spirituel or temporel to bye ony Pyes of two and thre comemoracions of Salisburi vse enprynted after the forme of this present lettre whiche ben wel and truly correct, late hym come to Westmonester into the Almonesrye at the reed pale and he shal have them good chepe. Supplico stet cedula." The preface to the present Liturgy of the Church of England explains what a Pye was: "The number and hardness of the rules called the Pie, and the manifold changings of the service, was the cause, that to turn the book only was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out." It is a curious fact that printers even at the present day call a confused heap of types Pie; and whilst no one has attempted to explain the origin of the word, we may venture to suggest that the intricacy of this Romish ordinal might lead the printers to call a mass of confused and deranged letters by a familiar expression of contempt derived from the Pie which

they or their predecessors in the art had been accustomed to work upon.

Sir Thomas More has clearly shown the reason why Caxton could not venture to print a Bible, although the people would have greedily bought Wickliff's translation. There were translations of the Bible before Wickliff, and that translation which goes by the name of this great reformer was probably made up in some degree from those previous translations. Wickliff's translation was interdicted, and thus More says, "On account of the penalties ordered by Archbishop Arundel's constitution, though the old translations that were before Wickliff's days remained lawful and were in some folks' hands had and read, yet he thought no printer would lightly be so hot to put any bible in print at his own charge—and then hang upon a doubtful trial whether the first copy of his translation was made before Wickliff's days or since. For if it were made since, it must be approved before the printing." This was a dilemma that Caxton would have been too prudent to encounter.

It may not be out of place for us here to mention some slight particulars of one or two of the theological books which Caxton printed in the Abbey of Westminster. From the '*Liber Festivalis*' we extract the Lord's Prayer, as a curious specimen of the English of that day:—

"Father our that art in heavens, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come to us; thy will be done in earth as is in heaven: our every day's bread give us this day; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from all evil sin, amen."

'*The Doctrinal of Sapyence*,' which was translated out of French into English by Caxton, is said by him to be "of right great profit and edification, and is examined and approved at Paris by divers masters in divinity." The preface contains a curious passage:—"This that is written in this little book ought the priests to learn and teach to their parishes: and also it is necessary for simple priests that understand not the Scriptures: and it is made for simple people and put in English. And by cause that for to hear examples stirreth and moveth the people, that ben simple, more to devotion than to that great authority of science—as it appeareth by the right reverend father and doctor Bede, priest, which saith, in the Histories of England, that a bishop of Scotland, a subtle and a great clerk, was sent by the clerks of Scotland into England for to preach the Word of God; but by cause he used in his sermon subtle authorities, such as [for] simple people had, nor took, no savour, he returned without doing of any great good ne profit, wherefore they sent another of less science: the which was more plain, and used commonly in his sermons examples and parables, by which he profited much more unto the erudition of the simple people, than did that other."

In the books printed by Caxton which treat of secular subjects, there is constant evidence of the sincere and unpretending piety of this skilful and laborious author and artisan. He lived in an age when the ancient power of the church was somewhat waning; and far-sighted observers saw the cloud no bigger than a man's hand which indicated the approaching storm. One of his biographers, the Rev. Mr. Lewis, says of him that "he expressed a great

sense of religion, and wrote like one who lived in the fear of God, and was very desirous of promoting his honour and glory." But Mr. Lewis complains that "he was so far carried away by the established errors and superstitions of his time, as to be an advocate for, and encourager of, some of the worst of them; as engaging in what they then called the Holy War, or marching armed forces into the land of Judæa, to recover that and the city of Jerusalem out of hands of the Turks; and going in pilgrimage, or sainterring, to visit that holy place." The passage to which the reverend biographer particularly objects furnishes a curious example of the enthusiastic temper of the old printer. It is contained in the proem, or prologue, to his translation of Godfrey of Boulogne, printed in 1481: "Then I thus visiting this noble history, which is no fable nor feigned thing, but all that is therein true; considering also the great puissance of the Turk, great enemy of our Christian faith, destroyer of Christian blood, and usurper of certain empires and many Christian royaumes and countries, and now late this said year hath assailed the city and castle in the Isle of Rhodes, where valiantly he hath been resisted; but yet notwithstanding, he hath approached more near, and hath taken the city of Idronte in Puille [Otranto in Apulia], by which he hath gotten an entrance to enter into the royaume of Naples; and from thence, without he be resisted, unto Rome and Italy, to whose resistance I beseech Almighty God to provide, if it be his will. Then me seemeth it necessary and expedient for all Christian princes to make peace, amity, and alliance each with other, and provide, by their wisdoms, the resistance again him, for the defence of our faith

and mother, holy church, and also for the recuperation of the Holy Land and holy city of Jerusalem, in which our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ redeemed us with his precious blood; and to do as this noble Prince Godfrey of Boulogne did, with other noble and high princes in his company. Thus, for the exhortation of all Christian princes, lords, barons, knights, gentlemen, merchants, and all the common people of this noble royaume, Wales, and Ireland, I have emprised to translate this book of the Conquest of Jerusalem, out of French into our maternal tongue; to the intent to encourage them by the reading and hearing of the marvellous histories herein comprised, and of the holy miracles shewed, that every man in his part endeavour them unto the resistance aforesaid; and recuperation of the said Holy Land. And forasmuch as I know no Christian king better proved in arms, and for whom God hath shewed more grace, and in all his emprises glorious vanquisher, happy and eurous [fortunate] than is our natural, lawful, and sovereign lord and most Christian king, Edward, by the grace of God, King of England and of France, and Lord of Ireland, under the shadow of whose noble protection, I have achieved this simple translation; that he, of his most noble grace, would address, stir, or command some noble captain of his subjects, to emprise this war against the said Turk and heathen people, to which I can think that every man will put hand to, in their proper persons, and in their moveable goods."

To this zealous address, in which we see much of the old chivalrous spirit that Caxton so constantly rejoices in, and of which we shall have to mention further examples, may be fitly contrasted his sober

and truly beautiful exposition of the uses of knowledge, contained in his prologue to the 'Mirror of the World:' "Let us pray the Maker and Creator of all creatures, God Almighty, that, at the beginning of this book, it list him, of his most bounteous grace, to depart with us of the same that we may learn; and that learned, to retain; and that retained, to teach; that we may have so perfect science and knowledge of God, that we may get thereby the health of our souls, and to be partners of his glory, permanent, and without end, in heaven. Amen."

The little hand-bill in which Caxton announces his Pies invites the reader to purchase them at the Almonesyre at the reed pale. Wynkyn de Worde, the successor of Caxton, in a book which he printed in the supposed year of Caxton's death, says, "Wynkyn de Worde this has set in print in William Caxton's house." William Caxton's house could scarcely be the chapel in the Abbey; and Bagford, whose account of Caxton we have mentioned, says, "The house is the sign of the King's Head, but does not seem so ancient, being a brick building." This is the place which Stow describes as the Almonry or Ambry. It still exists at Westminster, as may be seen in the annexed wood-cut.

Caxton's House, Westminster.

CHAPTER XI.

WORK FOR THE PRESS.

THE celebrated historian Gibbon has taken a somewhat severe view of the character of the works which were produced by the father of English printing:—"It was in the year 1474 that our first press was established in Westminster Abbey, by William Caxton: but in the choice of his authors, that liberal and industrious artist was reduced to comply with the vicious taste of his readers; to gratify the nobles with treatises on heraldry, hawking, and the game of chess, and to amuse the popular credulity with romances of fabulous knights and legends of more fabulous saints." The historian, however, notices with approbation the laudable desire which Caxton expresses to elucidate the history of his country. But his censure of the general character of the works of Caxton's press is somewhat too sweeping. It appears to us that a more just as well as a more liberal view of the use and tendency of these works is that of Thomas Warton, which we may be excused in quoting somewhat at length:—"By means of French translations, our countrymen, who understood French much better than Latin, became acquainted with many useful books which they would not otherwise have known. With such assistances, a commodious access to the classics was opened, and the

knowledge of ancient literature facilitated and familiarized in England, at a much earlier period than is imagined; and at a time when little more than the productions of speculative monks and irrefragable doctors could be obtained or were studied. . . . When these authors, therefore, appeared in a language almost as intelligible as the English, they fell into the hands of illiterate and common readers, and contributed to sow the seeds of a national erudition and to form a popular taste. Even the French versions of the religious, philosophical, historical, and allegorical compositions of those more enlightened Latin writers who flourished in the middle ages, had their use, till better books came into vogue: pregnant as they were with absurdities, they communicated instruction on various and new subjects, enlarged the field of information, and promoted the love of reading, by gratifying that growing literary curiosity which now began to want materials for the exercise of its operations. . . . These French versions enabled Caxton, our first printer, to enrich the state of letters in this country with many valuable publications. He found it no difficult task, either by himself or the help of his friends, to turn a considerable number of these pieces into English, which he printed. Ancient learning had as yet made too little progress among us, to encourage this enterprising and industrious artist to publish the Roman authors in their original language: and had not the French furnished him with these materials, it is not likely that Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, and many other good writers would by the means of his press have been circulated in the English tongue so early as the close of the fifteenth cen-

tury." Warton adds in a note, "It was a circumstance favourable at least to English literature, owing indeed to the general illiteracy of the times, that our first printers were so little employed on books written in the learned languages. Almost all Caxton's books are English. The multiplication of English copies multiplied English readers, and these again produced new vernacular writers. The existence of a press induced many persons to turn authors, who were only qualified to write in their native tongue." Having thus given the somewhat different views of two most able and accomplished scholars, viewing as they did the same objects through different media, we shall proceed to notice some of the more remarkable characteristics of the books issued from Caxton's press, rather regarding them as curious illustrations of the state of knowledge and the manners of his time, than as mere bibliographical curiosities, in which point of view they have been generally regarded.

The Histories of Troy is a book with which our readers must now be tolerably familiar. A writer in the century succeeding Caxton, one Robert Braham, is very severe upon the old printer for this his work: "If a man studious of that history [the Trojan war] should seek to find the same in the doings of William Caxton, in his lewd [idle] 'Recueil of Troye,' what should he then find, think ye? Assuredly none other thing but a long, tedious, and brainless babbling, tending to no end, nor having any certain beginning; but proceeding therein as an idiot in his folly, that cannot make an end till he be bidden. Much like the foolish and unsavoury doings of Orestes, whom Juvenal remembereth—which Caxton's 'Recueil,' who so

list with judgment peruse, shall rather think his doings worthy to be numbered amongst the trifling tales and barren lewderies of Robin Hood and Bevis of Hampton, than remain as a monument of so worthy an history." It is somewhat hard that Caxton should be thus maltreated for having made the English familiar with that romance of the Trojan war with which all Europe was enamoured in some language or another. Caxton says in his title-page that these histories were "composed and drawn out of divers books of Latin into French by Raoul le Fevre;" and he says also that "this book was new, and late made and drawn into French." The authority which Le Fevre partly followed was the Troy book of Guido di Colonna; and he is traced to have translated his book from a Norman French poet of the time of Edward the Second; and the Norman is to be traced to Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, the supposed authors of two ancient works on the History of Troy, but which histories are held to have been manufactured by an Englishman of the twelfth century. Guido di Colonna constructed the most captivating of the romances of chivalry upon these supposititious tales of Troy. Hector and Achilles are surrounded by him with all the attributes of knight-errantry; and the Grecian manners are Gothicised with all the peculiarities of the civilization of the middle ages. Lydgate constructed upon this romance his poem of the Troy Book; and Chaucer availed himself of it in his poem of 'Troilus and Cressida.' Shakspere, in his wonderful play upon the same part of the Trojan story of the middle ages, has used Chaucer, Lydgate, and Caxton; and several passages show that our great

dramatic poet was perfectly familiar with the translation of our old printer, which was so popular that by Shakspere's time it had passed through six editions, and continued to be read even in the last century. We give a short example of Caxton's version and of Shakspere's use of it:

"Andromeda [Andromache] saw that night a marvellous vision, and her seemed if Hector went that day to the battle he should be slain. And she, that had great fear and dread of her husband, weeping, said to him, praying that he would not go to the battle that day: whereof Hector blamed his wife, saying that she should not believe nor give faith to dreams, and would not abide nor tarry therefore."

"*Andromache.* When was my lord so much ungently temper'd,
To stop his ears against admonishment?
Unarm, unarm, and do not fight to-day.
Hector. You train me to offend you; get you gone:
By the everlasting gods, I'll go.
And. My dreams will, sure, prove ominous to the day.
Hect. No more, I say." (*Troilus and Cressida.*)

'*The Book of the whole Life of Jason*,' printed by Caxton in 1475, is another of these middle age romances, founded upon the supposititious histories of Dares and Dictys. Caxton, in his prologue to this translation, has the following very curious passage: "Under the protection and sufferance of the most high, puissant, and Christian king, my most dread natural liege Lord, Edward, by the grace of God, King of England and of France, and Lord of Ireland, I intend to translate the said book of the Histories of Jason, following mine author as nigh as I can or may, not changing the sentence, nor

presuming to add nor minish anything otherwise than mine author hath made in French. And insomuch as the greatest fame and renown standeth and resteth in the conquest of the fleece of gold, whereof is founded an order of knights, whereof our said sovereign lord is one, and hath taken the profession thereof, how well some persons affirm and say that the said order hath taken its original of the Fleece of Gideon, wherein I will not dispute. But well wot I that the noble Duke Philip, first founder of this said order, did so maken [caused to be made] a chamber in the Castle of Hesdyn, wherein was craftily and curiously depainted the conquest of the golden fleece by the said Jason. In which chamber I have been, and seen the said history so depainted; and in remembrance of Medea, and of her cunning and science, he had do make [had made] in the said chamber, by subtil engine, that, when he would, it should seem that it lightened, and after thunder, snow, and rain, and all within the said chamber, as oft times and when it should please him, which was all made for his singular pleasure. Then for the honour and worship of our said most redoubted liege lord, which hath taken the said order, I have under the shadow of his noble protection enterprized to accomplish this said little book." Spenser's description of the gate of the Bower of Bliss, in the 12th canto of the second book of the 'Fairy Queen,' might have been suggested by this account of the Duke of Burgundy's wonderful chamber:—

"It framed was of precious ivory,
That seem'd a work of admirable wit;
And therein all the famous history
Of Jason and Medea was ywrit;

Her mighty charms, her furious loving fit;
His goodly conquest of the golden fleece,
His falsed faith, and love too lightly flit:
The wonder'd Argo, which in venturous peace
First through the Euxine seas bore all the flower of Greece."

'*The Game and Play of the Chess.*' Caxton printed two editions of this book, which he translated himself from the French. The first was finished on the last day of March, 1474; and it is supposed to have been the first book which he printed in England. Bagford says, "Caxton's first book in the Abbey was 'The Game of Chess;' a book in those times much in use with all sorts of people, and in all likelihood first desired by the abbot, and the rest of his friends and masters." It was a book that Caxton clearly intended for the diffusion of knowledge amongst all ranks of people; for in his second edition he says, in not very complimentary phrase, "The noble clerks have written and compiled many notable works and histories," that they might come "to the knowledge and understanding of such as be ignorant, of which the number is infinite." And he adds, with still plainer speech, that, according to Solomon, "the number of fools is infinite." He says that amongst these noble clerks there was an excellent doctor of divinity in the kingdom of France, which "hath made a book of the chess moralized, which at such a time as I was resident in Bruges came into my hands." He says, moreover, "This said book is full of wholesome wisdom, and requisite unto every estate and degree." It is unnecessary for us here to enter into the question whether chess was known to the Greeks and Romans, or endeavour to trace how it came into Europe. There is little doubt

that the game was invented by the Hindoos. We know from Boccaccio, who lived in the fourteenth century, that it was a common amusement at Florence; and that there was a player there who, like the celebrated Philidor, could beat two antagonists without seeing either of the chess-boards. There is a notion that it was brought into England from the Holy Land, by Edward the First. Lydgate mentions a game of chess in which a queen drove the king into a corner of the board; and in this description he uses the term *mate*. Mrs. Paston, in one of the letters collected under the name of her family, says, "The Lady Morley had no harpings or lutings during Christmas, but playing at tables and chess." In France the game was known very early; for there is an accredited anecdote that John, king of France, when taken prisoner at the battle of Poitiers, exclaimed, "Do you not know that at chess a king is never taken?" Froissart mentions that Charles the Fifth, of France, played at chess with the Duke of Burgundy. It would seem to be an ingenious device of the reverend writer of the book of chess which Caxton translated, to associate with very correct instructions as to the mode of playing the game, such moralizations as would enable him therewith to teach the people "to understand wisdom and virtue." Caxton readily adopts the same notion. He dedicates the book to the Duke of Clarence: "Forasmuch as I have understood and known that you are inclined unto the commonweal of the king, our said sovereign lord, his nobles, lords, and common people of his noble realm of England, and that ye saw gladly the inhabitants of the same informed in good, virtuous, profitable, and honest

manners." This book contains authorities, sayings, and stories, "applied unto the morality of the public weal, as well of the nobles and of the common people, after the game and play of chess;" and Caxton trusts that "other of what estate or degree he or they stand in may see in this little book that they govern themselves as they ought to do." This book of chess contains four treatises. The first describes the invention of the game in the time of a king of Babylon, Emsmerodach, a cruel king, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, to whom a philosopher showed the game for the purpose of exhibiting "the manners and condition of a king, of the nobles, and of the common people and their offices, and how they should be touched and drawn, and how he should amend himself and become virtuous." This is a bold fable, and takes us farther back than Sir William Jones, who says that chess was imported from the west of India, in the sixth century, and known immemorially in Hindustan by the name of Chaturanga, or the four members of an army, namely, elephants, horses, chariots, and foot soldiers. The second treatise in Caxton's book describes, first, the office of a king: by this name the principal piece was always known. Secondly, of the queen; this name would seem to belong to the time of Caxton, for Chaucer and Lydgate call the piece Fers or Feers, a noble, a general,—hence Peer. Thirdly, of the Alphyns: this is the same as the present Bishop; the French called this personage the Fou, and Rabelais calls him the Archer. Fourthly, the knight, who was always called by this name, in English and French chess. The rook, the fifth dignified piece, is from the Eastern name, Ruc Caxton goes on to inform

us that the third treatise is of the offices of the common people. This treatise relates to the pawns; and a curious thing it is that the eight pawns of the board are taken by him each to represent large classes of the commonalty. The denominations of these classes somewhat vary in the two editions, but their general arrangement is the same. We have, in the first class, labourers and tillers of the earth; in the second, smiths and other workers in iron and metal; in the third, notaries, advocates, scriveners, drapers, and makers of cloth; in the fourth, merchants and changers; in the fifth, physicians, leeches, spicers, and apothecaries; in the sixth, taverners, hostelers, and victuallers; in the seventh, guards of the cities, receivers of custom, and tollers; and lastly, messengers, couriers, ribalds, and players at the dice. The book concludes with a prayer for the prosperity of King Edward, and "that his noble realm of England may prosper and abound in virtues, and that sin may be eschewed, justice kept, the realm defended, good men rewarded, malefactors punished, and the idle people be put to labour."

The second edition of 'The Game of the Chess,' which is without date or place, was the first book printed in the English language which contained wood-cuts. The following is given as a "correct list of these first-fruits of English wood-engraving," in the valuable work published by Mr. Jackson:

"1. An executioner with an axe cutting to pieces, on a block, the limbs of a man. On the head, which is lying on the ground, there is a crown. Birds are seen seizing and flying away with portions of the limbs. There are buildings in the distance; and three figures, one of whom is a king

with a crown and sceptre, appear looking on. 2. A figure sitting at a table, with a chess-board before him, and holding one of the chess-men in his hand. 3. A king and another person playing at chess. 4. The king at chess, seated on a throne. 5. The king and queen. 6. The alphyns, now called bishops, in the game of chess, "in the manner of judges sittyng." 7. The knight. 8. The rook or castle, a figure on horseback, wearing a hood and holding a staff in his hand. From No. 9 to No. 15 inclusive, the pawns are thus represented:—9. Labourers and workmen, the principal figure representing the first pawn, with a spade in his right hand and a cartwhip in his left. 10. The second pawn a smith, his buttriss in the string of his apron, and a hammer in his right hand. 11. The third pawn, represented as a clerk, that is, a writer or transcriber, in the same sense as Peter Schoeffer and Ulric Lyel are styled clerici, with his case of writing-materials at his girdle, a pair of shears in one hand and a large knife in the other. The knife, which has a large curved blade, appears more fit for a butcher's chopper than to make or mend pens. 12. The fourth pawn, a man with a pair of scales, and having a purse at his girdle, representing "marchauntes or chaungers." 13. The fifth pawn, a figure seated on a chair, having in his right hand a book, and in his left a sort of casket or box of ointments, representing a physician, spicer, or apothecary. 14. The sixth pawn, an innkeeper receiving a guest. 15. The seventh pawn, a figure with a yard-measure in his right hand, a bunch of keys in his left, and an open purse at his girdle, representing "customers ana tolle gaderers." 16. The eighth pawn, a figurp

with a sort of badge on his breast, near to his right shoulder, after the manner of a nobleman's retainer, and holding a pair of dice in his left hand, representing dice-players, messengers, and "currours," that is, "couriers." In old authors the numerous idle retainers of the nobility are frequently represented as gamblers, swash-bucklers, and tavern-haunters."

We give a fac-simile of the figure of the knight in Caxton's volume.

The original art of engraving on wood, and the production of block-books, gradually merged, as we have seen, into the art of printing from moveable types. From that time wood-cuts became a secondary part of books, used, indeed, very often by the early printers, but by no means forming an indispensable branch of typography. Imitating the manuscript books, the first printers chiefly employed the wood-engraver upon initial letters; and sometimes the pages of their works were surrounded by borders, which contained white lines or sprigs of foliage upon a black ground. If a figure, or group of figures, was introduced, little more than the outline was first attempted. By degrees, however, endeavours were made to represent gradations of shadow; and a few light hatchings, or white dots, were employed. All cross-hatchings, such as characterize a line-engraving upon metal, were carefully avoided by the early wood-cutters, on account of the difficulty in the process. Mr. Ottley, in his 'History of Engraving,' says that an engraver on wood, of the name of Wohlgemuth (who flourished at Nuremburg about 1480), "perceived that, though difficult, this was not impossible;" and, in the cuts of the 'Nuremburg Chronicle,' a "successful attempt was first made to imitate the bold hatchings of a pen-drawing." Albert Durer, an artist of extraordinary talent, became the pupil of Wohlgemuth; and by him, and many others, wood-engraving was carried to a perfection which it subsequently lost till its revival in our own country. For more than a century and a half after the invention of printing in England, as well as in France, Holland, and Germany, wood-cuts were profusely employed in the

illustration of books. Those who have seen copies of the original editions of those very popular English works, Holinshed's 'Chronicles' and Fox's 'Martyrs,' will perceive how attractive and really instructive wood-cuts were considered in the sixteenth and early in the seventeenth century. Wood-cuts are indeed essentially applicable to the general diffusion of knowledge; and the early printers were as much engaged in that great task as we of the present day, who are anxious to carry information into the dwellings of the peasant and the artisan, and to excite the curiosity of those who have been unaccustomed to think upon any subject connected with art and literature. The early printers had to seek for their most numerous class of customers among the laity, who, according to Richard de Bury, were considered unworthy of the perusal of the monastic manuscripts. These, undoubtedly, were for a long time surrounded with every difficulty in the acquisition of knowledge. Many, even of the wealthier classes, were unable to read their own language; few understood the learned languages, in which the larger number of books were printed; and the greater part required some excitement to their curiosity before they seriously applied themselves to the perusal of a book, even if they possessed the ability. The liberal introduction of wood-cuts furnished a great attraction. After the first expenses of the drawing and engraving were incurred, there was no separate cost in taking off the impressions of the cuts;—they were executed by the typographical process, and thus formed an integral portion of the books. Gradually, however, as the original readers of books, namely, the nobility and other possessors of

property in land, and a few of the wealthier of the mercantile class, desired a species of embellishment more costly than wood-cuts, though in many cases not superior, copper-plate prints began to be introduced into printed works. Impressions of these prints were obtained by a process totally different from the typographical art; so that they constituted, in every respect, an additional expense in the production of a book. Sir John Harrington's translation of 'Orlando Furioso' was the first English work in which copper-plates were used; this was printed in 1690. From this time till the latter part of the eighteenth century, the use of wood-cuts gradually decreased in England. The rudest illustrations, as rude as those of Caxton's 'Book of the Chess,' were sometimes found in Primers and Spelling-books; but as a high branch of art wood-engraving was entirely lost till the appearance of Bewick, a most ingenious artist, who practised at Newcastle upon Tyne. There never was a period in the history of typography or art in which wood-engraving has been so extensively employed in England as during the last twelve years. Illustrations on wood have become the great characteristic of many of the productions of the English press which are addressed to large numbers of the people. Wood-engraving is essentially the art of design which is naturally associated with cheap and rapid printing; and at the same time it is capable of such excellence, that the finest works which are embellished by this art may compete in their peculiar line with the smaller productions of the graver on copper or steel.

CHAPTER XII.

MORE WORK.

Lord Rivers presenting his Book to Edward IV.

In the library belonging to the Archbishops of Canterbury, at Lambeth, is a beautiful manuscript, on vellum, of a French work, 'Les Dicts Moraux des Philosophes,' which contains the illumination

of which the above is a copy. The following lines are written under the illumination :—

"This boke late translate here in sight
By Antony erle [Rivers] that vertueux knight,
Please it to accepte to your noble grace,
And at youre convenient leysoure and space
It to see, reede, and understond,
A precious jewell for alle your lond :
For therein is taught, how and in what wyse
Men vertues shulde use and vices despise,
The subjects theire princes ever obeye,
And they theim in right defend ay :—
Thus do every mann in his degrè,
Graunt of his grace, the Trinitè."

The book thus stated to be translated was printed by Caxton in 1477 ; and it is held that the man kneeling by the side of the earl in the illumination is the printer of the book. There is an interesting preface to his translation by Lord Rivers, in which he says that being on his way to Spain, in 1473, having shipped at Southampton, "lacking sight of all lands, the wind being good and the weather fair, for a recreation and a passing of time, I had delight and asked to read some good history." And so a worshipful gentleman brought him a book which he had never seen before, 'The Dictes, or Sayings of Philosophers.' Subsequently, when he had leisure, he looked upon the said book, and concluded within himself to translate it into the English tongue. We have already mentioned the confidential intercourse which subsisted between Lord Rivers and his printer, with regard to the revision of this work. (See page 111.) The passages which we there quote are given in a sort of appendix, in

which Caxton professes to have himself translated a chapter upon women, which Lord Rivers did not think fit to meddle with, and which he prints with a real or affected apprehension. The printer's statement is altogether such a piece of sly humour, that we willingly transcribe it, trusting that our readers will see the drollery through the quaintness:—

"I find that my said lord hath left out certain and divers conclusions touching women. Whereof I marvelled that my said lord hath not writ on them, nor what hath moved him so to do, not what cause he had at that time. But I suppose that some fair lady hath desired him to leave it out of his book; or else he was amorous on some noble lady, for whose love he would not set it in his book; or else for the very affection, love, and good will that he hath unto all ladies and gentlewomen, he thought that Socrates spared the sooth, and wrote of women more than truth; which I cannot think that so true a man and so noble a philosopher as Socrates was, should write otherwise than truth. For if he had made fault in writing of women, he ought not nor should not be believed in his other Dictes and Sayings. But I perceive that my said lord knoweth verily that such defaults be not had nor found in the women born and dwelling in these parts nor regions of the world. Socrates was a Greek, born in a far country from hence, which country is all of other conditions than this is, and men and women of other nature than they be here in this country; for I wot well of whatsoever condition women be in Greece, the women of this country be right good, wise, pleasant, humble, dis-

creet, sober, chaste, obedient to their husbands, true, secret, stedfast, ever busy, and never idle, attemperate in speaking, and virtuous in all their works; or at least should be so. For which causes so evident, my said lord, as I suppose, thought it was not of necessity to set in his book the sayings of his author Socrates touching women. But forasmuch as I had commandment of my said lord to correct and amend where as I should find fault, and other find I none save that he hath left out these Dictes and Sayings of the Women of Greece, therefore in accomplishing his commandment, forasmuch as I am not in certain whether it was in my lord's copy or not, or else peradventure that the wind had blown over the leaf at the time of the translation of his book, I purpose to write these same sayings of that Greek Socrates, which wrote of those women of Greece, and nothing of them of this royaume, whom I suppose he never knew."

There is a book translated by Caxton from the French, and printed by him in 1484, which we may incidentally here notice, as illustrating the female manners of that century. It is called 'The Knight of the Tower;' and really would seem to justify the sarcasm of Caxton where he says, "The women of this country be right good, &c., or at least should be so." A writer in the 'Retrospective Review' says, "The preface prefixed to Caxton's translation implies most unequivocally that this work, though written by a Frenchman, was applicable to the contemporary state of society in England, of which, indeed, there is abundant evidence from other sources. The truth is, that English and French manners in the upper ranks

scarcely differed at the time, by any perceptible features." It appears from this curious performance that the ladies, although well accomplished in needlework, confectionary, church music, and even taught something of the rude surgery of those days, were not great proficients in reading, and the art of writing was thought to be better let alone by them. The Knight of the Tower complains of the levity of the ladies. Their extravagance in dress, the husband's standing complaint, is thus put by the Knight of the Tower: "The wives say to their husbands every day, 'Sir, such a wife and such hath such goodly array that beseemeth her well, and I pray you I may have of the same.' And if her husband say, 'Wife, if such have such array, such that are wiser than they have it not,' she will say, 'No force it is [that is of no consequence], for they cannot wear it, and if I have it, ye shall see how well it will become me, for I can wear it.' And thus with her words her husband must needs ordain her that which she desireth, or he shall never have peace with her, for they will find so many reasons that they will not be warned [put off]." The women of lower estate come in for the same censure, the complaint being that they *fur* their draperies and *fur* their heels. It appears to have been the practice for ladies to go very freely to feasts and assemblies, to joustings and tournaments, without what we now call the protection of a husband or a male relation. A contemporary writer says, they lavished their wealth and corrupted their virtue by these freedoms. If we may judge from the warnings which the Knight of the Tower gives his daughters of the discipline they would receive at the hands of their husbands for

any act of disobedience,—the discipline not only of hard words, but of harder blows,—it is not to be wondered at that they sought abroad for some relief to the gloom and severity of their home lives. It is pleasant, amidst these illustrations of barbarous and profligate manners, to find a picture of that real goodness which has distinguished the female character in all ages, and which, especially in the times of feudal oppression of which we are speaking, mitigated the lot of those who were dependent upon the benevolence of the great possessors of property. The good Lady Cecile of Balleville is thus described by the Knight of the Tower: "Her daily ordinance was, that she rose early enough, and had ever friars and two or three chaplains, which said matins before her within the oratory. And after, she heard a high mass and two low, and said her service full devoutly. And after this, she went and arrayed herself, and walked in her garden or else about her place, saying her other devotions and prayers. And as time was she went to dinner. And after dinner, if she wist and knew any sick folk or women in their child-bed, she went to see and visited them, and made to be brought to them her best meat. And there as she might not go herself, she had a servant proper therefore, which rode upon a little horse, and bare with him great plenty of good meat and drink, for to give to the poor and sick folk there as they were. Also, she was of such custom, that if she knew any poor gentlewoman that should be wedded, she arrayed her with her jewels. Also she went to the obsequies of poor gentlewomen, and gave there torches, and such other luminary as it needed thereto. And after she had heard evensong she went to her

supper if she fasted not, and timely she went to bed, and made her steward to come to her to wit [know] what meat should be had the next day. She made great abstinence, and wore the hair upon the Wednesday and upon the Friday." This is a true character of the middle ages;—goodness based upon sincere piety, but that degenerating into penances and mortifications, which our Reformed faith teaches us to believe are unnecessary for spiritual elevation.

We return, after this long digression, to Caxton's early friend and patron, Lord Rivers. He appears, as far as we can judge from the books which remain, to have been the only one of the first English printer's contemporaries who rendered him any literary assistance. He contributed three works to Caxton's press; namely, the 'Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers,' 'The Moral Proverbs of Christine de Pisa,' and the book named 'Cordial.' The '*Moral Proverbs*' are a metrical translation of a little French poem. Caxton tries his own hand at versification, as a conclusion of the work:—

> "Go thou little quire, and recommend me
> Unto the good grace of my special lord
> Th'earl Rivers, for I have emprinted thee
> At his commandment, following every word
> His copy, as his secretary can record,
> At Westminster, of Feuerer [February] the xx day,
> And of king Edward the xvii day vraye."

The book named '*Cordial*' is clearly described in a prologue by Caxton. It was delivered to him, he says, by Lord Rivers, "for to be imprinted and so multiplied to go abroad among the people, that thereby more surely might be remembered the four last things undoubtedly coming." Caxton, in

an elaborate commendation of his patron, of whose former "great tribulation and adversity" he speaks, says, "It seemeth that he conceiveth well the mutability and the unstableness of this present life, and that he desireth, with a great zeal and spiritual love, our ghostly help and perpetual salvation." Lord Rivers had indeed borne tribulation since the time when, the flower of Edward's court, he jousted with the Bastard of Burgundy in Smithfield, in 1468. In the following year his father and brother were murdered by a desperate faction at Northampton. When Lord Rivers, conceiving the mutability and unstableness of life, wrote the book called 'Cordial,' he was only six and thirty years of age. Three years after Caxton printed the book, the translator was himself murdered at Pomfret by the Protector Richard. Shakspere did not do injustice to the noble character of this peer when he makes him exclaim, when he was led to the block,

> "Sir Richard Ratcliff, let me tell thee this,—
> To-day shalt thou behold a subject die,
> For truth, for duty, and for loyalty."
>
> *Richard III.*, Act iii., Scene 2.

There is left to us a remarkable fragment which indicates to us something higher than the ability and literary attainment of this unfortunate nobleman. It has been preserved by John Rouse, a contemporary historian, who lived in the pleasant solitude of Guy's Cliff, near Warwick, and died there in 1491. He says (we translate from his Latin), "In the time of his imprisonment at Pomfret he wrote a balet in English, which has been shown to me, having these words—Sum what musyng," &c.; and then Rouse transcribes the ballad, of which

the second stanza is imperfect, but has been supplied from another ancient copy. Percy, who prints the ballad in his 'Reliques,' says, "If we consider that it was written during his cruel confinement in Pomfret Castle, a short time before his execution in 1483, it gives us a fine picture of the composure and steadiness with which this stout earl beheld his approaching fate." We subjoin the ballad, modernizing the orthography:—

Somewhat musing, and more mourning,
In remembering the unstedfastness,
This world being of such wheeling,
Me contrarying what may I guess.

I fear doubtless, remediless
Is now to seize my woful chance;
For unkindness withouten less
And no redress, me doth avance,

With displeasance to my grievance
And no surance of remedy:
Lo in this trance, now in substance
Such is my dance, willing to die.

Methinks truly bounden am I,
And that greatly, to be content,
Seeing plainly fortune doth wry
All contrary from mine intent.

My life was lent me to one intent;
It is nigh spent. Welcome, fortune!
But I ne went thus to be shent,
But she it meant—such is her won" [wont].

Turn we to one of the more important works of Caxton, in which he sought to inform his countrymen generally with a knowledge of history. '*The Chronicles of England*,' printed in 1480, begins at the fabulous period before the Romans, and ends at the commencement of the reign of Edward IV. The early legends of English history, which even

Milton did not disdain to touch upon, are founded upon the 'History of Nennius,' which was composed in the ninth century, and which was copied by Geoffrey of Monmouth and other of the early chroniclers. Caxton took the thing as he found it, and continued the narrative to his own time. He deals prudently with contemporary events. For example, he thus briefly describes the battle of Towton:—"And on Palm Sunday after, he [Edward IV.] had a great battle in the north country at a place called Towton, not far from York, where, with the help of God, he got the field and had the victory: where were slain of his adversaries xxv thousand men and more, as it was said by men that were there." Caxton followed up these chronicles in the same year with another book, called '*The Description of Britain*,' in which he tells of the extent of the island, its marvels and wonders, its highways, rivers, cities, and towns, provinces, laws, bishoprics, and languages. He describes also Scotland and Ireland. Some of his marvels and wonders are a little astounding; but others are as precise in their description, and as forcible (brevity being an essential quality) as we could well desire. Thus of Stonehenge: "At Stonehinge beside Salisbury there be great stones and wondrous huge; and be reared on high as it were gates set upon other gates; nevertheless it is not known cleanly nor aperceived how and wherefore they be so areared and so wonderful hanged."

From the chronicles of his own country Caxton sought to lead his readers forward to a knowledge of the history of other countries. He published in 1482 '*The Polychronicon*, containing the bearings and deeds of many times.' This book was originally

composed by Higden, a Benedictine monk of Chester; and was translated from Latin into English by John de Trevisa, who lived in the times of Edward III. and Richard II. Caxton, in his title-page, says, "Imprinted by William Caxton, after having somewhat changed the rude and old English, that is to wit certain words which in these days be neither used nor understanden." In another place he says, "And now at this time simply imprinted and set in form by me, William Caxton, and a little embellished from the old making." Caxton was here doing what every person who desires to advance the knowledge of his time, by extending that knowledge beyond the narrow circle of scholars and antiquarians, must always do. He popularised an old book; he made it intelligible. He did not do, —as some verbal pedants amongst us still persist in doing,—present our old writers, and especially our poets, in all the capriciousness of their original orthography. He was the first great diffuser of knowledge amongst us; and surely we think he took a judicious course. He says of the 'Polychronicon,' "The book is general, touching shortly many notable matters." But *general* as the book was, and extensively as he desired to circulate it according to his limited means, he does not approach his task without a due sense of the importance of the knowledge he was seeking to impart. The praise of history in his proem is truly eloquent: "History is a perpetual conservatrice of those things that have been before this present time; and also a quotidian witness of benefits, of malfaits [evil deeds], great acts, and triumphal victories of all manner of people. And also if the terrible feigned fables of poets have much stirred and moved

men to right and conserving of justice, how much more is to be supposed that history, assertrice of virtue and a mother of all philosophy, moving our manners to virtue, reformeth and reconcileth near hand all those men, which through the infirmity of our mortal nature hath led the most part of their life in otiosity [idleness], and mis-spended their time, passed right soon out of remembrance: of which life and death is equal oblivion." Again, "Other monuments distributed in divers changes endure but for a short time or season; but the virtue of history diffused and spread by the universal world hath time, which consumeth all other things, as conservatrice and keeper of her work."

'*The Image or Mirror of the World*' is one of the popular books which Caxton translated from the French. It treats of a vast variety of subjects, after the imperfect natural philosophy of those days. We have an account of the seven liberal arts; of nature, how she worketh; and how the earth holdeth him right in the middle of the world. We have also much geographical information, amongst which the wonders of Inde occupy a considerable space. Meteorology and astronomy take up another large portion. The work concludes with an account of the celestial paradise. This book seems specially addressed to high and courtly readers, for Caxton says, "The hearts of nobles, in eschewing of idleness at such time as they have none other virtuous occupations on hand, ought to exercise them in reading, studying, and visiting the noble feats and deeds of the sage and wise men, sometime travelling in profitable virtues; of whom it happeneth oft that some be inclined to visit the books treating of sciences particular; and other to read and visit

books speaking of feats of arms, of love, or of other marvellous histories; and among all other, this present book, which is called the 'Image or Mirror of the World,' ought to be visited, read, and known, by cause it treateth of the world, and of the wonderful division thereof." But the translator tells us, "I have endeavoured me therein, at the request and desire, cost and dispense of the honourable and worshipful man, Hugh Brice, citizen and alderman of London." We may therefore believe that Caxton intended this book for a wider circulation than that of the nobles whom he addresses; especially as he says, "I have made it so plain that every man reasonable may understand it, if he advisedly and attentively read it, or hear it." The good old printer rendered the book intelligible to all classes, under the condition that all who read it should give their attention. He expects his readers to be critical; for he says, "If there be fault, in measuring of the firmament, sun, moon, or of the earth, or in any other marvels herein contained, I beseech you not to arette [impute] the fault in me, but in him that made my copy." This is one of the books into which Caxton has introduced woodcuts, giving twenty-seven figures, "without which it may not lightly [easily] be understood." These twenty-seven figures are diagrams, explanatory of some of the scientific principles laid down in this book; but there are eleven other cuts illustrative of other subjects treated in the work. These cuts are thus described in Mr. Jackson's Book on Wood-Engraving:—"1. A schoolmaster or 'doctor,' gowned and seated on a high-backed chair, teaching four youths, who are on their knees. 2. A person seated on a low-backed chair, holding in his

hand a kind of globe; astronomical instruments on a table before him. 3. Christ, or the Godhead, holding in his hand a ball and cross. 4. The creation of Eve, who appears coming out of Adam's side. The next cuts are figurative of the 'seven arts liberal.' 5. Grammar. A teacher with a large birch-rod seated on a chair, his four pupils before him on their knees. 6. Logic. Figure bare-headed, seated on a chair, and having before him a book on a kind of reading-stand, which he appears expounding to his pupils, who are kneeling. 7. Rhetoric. An upright figure in a gown, to whom another, kneeling, presents a paper, from which a seal is seen depending. 8. Arithmetic. A figure seated and having before him a tablet inscribed with numerical characters. 9. Geometry. A figure standing, with a pair of compasses in his hand, with which he seems to be drawing diagrams on a table. 10. Music. A female figure with a sheet of music in her hand, singing, and a man playing on the English flute. 11. Astronomy. Figure with a kind of quadrant in his hand, who seems to be taking an observation. An idea may be formed of the manner in which those cuts are engraved from the following facsimile of No. 10, Music."*

One of the most popular books of Caxton's translation must unquestionably have been the '*History of Reynard the Fox.*' It is held that this work was composed in the twelfth century; and surely the author must have been a man of high genius to have constructed a fable which has been ever since

* Mr. Jackson has kindly lent us this cut, as well as several others which we have introduced.

popular in all countries, and delights us even to this hour. Caxton has no wood-cuts to his edition, to which the book subsequently owed a portion of its attractions. Our good printer appears to think it necessary to apologize for some of the satire of this fable: "There is no good man blamed herein; it is spoken generally; let every man take his own part as it belongeth and behoveth; and he that

findeth him guilty in any deal or part thereof, let him better and amend him; and he that is verily good, I pray God keep him therein; and if any thing be said or written herein that may grieve or displease man, blame not me, but the fox; for they be his words and not mine. Praying all them that shall see this little treatise, to correct and amend where they shall find fault; for I have not added, nor minished, but have followed, as nigh as I can, my copy, which was in Dutch."

'*The Subtil Histories and Fables of Esop*,' translated by Caxton from the French, were printed by him in 1474, "The first year of the reign of King Richard the Third." In the first leaf there is a supposed portrait of Esop, a large rough wood-cut, exhibiting him as he is described, with a great head, large visage, long jaws, sharp eyes, a short neck, *curb*-backed, and so forth. There is a controversy whether Richard the Third was a deformed man or not. It is held by many that it was one of the scandals put forth under his triumphant successor (which scandal Shakspere has for ever made current), that Richard was

> "Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deform'd, unfinish'd."

It strikes us that Caxton would scarcely have ventured, in the first year of King Richard III., to exhibit a print of a hump-backed Esop (for any print was then a rare thing), if his dread sovereign had been remarkable amongst the people for a similar defect. The conclusion of these fables of Esop has a story told by Caxton as from himself, which is a remarkable specimen of a plain narrative style, with a good deal of sly humour:—

Richard III.

"Now then I will finish all these fables with this tale that followeth, which a worshipful priest and a parson told me late: he said that there were dwelling at Oxenford two priests, both Masters of Arts—of whom that one was quick and could put himself forth; and that other was a good simple priest. And so it happened, that the master that was pert and quick was anon promoted to a benefice or twain, and after to prebends, and for to be a dean of a great prince's chapel, supposing and weening that his fellow, the simple priest, should never be promoted, but be always an annual, or, at the most, a parish priest. So after a long time that this worshipful man, this dean, came running

into a good parish with five or seven horses, like a prelate, and came into the church of the said parish, and found there this good simple man, sometime his fellow, which came and welcomed him lowly. And that other bade him 'Good morrow, Master John,' and took him slightly by the hand, and axed him where he dwelt—And the good man said, 'In this parish.' 'How,' said he, 'are ye here a sole priest, or a parish priest?' 'Nay, Sir,' said he, 'for lack of a better, though I be not able nor worthy, I am parson and curate of this parish.' And then that other vailed [lowered] his bonnet, and said, 'Master Parson, I pray you to be not displeased; I had supposed ye had not been beneficed. But master,' said he, 'I pray you what is this benefice worth to you a year?' 'Forsooth,' said the good simple man, 'I wot never; for I make never accompts thereof, how well I have had it four or five years.' 'And know ye not,' said he, 'what it is worth?—it should seem a good benefice.' 'No, forsooth,' said he, 'but I wot well what it shall be worth to me.' 'Why,' said he, 'what shall it be worth?' 'Forsooth,' said he, 'if I do my true dealing in the cure of my parishes in preaching and teaching, and do my part belonging to my cure, I shall have heaven therefore. And if their souls be lost, or any of them, by my default, I shall be punished therefore. And hereof I am sure.' And with that word the rich dean was abashed: and thought he should be the better, and take more heed to his cures and benefices than he had done. This was a good answer of a good priest and an honest. And herewith I finish this book, translated and imprinted by me, William Caxton."

One of Caxton's most splendid books, of which he seems to have printed three editions, was '*The Golden Legend.*' This is, indeed, an important work, printed in double columns, and containing between four and five hundred pages, which are largely illustrated with wood-cuts. It was not without great caution, as we have already mentioned (page 136), that Caxton proceeded with this heavy and expensive undertaking. We repeat, however, this portion of the preface, which is very characteristic of our honest old printer:—"And forasmuch as this said work was great and overchargeable to me to accomplish, I feared me in the beginning of the translation to have continued, by cause of the long time of the translation, and also in the imprinting of the same; and in manner half desperate to have left it, after that I had begun to translate it, and to have laid it apart, nor had it be at the instance and request of the puissant and virtuous earl, my Lord William, Earl of Arundel, which desired me to proceed and continue the said work, and promised me to take a reasonable quantity of them when they were achieved and accomplished, and sent to me a worshipful gentleman, a servant of his, named John Stanney, which solicited me in my lord's name that I should in no wise leave it, but accomplish it; promising that my said lord should during my life give and grant to me a yearly fee; that is to wit, a buck in summer, and a doe in winter; with which fee I hold me well content. Then, at contemplation and reverence of my said lord, I have endeavoured me to make an end and finish this said translation, and also have imprinted it in the most best wise that I have,

could, or might, and present this said book to his good and noble lordship, as chief causer of the achieving of it, praying him to take it in gree of me William Caxton, his poor servant, and that it like him to remember my fee."

In the prologue to the 'Golden Legend' Caxton recites several of the works which he had previously "translated out of French into English at the request of certain lords, ladies, and gentlemen." Those recited are the 'Recueil of Troy,' the 'Book of the Chess,' 'Jason,' the 'Mirror of the World,' Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' and 'Godfrey of Boulogne.' It is remarkable that no printed copy exists of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses;' but in the library of Magdalen College, Cambridge, there is a manuscript containing five books of the 'Metamorphoses,' which purport to be translated by Caxton. It was evidently a part of his plan for the encouragement of liberal education, to present a portion of the people with translations of the classics through the ready means that were open to him of re-translation from the French. Many translators in later times have availed themselves of such aids, without the honesty to indicate the immediate sources of their versions. Caxton printed '*The Book of Tully of Old Age*,' and '*Tullius his Book of Friendship*.' He seems to have had great difficulty in obtaining a copy of an old translation of 'Tullius de Senectute.' The Book 'De Amicitia' was translated by John, Earl of Worcester, the celebrated adherent of the House of York, who was beheaded in 1470. Caxton, we think somewhat unnecessarily, limits the perusal of the treatise on Old Age. "This book is not requisite nor eke convenient for every rude and

simple man, which understandeth not of science nor cunning, and for such as have not heard of the noble policy and prudence of the Romans; but for noble, wise, and great lords, gentlemen, and merchants, that have been and daily be occupied in matter touching the public weal: and in especial unto them that been passed their green age, and eke their middle age, called virility, and been approached unto *senectute*, called old and ancient age. Wherein they may see how to suffer and bear the same patiently; and what surety and virtue been in the same, and have also cause to be joyous and glad that they have escaped and passed the manifold perils and doubteous adventures that been in juvente and youth, as in this said book here following ye may more plainly see."

'*The Book of Eneydus*,' compiled from Virgil, is not a translation of Virgil's great epic, but a sort of historical narrative formed upon the course of the poet's great story. The most remarkable passage of this book is that of Caxton's preface, in which he complains of the unsteadfastness of our language, and the difficulty that he found between plain, rude, and curious terms. (See page 13.) In this translation he again limits his work to a particular class of persons; as if he felt, which was probably a prejudice of his time, that the inferior members of the laity ought not to touch anything that pertained to scholastic learning. He says, "Forasmuch as this present book is not for a rude uplandish man to labour therein, nor read it, but only for a clerk and a noble gentleman that feeleth and understandeth in faits of arms, in love, and in noble chivalry: therefore in mean between both, I have reduced and translated this said book into

our English, not over rude nor curious, but in such terms as shall be understanden, by God's grace, according to my copy."

'*The book called Cathon*' (Cato's Morals) was destined by Caxton for a wider circulation :—"In my judgment it is the best book for to be taught to young children in schools, and also to people of every age it is full convenient if it be well understanden." It is in the prologue to this book that Caxton informs us (see page 24) that he was a citizen of London, and puts up his prayer for the prosperity of the city.

Caxton's edition of '*The Consolation of Philosophy*,' by Boetius, will be noticed in our next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

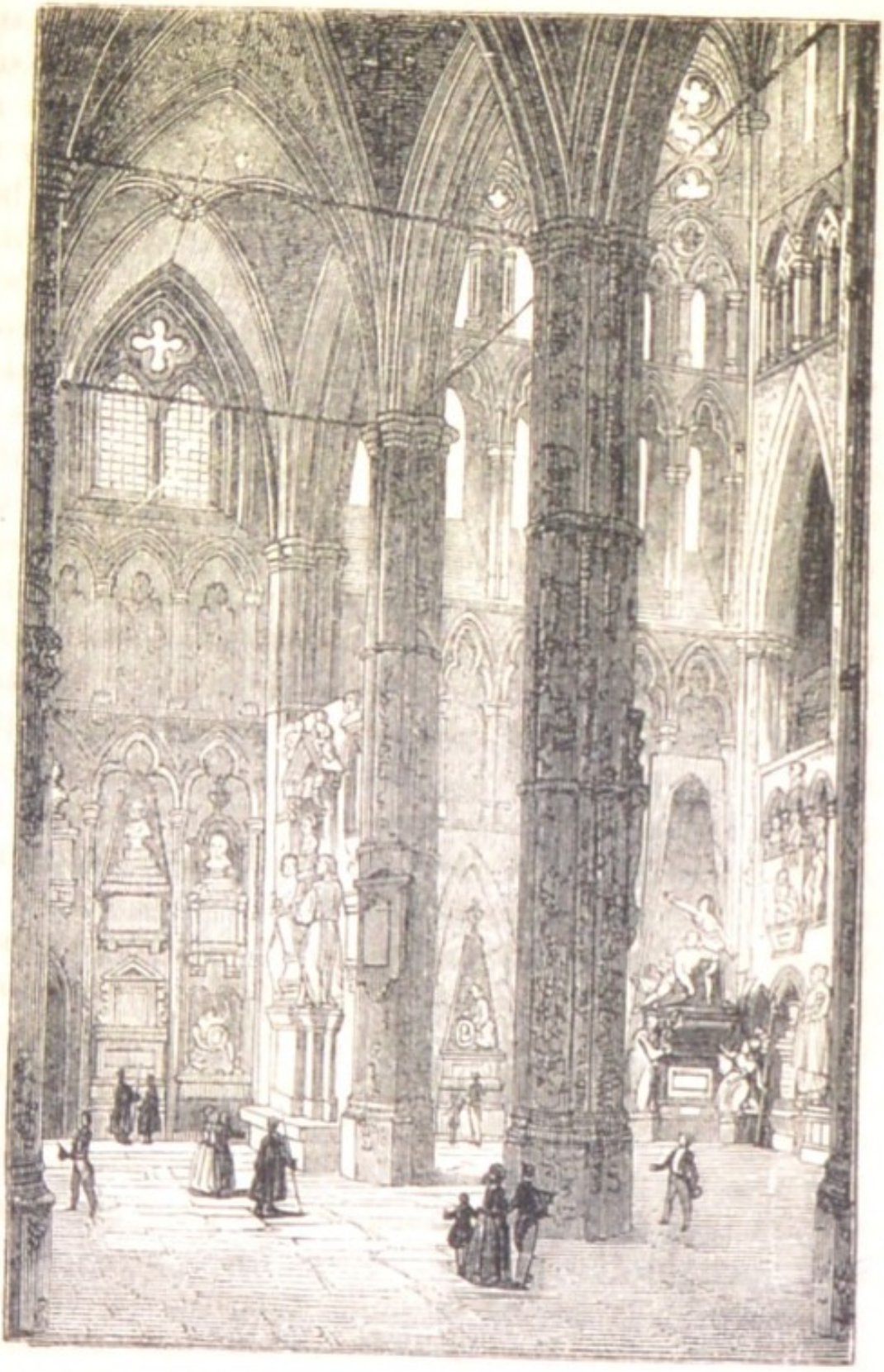
WORK TO THE END.

Dr. Dibdin, in his 'Typographical Antiquities,' says of Caxton, "Exclusively of the labours attached to the working of his press as a new art, our typographer contrived, though well stricken in years, to translate not fewer than five thousand closely printed folio pages. As a translator, therefore, he ranks among the most laborious, and, I would hope, not the least successful, of his tribe. The foregoing conclusion is the result of a careful enumeration of all the books translated as well as printed by him; which [the translated books], if published in the modern fashion, would extend to nearly twenty-five octavo volumes!" The exact nature of his labours seems, as might well be imagined, to have been often determined by very accidental circumstances. One noble lord requests him to produce this book, and one worshipful gentleman urges him to translate that. He says himself of his Virgil, "After divers works made, translated, and achieved, having no work in hand, I sitting in my study whereas lay many divers pamphlets and books, happened that to my hand came a little book in French, which late was translated out of Latin by some noble clerk of France, which book is named Eneydos, made in Latin by that noble poet and great clerk Virgil." Some

books, indeed, he would be determined to print by their existing popularity. Such were his two editions of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales,' which we may be sure, from his sound criticism, he felt the necessity of promulgating to a much wider circle than had been reached by the transcribers. (See page 38.) Caxton was especially the devoted printer of Chaucer. His truly honourable conduct in venturing upon a new edition of the 'Canterbury Tales,' when he found his first was incorrect, exhibits an example in the first printer and the first publisher which the printers and publishers of all subsequent times ought to reverence and imitate. The early printers, English and foreign, were indeed a high and noble race. They did not set themselves up to be the patrons of letters; they did not dispense their dole to scholars grudgingly and thanklessly; they worked with them; they encountered with them the risks of profit and of fame; they were scholars themselves; they felt the deep responsibility of their office; they carried on the highest of all commerce in an elevated temper; they were not mere hucksters and chafferers. It was in no spirit of pride, it was in the spirit of duty, that Caxton raised a table of verses to Chaucer in Westminster Abbey. In his edition of Boetius, which he gives us to understand was translated by Master Geoffrey Chaucer, he says, "And furthermore I desire and require you, that of your charity ye would pray for the soul of the said worshipful man Geoffrey Chaucer, first translator of this said book into English, and embellisher in making the said language ornate and fair, which shall endure perpetually, and therefore he ought eternally to be remembered; of whom

the body and corps lieth buried in the Abbey of Westminster, beside London, to fore the chapel of Saint Benet, by whose sepulture is written on a table, hanging on a pillar, his epitaph made by a poet-laureate, whereof the copy followeth." The writer of the Life of Chaucer, in the 'Biographia Britannica,' says, "It is very probable he lay beneath a large stone of grey marble in the pavement where the monument to Mr. Dryden now stands, which is in the front of that chapel [St. Benet's], upon the erecting of which [Dryden's monument] this stone was taken up, and sawed in pieces to made good the pavement. At least this seems best to answer the description of the place given by Caxton." There appears, according to the ancient editors of Chaucer's works, to have been two Latin lines upon his tombstone previous to the epitaph set up upon a pillar by Caxton. That epitaph was written by Stephanus Suriganius, poet-laureate of Milan. The monument of Chaucer, which still remains in the Abbey, around which the ashes of Spenser, and Beaumont, and Drayton, and Jonson, and Cowley, and Dryden have clustered, was erected by an Oxford student in 1555. There might have been worse things preserved, and yet to be looked upon in that Abbey, than honest old Caxton's epitaph upon him whom he calls "the worshipful father and first founder and embellisher of ornate eloquence in our English."

As the popularity of Chaucer demanded various impressions of his works from Caxton's press, so did he print an apparently cheap edition of Gower's 'Confessio Amantis' in small type. Two of Lydgate's works were also printed by him. The more fugitive poetry which issued from his press has pro-



Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey.

bably all perished. In one of the volumes of Old Ballads in the British Museum is a fragment of a

poem, of which nothing further is known, telling the story of some heroine that lived a life of unvaried solitude:

> "From her childhood I find that she fled
> Office of woman, and to wood she went,
> And many a wild harte's blood she shed
> With arrows broad that she to them sent."

One of the most important uses of early printing in England is to be found in fragments of the Statutes of the Realm, made in the first parliament of Richard III., and in the first, second, and third parliaments of Henry VII., some leaves of which exist. That the promulgation of the laws would soon follow the introduction of the art of printing was a natural consequence. Early in the next century the publication of Acts of Parliament became an important branch of trade; and a King's Printer was formally appointed. Up to our own times all the cheapening processes of the art of printing had been withheld, at least in their results, from that branch of printing which was to instruct the people in their new laws. The Statutes were the dearest of books, and kept dear for no other purpose but to preserve one relic of the monopolies of the days of the Stuarts. The abuse has been partially remedied.

We have purposely reserved to the conclusion of this account of the productions of Caxton's press, some notice of those works, to the undertaking of which he seems to have been moved by his familiarity with the frequenters of the court,—those whose talk was of tournaments and battles, of gallant knights and noble dames; and whose heads, like that of the worthy Knight of La Mancha, were "full of nothing but enchant-

ments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, complaints, amours, torments." It is quite marvellous to look upon the enthusiasm with which Master Caxton deals with these matters in the days when he had achieved

"The silver livery of advised age."

It offers us one of the many proofs of the energy and youthfulness of his character. We have already quoted his address to the knights of England, (see page 91,) given in his '*Book of the Order of Chivalry*,' supposed to have been printed in 1484. After this address he proposes a question which shows that he considers he has fallen upon degenerate days. "How many knights be there now in England that have the use and the exercise of a knight? that is to wit, that he knoweth his horse, and his horse him; that is to say, he being ready at a point to have all thing that belongeth to a knight, an horse that is according and broken after his hand, his armour and harness suit, and so forth, *et cetera*. I suppose, an a due search should be made, there should be many founden that lack: the more pity is! I would it pleased our sovereign Lord, that twice or thrice a year, or at the least once, he would cry jousts of peace, to the end that every knight should have horse and harness, and also the use and craft of a knight, and also to tourney one against one, or two against two; and the best to have a prize, a diamond or jewel, such as should please the prince. This should cause gentlemen to resort to the ancient customs of chivalry to great fame and renown: and also to be alway ready to serve their prince when he shall call them, or have need." There is always some

compensating principle arising in the world to prevent its too rapid degeneracy; and thus, although the tournament has long ceased, except as a farce, there is many a noble who may still say, "That he knoweth his horse, and his horse him," through the attractions of Melton Mowbray and Epsom. Hunting and horse-racing have done much to keep up our pristine civilization.

In '*The Fait of Arms and Chivalry*,' 1489, Caxton undertakes a higher strain. He translates this book, "to the end that every gentleman born to arms and all manner men of war, captains, soldiers, victuallers, and all other, should have knowledge how they ought to behave them in the faits of war and of battles." And yet, strange to relate, this belligerent book was written by a fair lady, Christina of Pisa. She certainly has good authority for her work, as we may collect from her own prologue: "O Minerva, goddess of arms and of chivalry! which by virtue of high entendment [destiny] above all other women, foundest and institutest, among the other noble arts and sciences which of thee took their beginning, the usage to forge of iron and steel armours and harness, propice and convenable to cover and targe [shield] the body of man against the strokes of darts, noyous [noxious] shot and spears in battle; feats of arms, helms, shields, targes, and other harness defensible; from the first coming, institutest and gavest manner and order to arrange battles, and to assail and fight in manner—adored lady and high goddess! be not displeased that I, simple and little woman, like as nothing unto the greatness of thy renown in cunning [skill], dare presently emprise [undertake] to speak of so magnific an office as is

the office of arms; of which first, in the said renowned country of Greece, thou gavest the usage."

We have already alluded to Caxton's heroic exhortation to a new Crusade, in his translation of 'Godfrey of Boulogne' (see page 145), and we therefore pass on without further notice of that chivalric work. His '*Histories of King Arthur*,' printed in 1485, lands us at once into all the legendary hero-worship of the middle ages. Caxton, in his preface to this translation by Sir Thomas Mallory, gives us a pretty full account of the Nine Worthies, "the best that ever were;" and then he goes on to expound his reasons for once doubting whether the Histories of Arthur were anything but fables, and how he was convinced that he was a real man. But surely in these chivalrous books Caxton had an honest purpose. He exhorts noble lords and ladies, with all other estates, to read this said book, "wherein they shall well find many joyous and pleasant histories, and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalries; for herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good, and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown."

'*The Life of Charles the Great*' succeeded the 'Histories of King Arthur;' for, according to Caxton, Charlemagne was the second of the three worthy. It is in the preface to this book that Caxton says that his father and mother in his youth sent him to school, by which, by the sufferance of God, he gets his living. We need scarcely notice this book further; and we may conclude this imperfect description of Caxton's labours in

the literature of romance and chivalry, so characteristic of the age in which he lived, with the following extract from the '*History of King Blanchardine and Queen Eglantine his wife*,' which he translated from the French, at the command of the Duchess of Somerset, mother of King Henry VII. The passage shows us that the old printers were dealers in foreign books as well as in their own productions: "Which book I had long to fore *sold* to my said lady, and knew well that the story of it was honest and joyful to all virtuous young noble gentlemen and women, for to read therein, as for their pastime. For under correction, in my judgement, histories of noble feats and valiant acts of arms and war, which have been achieved in old time of many noble princes, lords, and knights, are as well for to see and know their valiantness for to stand in the special grace and love of their ladies, and in like wise for gentle young ladies and demoiselles for to learn to be stedfast and constant in their part to them, that they once have promised and agreed to such as have put their lives oft in jeopardy for to please them to stand in grace, as it is to occupy the ken and study overmuch in books of contemplation." This is a defence of novel reading which we could scarcely have expected at so early a period of our literature.

In 1490 Caxton was approaching, according to all his biographers, to the great age of fourscore. About this period he appears to have consigned some relation to the grave, perhaps his wife. In the first year of the churchwardens' accounts of the parish of St. Margaret's, Westminster, from May

17, 1490, to June 3, 1492, there is the following entry :—

"Item; atte bureynge of Mawde Caxton for torches and tapers . . iiij^{s} ij^{d}"

On the 15th June, 1490, Caxton finished translating out of French into English, '*The Art and Craft to know well to die.*" The commencement of the book is an abrupt one: "When it is so, that, what a man maketh or doeth it is made to come to some end, and if the thing be good and well made it must needs come to good end; then by better and greater reason every man ought to intend in such wise to live in this world, in keeping the commandments of God, that he may come to a good end. And then out of this world, full of wretchedness and tribulations, he may go to heaven unto God and his saints unto joy perdurable."

That the end of Caxton was a good end we have little doubt. We have a testimony, which we shall presently see, that he *worked* to the end. He worked upon a book of pious instruction to the last day of his life. He was not slumbering when his call came. He was still labouring at the work for which he was born.

There is the following entry in the churchwardens' accounts of the parish of St. Margaret, in the second year of the period we have above mentioned:

"Item; atte bureyng of William Caxton for iiij torches . . . vj^{s} viij^{d}
Item; for the belle at same bureyng . . . . . vj^{d}"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHAPEL.

Wynkyn de Worde.

It was evensong time when, after a day of listlessness, the printers in the Almonry at Westminster prepared to close the doors of their workshop. This was a tolerably spacious room, with a carved oaken roof. The setting sun shone brightly into the chamber, and lighted up such furniture as no other

room in London could then exhibit. Between the columns which supported the roof stood two presses —ponderous machines. A *form* of types lay unread upon the *table* of one of these presses; the other was empty. There were *cases* ranged between the opposite columns; but there was no *copy* suspended ready for the compositors to proceed with in the morning. No heap of wet paper was piled upon the floor. The *balls*, removed from the presses, were rotting in a corner. The *ink-blocks* were dusty, and a thin film had formed over the oily pigment. He who had set these machines in motion, and filled the whole space with the activity of mind, was dead. His daily work was ended.

Three grave-looking men, decently clothed in black, were girding on their swords. Their caps were in their hands. The door opened, and the chief of the workmen came in. It was Wynkyn de Worde. With short speech, but with looks of deep significance, he called a *chapel*—the printer's parliament—a conclave as solemn and as omnipotent as the Saxons' Witenagemot. Wynkyn was the Father of the Chapel.

The four drew their high stools round the *imposing-stone*—those stools on which they had sat through many a day of quiet labour, steadily working to the distant end of some ponderous folio, without hurry or anxiety. Upon the stone lay two uncorrected folio pages—a portion of the 'Lives of the Fathers.' The *proof* was not returned. He that they had followed a few days before to his grave in Saint Margaret's church had lifted it once to his failing eyes,—and then they closed in night.

"Companions," said Wynkyn—(surely that word "*companions*" tells of the antiquity of printing, and

of the old love and fellowship that subsisted amongst its craft)—"companions, the good work will not stop."

"Wynkyn," said Richard Pynson, "who is to carry on the work?"

"I am ready," answered Wynkyn.

A faint expression of joy rose to the lips of these honest men, but it was damped by the remembrance of him they had lost.

"He died," said Wynkyn, "as he lived. The Lives of the Holy Fathers is finished, as far as the translator's labour. There is the rest of the copy. Read the words of the last page, which *I* have written:

"Thus endeth the most virtuous history of the devout and right-renowned lives of holy fathers living in desert, worthy of remembrance to all well-disposed persons, which hath been translated out of French into English by William Caxton, of Westminster, late dead, and finished at the last day of his life."*

The tears were in all their eyes; and "God rest his soul," was whispered around.

"Companion," said William Machlinia, "is not this a hazardous enterprise?"

"I have encouragement," replied Wynkyn;—"the Lady Margaret, his Highness' mother, gives me aid. So droop not, fear not. We will carry on the work briskly in our good master's house.—So fill the case."†

A shout almost mounted to the roof.

* These are the works with which this book closes.

† "Wynkyn de Worde this hath set in print,
In William Caxton's house:—so fill the case."
Stanzas to 'Scala Perfectionis,' 1494.

"But why should we fear? You, Machlinia, you, Lettou, and you, dear Richard Pynson, if you choose not to abide with your old companion here, there is work for you all in these good towns of Westminster, London, and Southwark. You have money; you know where to buy types. Printing *must* go forward."

"Always full of heart," said Pynson. "But you forget the statute of King Richard; we cannot say 'God rest his soul,' for our old master scarcely ever forgave him putting Lord Rivers to death. You forget the statute. We ought to know it, for we printed it. I can turn to the file in a moment. It is the Act touching the merchants of Italy, which forbids them selling their wares in this realm. Here it is: 'Provided always that this Act, or any part thereof, in nowise extend or be prejudicial of any let, hurt, or impediment to any artificer or merchant stranger, of what nation or country he be or shall be of, for bringing into this realm, or selling by retail or otherwise, of any manner of books written or imprinted.' Can we stand up against that, if we have more presses than the old press of the Abbey of Westminster?"

"Ay, truly, we can, good friend," briskly answered Wynkyn. "Have we any books in our stores? Could we ever print books fast enough? Are there not readers rising up on all sides? Do we depend upon the court? The mercers and the drapers, the grocers and the spicers of the city, crowd here for our books. The rude uplandish men even take our books; they that our good master rather vilipended. The tapsters and tavernеers have our books. The whole country-side cries out for our ballads and our Robin Hood

stories; and, to say the truth, the citizen's wife is as much taken with our King Arthurs and King Blanchardines as the most noble knight that Master Caxton ever desired to look upon in his green days of jousts in Burgundy. So fill the case."*

"But if foreigners bring books into England," said cautious William Machlinia, "there will be more books than readers."

"Books make readers," rejoined Wynkyn. "Do you remember how timidly even our bold master went on before he was safe in his sell? Do you forget how he asked this lord to take a copy, and that knight to give him something in fee; and how he bargained for his summer venison and his winter venison, as an encouragement in his ventures? But he found a larger market than he ever counted upon, and so shall we all. Go ye forth, my brave fellows. Stay not to work for me, if you can work better for yourselves. I fear no rivals."

"Why, Wynkyn," interposed Pynson, "you talk as if printing were as necessary as air; books as food, or clothing, or fire."

"And so they will be some day. What is to stop the want of books? Will one man have the command of books, and another desire them not? The time may come when every man shall require books."

"Perhaps," said Lettou, who had an eye to printing the Statutes, "the time may come when every man shall want to read an Act of Parliament, instead of the few lawyers who buy our Acts now."

"Hardly so," grunted Wynkyn.

* To "fill the case" is to put fresh types in the case, ready to arrange in new pages. The bibliographers scarcely understood the technical expression of honest Wynkyn.

"Or perchance you think that when our sovereign liege meets his Peers and Commons in Parliament, it were well to print a book some month or two after, to tell what the said Parliament said, as well as ordained?"

"Nay, nay, you run me hard," said Wynkyn.

"And if within a month, why not within a day? Why shouldn't we print the words as fast as they are spoken? We only want fairy fingers to pick up our types, and presses that Doctor Faustus and his devils may some day make, to tell all London to-morrow morning what is done this morning in the palace at Westminster."

"Prithee, be serious," ejaculated Wynkyn. "Why do you talk such gallymaufry? I was speaking of possible things; and I really think the day may come when one person in a thousand may read books and buy books, and we shall have a trade almost as good as that of armourers and fletchers."

"The Bible!" exclaimed Pynson; "O that we might print the Bible! I know of a copy of Wickliffe's Bible. That were indeed a book to print!"

"I have no doubt, Richard," replied Wynkyn, "that the happy time may come when a Bible shall be chained in every church, for every Christian man to look upon. You remember when our brother Hunte showed us the chained books in the Library at Oxford. So a century or two hence a Bible may be found in every parish. Twelve thousand parishes in England! We should want more paper in that good day, Master Richard."

"You had better fancy at once," said Lettou, "that every housekeeper will want a Bible!

Chained Bible.

Heaven save the mark, how some men's imaginations run away with them!"

"I cannot see," interposed Machlinia, "how we can venture upon more presses in London. Here are two. They have been worked well, since the day when they were shipped at Cologne. Here are five good founts of type, as much as a thousand weight—*Great Primer*, *Double Pica*, *Pica*—a large and a small face, and *Long Primer*. They have well worked; they are pretty nigh worn out.

TO the right noble/right excellent & vertuous prince George duc of Clarence Erle of warwyk and of Salysburye/ grete chamberlayn of Englond & leutenant of Irelond/ oldest broder of kynge Edward/ by the grace of god kynge of England and of fraūce / your moste humble seruant william Caxton amonge other of your seruantes sendeth vnto yow peas . helthe . Joye and victorye vpon your Enemyes /

What man would risk such an adventure, after our good old master? He was a favourite at court and in cloister. He was well patronized. Who is to patronize us?"

"The people, I tell you," exclaimed Wynkyn. "The babe in the cradle wants an Absey-book; the maid at her distaff wants a ballad; the priest wants his Pie; the young lover wants a romance of chivalry to read to his mistress; the lawyer wants his Statutes; the scholar wants his Virgil and Cicero. They will all want more the more they are supplied. How many in England have a book at all, think you? Let us make books cheaper by printing more of them at once. The churchwardens of St. Margaret's asked me six and eightpence yesterday for the volume that our master left the parish;* for not a copy can I get, if we should want to print again. Six-and-eightpence! That was exactly what he charged his customers for the volume. Print five hundred instead of two hundred, and we could sell it for three and fourpence."

"And ruin ourselves," said Machlinia. "Master Wynkyn, I shall fear to work for you if you go on so madly. What has turned your head?"

"Hearken!" said Wynkyn. "The day our good master was buried I had no stomach for my home. I could not eat. I could scarcely look on the sunshine. There was a chill at my heart. I took the key of our office, for you all were absent, and I came here in the deep twilight. I sat down in Master Caxton's chair. I sat till I fancied I saw

* There is a record in the parish books of St. Margaret's of the churchwardens selling for 6*s.* 8*d.* one of the books bequeathed to the church by William Caxton.

him moving about, as he was wont to move, in his furred gown, explaining this copy to one of us, and shaking his head at that proof to the other. I fell asleep. Then I dreamed a dream, a wild dream, but one that seems to have given me hope and courage. There I sat, in the old desk at the head of this room, straining my eyes at the old proofs. The room gradually expanded. The four *frames* went on multiplying, till they became innumerable. I saw *case* piled upon *case;* and *form* side by side with *form*. All was bustle, and yet quiet, in that room. Readers passed to and fro; there was a glare of many lights; all seemed employed in producing one folio, an enormous folio. In an instant the room had changed. I heard a noise as of many wheels. I saw sheets of paper covered with ink as quickly as I pick up this type. Sheet upon sheet, hundreds of sheets, thousands of sheets, came from forth the wheels—flowing in unstained, like corn from the hopper, and coming out printed, like flour to the sack. They flew abroad as if carried over the earth by the winds. Again the scene changed. In a cottage, an artificer's cottage, though it had many things in it which belong to princes' palaces, I saw a man lay down his basket of tools and take up one of these sheets. He read it; he laughed, he looked angry; tears rose to his eyes; and then he read aloud to his wife and children. I asked him to show me the sheet. It was wet; it contained as many types as our 'Mirror of the World.' But it bore the date of 1844. I looked around, and I saw shelves of books against that cottage-wall—large volumes and small volumes; and a boy opened one of the large volumes and showed me numberless block cuts; and the

artificer and his wife and his children gathered round me, all looking with glee towards their books, and the good man pointed to an inscription on his book-shelves, and I read these words,

MY LIBRARY A DUKEDOM.

I woke in haste; and, whether awake or dreaming I know not, my master stood beside me, and smilingly exclaimed, 'This is my fruit.' I have encouragement in this dream."

"Friend Wynkyn," said Pynson, "these are distempered visions. The press may go forward; I think it will go forward. But I am of the belief that the press will never work but for the great and the learned, to any purpose of profit to the printer. How can we ever hope to send our wares abroad? We may hawk our ballads and our merry jests through London; but the citizens are too busy to heed them, and the apprentices and serving-men too poor to buy them. To the country we cannot send them. Good lack, imagine the poor pedlar tramping with a pack of books to Bristol or Winchester! Before he could reach either city through our wild roads, he would have his throat cut or be starved. Master Wynkyn, we shall always have a narrow market till the king mends his highways, and that will never be."

"I am rather for trying, Master Wynkyn," said Lettou, "some good cutting jest against our friends in the Abbey, such as Dan Chaucer expounded touching the friars. That would sell in these precincts."

"Hush!" exclaimed Wynkyn: "the good fathers are our friends; and though some murmur against them, we might have worse masters."

"I wish they would let us print the Bible though," ejaculated Pynson.

"The time will come, and that right soon," exclaimed the hopeful Wynkyn.

"So be it," said they one and all.

"But what fair sheet of paper is that in your hand, good Wynkyn?" said Pynson.

"Master Richard, we are all moving onward. This is English-made paper. Is it not better than the brown thick paper we have had from over the sea? How *he* would have rejoiced in this accomplishment of John Tate's longing trials! Ay, Master Richard, this fair sheet was made in the new mill at Hertford; and well am I minded to use it in our Bartholomæus, which I shall straightly put in hand, when the Formschneider is ready I have thought anent it; I have resolved on it; and I have indited some rude verses touching the matter, simple person as I am:—

"For in this world to reckon every thing
Pleasure to man, there is none comparable
As is to read and understanding
In books of wisdom—they ben so delectable,
Which sound to virtue, and ben profitable;
And all that love such virtue ben full glad
Books to renew, and cause them to be made.

And also of your charity call to remembrance
The soul of William Caxton, first printer of this book
In Latin tongue at Cologne, himself to advance,
That every well disposed man may thereon look:
And John Tate the younger joy mote [may] he brook,
Which hath late in England made this paper thin,
That now in our English this book is printed in."

"Fairly rhymed, Wynkyn," said Lettou. "But John Tate the younger is a bold fellow. Of a

surety England can never support a Paper-mill of its own."

"Come, to business," said William of Mechlin.

What passed further at the first Chapel after the death of Caxton, such as the rate of wages which Wynkyn de Worde settled with his companions, and many other matters of a technical nature, is not recorded by the authorities that we have consulted in the compilation of this little book.

END OF THE BIOGRAPHY.

POSTSCRIPT.

PROGRESS OF THE PRESS IN ENGLAND.

THE greatest encouragement to the belief that the printing press will, slowly but surely, accomplish its work throughout the world, is derived from the history of what it has accomplished. Availing ourselves of some materials which we have formerly published, which we now present with large additions and careful corrections, we will endeavour to trace the progress of the press in our own country.

We may probably simplify this large subject, by dividing this progress into five periods, viz. :—

I. From the introduction of printing by Caxton to the accession of James I., 1603.

II. From 1603 to the Revolution, 1688.

III. From 1688 to the accession of George III., 1760.

IV. From 1760 to 1800.

V. From 1800 to 1843.

I. It is a remarkable characteristic of the first century of printing, not only in this country, but wherever a press was erected, that the highest and most constant efforts of the new art were addressed to the diffusion of the old stores of knowledge, rather than to an enlargement of the stores. The early professors of the art on the continent, in Germany, Italy, and France, were scholars who knew the importance of securing the world's inheritance of the knowledge of Greece and Rome from any further de-

struction, such as the scattered manuscripts of the ancient poets, orators, and historians had experienced, through neglect and ignorance. The press would put them fairly beyond the reach of any new waste. But after the first half-century of printing, when these manuscripts had been copied in type, and the public libraries and the princes and nobles of Europe had been supplied, a fresh want arose out of the satisfaction of the former want. Men of letters, who did not belong to the class of the rich, anxiously demanded copies of the ancient classics, and their demands were not made in vain. The Alduses, and Stephenses, and Plantins, did not hold it good to keep books dear for the advancement of letters; they anxiously desired to make them cheap, and they produced, therefore, not expensive folios only, as their predecessors had done, but neat and compactly printed octavos and duodecimos, for the general market. The instant that they did this, the foundations of literature were widened and deepened. They probably at first overrated the demand; indeed, we know they did so, and they suffered in consequence. But the time was sure to come when their labours would be rewarded; and, at any rate, they were at once placed beyond a servile dependence upon patrons. When they had their customers in every great city and university, they did not wait for the approving nod of a pope or a cardinal before they began to print.

A new demand very soon followed upon the first demand for cheap copies of the ancient classics, and this was even more completely the demand of the people. The doctrines of the Reformation had proclaimed the Bible as the best spiritual guide and teacher, and the people would have Bibles. The first English Bible was bought up and burnt; those who bought the Bibles contributed capital for making new Bibles, and those who burnt the Bibles advertised them. The first printers of the Bible were, however, cautious—they did not see the number of readers upon which they were to rely for a sale. In 1540 Grafton printed but 500 copies of his complete edition of the Scriptures; and yet, so great was

the rush to this new supply of the most important knowledge, that we have existing 326 editions of the English Bible, or parts of the Bible, printed between 1526 and 1600.

The early English printers did not attempt what the continental ones were doing for the ancient classics. Down to 1540 no Greek book had appeared from an English press. Oxford had only printed a part of Cicero's Epistles; Cambridge, no ancient writer whatever: only three or four old Roman writers had been reprinted, at that period, throughout England. But a great deal was done for public instruction by the course which our early printers took; for, as one of them says, "Divers famous clerks and learned men translated and made many noble works into our English tongue, whereby there was much more plenty and abundance of English used than there was in times past." The English nobility were, probably, for more than the first half-century of English printing, the great encouragers of our press: they required translations and abridgments of the classics—versions of French and Italian romances, old chronicles, and helps to devout exercises. Caxton and his successors abundantly supplied these wants, and the impulse to most of their exertions was given by the growing demand for literary amusement on the part of the great. Caxton, as we have seen, speaking of his 'Boke of Eneydos,' says, "This present book is not for a rude uplandish man to labour therein, nor read it." But a great change was working in Europe; the "rude uplandish man," if he gave promise of talent, was sent to school. The priests strove with the laity for the education of the people; and not only in Protestant, but in Catholic countries, were schools and universities everywhere founded. Here, again, was a new source of employment for the press—A, B, C's, or Absies, Primers, Catechisms, Grammars, Dictionaries, were multiplied in every direction. Books became, also, during this period, the tools of professional men. There were not many works of medicine, but a great many of law. The people, too, required instruction in the ordinances they were called upon to obey;

and thus the Statutes, mostly written in French, were translated and abridged by Rastell, an eminent law-printer. Even as early as the time of Caxton the press was employed to promulgate new laws.

After all this rush of the press of England towards the diffusion of existing knowledge, it began to assist in the production of new works, but in very different directions. Much of the poetry of the sixteenth century, which our press spread around, will last for ever: its controversial divinity has, in great part, perished. Each, however, was a natural supply, arising out of the demand of the people, as much as the chronicles, and romances, and grammars were a natural supply; and as the almanacs, and mysteries, and ballads, which the people also then had, were a natural supply. Taken altogether, the activity of the press of England, during the first period of our inquiry, was very remarkable.

The First Century of Printing in England, being more immediately connected with the life of Caxton, demands a somewhat minute, though necessarily brief notice in this place. We shall abstract from Dr. Dibdin's 'Typographical Antiquities' the names of the printers of this period, and give the dates of the years during which they printed, as well as the aggregate number of their works. The dates can only be collected from those books which bear dates; many are undated. Their works can only be known by what remain; hundreds must have perished.

William Caxton. [1471—1491.] To our first printer are assigned 64 works. We subjoin a list of them, furnished to the 'Penny Cyclopædia' by Sir Henry Ellis, Principal Librarian of the British Museum. In this list are included the French edition of the 'Recueil,' and the Oration of Russell, which we have considered doubtful.

1. 'Le Recueil des Histoires de Troyes, compose par raoulle le feure, chapellein de Monseigneur le duc Philippe de Bourgoingne en l'an de grace mil ccccIxiiii.' fol.

2. 'Propositio clarissimi Oratoris Magistri Johannis Russell, decretorum doctoris ac adtunc Ambassiatoris Edwardi

Regis Anglie et Francie ad illustr. Principem Karolum ducem Burgundie super susceptione ordinis garterij,' &c. 4to.

3. 'The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, composed and drawen out of diverce bookes of latyn into Frensshe by Raoul le ffeure in the yere 1464, and drawen out of frensshe in to Englisshe by William Caxton at the commaundement of Margarete Duchess of Bourgoyne, &c., whyche sayd translacion and werke was begonne in Brugis in 1468 and ended in the holy cyte of Colen 19 Sept. 1471,' fol.

4. 'The Game and Playe of the Chesse, translated out of the French, fynysshid the last day of Marche, 1474,' fol.

5. A second edition of the same, fol. (with wood-cuts).

6. 'A Boke of the hoole lyf of Jason,' (1475,) fol.

7. 'The Dictes and notable wyse Sayenges of the Phylosophers, transl. out of Frenshe by lord Antoyne Wydeville Erle Ryuyeres, empr. at Westmestre, 1477,' fol.

8. 'The Morale Prouerbes of Christyne (of Pisa),' fol., 1478.

9. 'The Book named Cordyale; or Memorare Novissima,' which treateth of 'The foure last Things,' begun 1478, finished 1480, fol.

10. 'The Chronicles of Englond,' Westm., 1480, fol.

11. 'Description of Britayne,' 1480, fol.

12. 'The Mirrour of the World or thymage of the same,' 1481, fol.

13. 'The Historye of Reynart the Foxe,' 1481, fol.

14. 'The Boke of Tullius de Senectute, with Tullius de Amicitia, and the Declamacyon, which laboureth to shew wherein honour sholde reste,' 1481, fol.

15. 'Godefroy of Boloyne; or, the laste Siege and Conqueste of Jherusalem,' Westm., 1481, fol.

16. 'The Polycronycon,' 1482, fol.

17. 'The Pylgremage of the Sowle;' transl. from the French, Westm., 1483, fol.

18. 'Liber Festivalis, or Directions for keeping Feasts all the Yere,' Westm., 1483, fol.

19. 'Quatuor Sermones' (without date), fol.

20. 'Confessio Amantis, that is to saye in Englisshe, 'The Confessyon of the Louer,' maad and compyled by Johan Gower, squyer,' Westm., 1483, fol.

21. 'The Golden Legende,' Westm., 1483, fol.

22. Another edition of 'The Legende,' sm. folio.

23. A third, 'fin. at Westmestre,' 20th May, 1483, fol.

24. 'The Booke callid Cathon' (Magnus), transl. fr. the French, 1483, fol.

25. 'Parvus Chato' (without printer's name or date, but in Caxton's type), folio.

26. 'The Knyght of the Toure,' transl. from the French; Westm. (1484), fol.

27. 'The Subtyl Historyes and Fables of Esope,' transl. from the French, 1484, fol.

28. 'The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry, or Knyghthode,' transl. from the French (assigned to 1484), fol.

29. 'The Book ryal; or the Book for a Kyng,' 1484, fol.

30. 'A Book of the noble Historyes of Kynge Arthur and of certen of his Knyghtes, which book was reduced in to Englysshe by syr Thomas Malory Knyght,' 1485, fol.

31. 'The Lyf of Charles the Grete Kyng of Fraunce and Emperour of Rome,' 1485, fol.

32. Another edition of the same, 1485, fol.

33. 'Thystorye of the noble ryght valyaunt and worthy Knyghte Parys and of the fayr Vyenne, the doulphyns doughter of Vyennoys,' transl. from the French, 1485, fol.

34. 'The Book of Good Maners,' 1486, fol.

35. 'The Doctrinal of Sapyence,' transl. from the French, 1489, fol.

36. 'The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyvalrye,' a translation from the first part of Vegetius de Re Militari, 1489, fol.

37. 'The Arte and Crafte to knowe well to dye,' transl. from the French, 1490, fol.

38. 'The Boke of Eneydos, compyled by Vyrgyle,' translated from the French, 1490, fol.

39. 'The Talis of Cauntyrburye' (no date), fol.

40. Another edition (without date or place), fol.

41. 'Infancia Salvatoris,' 4to.

42. 'The Boke of Consolacion of Philosophie, whiche that Boecius made for his comforte and consolacion' (no date nor place), fol.

43. A collection of Chaucer's and Lydgate's minor Poems, 4to.

44. 'The Book of Fame, made by Gefferey Chaucer,' fol.

45. 'Troylus and Creseyde,' fol.

46. 'A Book for Travellers,' fol.

47. 'The Lyf of St. Katherin of Senis,' fol.

48. 'Speculum Vite Christi; or the myrroure of the blessyd Lyf of Jhesu Criste,' fol.

49. 'Directorium Sacerdotum: sive Ordinale secundum Usum Sarum,' Westm., fol.

50. 'The Worke (or Court) of Sapience,' composed by John Lydgate, fol.

51. 'A Boke of divers Ghostly Maters,' Westm., fol.

52. 'The Curial made by Maystre Alain Charretier,' transl. from the French, fol.

53. 'The Lyf of our Lady, made by Dan John Lydgate, monke of Burye,' fol.

54. 'The Lyf of Saynt Wenefryde, reduced into Englisshe,' fol.

55. 'A Lytel Tretise, intytuled or named The Lucidarye,' 4to.

56. 'Reverendissimi viri dni. Gulielmi Lyndewodi, LLD. et epi Asaphensis constitutiones provinciales Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ,' 24mo.

57. 'The Historye of Kynge Blanchardyne and Queen Eglantyne his wyfe,' fol.

58. 'The Siege of the noble and invyncyble Cytee of Rhodes,' fol.

59. 'Statuta apud Westmonasterium edita, anno primo Regis Ricardi tercii,' fol.

60. 'Statutes' made in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Parliaments of Henry VII., folio. (The only fragment of this work known consists of two leaves.)

61. 'The Accidence,' (mentioned in one of the sale catalogues of the library of T. Martin of Palgrave.)

62. 'The Prouffytable Boke of mānes soule, called The Chastysing of Goddes Chyldern,' fol.

63. 'Horæ,' &c., 12mo., a fragment of eight pages, now at Oxford, in the library bequeathed to the Bodleian by the late F. Douce, Esq.

64. A fragment of a Ballad, preserved in a volume of scraps and ballads in the British Museum.

John Lettou and William Machlinia. These were chiefly law-printers, who, although their books are undated, were probably contemporaries with Caxton in his later years, and are thought to have worked for him. 13 works are assigned to them.

Wynkyn de Worde. [1493—1535.] From the press of the able assistant and friend of Caxton have been recorded the large number of 408 books, an amount of

industry which would appear very remarkable, did we not consider that his labours extended over forty-two years, so that upon an average he printed 10 books in each year. We subjoin one of his *marks*. He always, in these marks, associated the device of Caxton with his own; glorying, as he well might, in succeeding to the business of his honoured master, and continuing for so many years the good work which he had begun.

Richard Pynson. [1493—1531.] He is supposed, as well as Wynkyn de Worde, to have been an assistant of Caxton, calling him, in his preface to Chaucer, "my worshipful master." He was a native of Normandy. After he became a printer on his own account, he carried on a successful business, and had the honour to be the first "King's Printer," for which office he received a small salary. 212 works are assigned to him. We subjoin his mark in the next page.

Julian Notary. [1498—1520.] Of this printer little is known: 23 books are assigned to him.

William Faques. [1502—1508.] A Norman. Only 8 works are ascribed to him. Many of his smaller productions have doubtless perished.

Henry Pepwell. [1505—1539.] Only 16 works.

Peter Treveris. [1514—1531.] 26 works.

James Nicholson. [1536—1538.] 18 works.

John Redman. [1540—1542.] 3 works.

Christopher Truthall. [1556.] 2 works. This is supposed to have been a feigned name.

Thomas Godfray. [1522—1532.] 20 works.

John Skot. [1521—1537.] 13 works.

John Rastell. [1517—1533.] Rastell was distinguished for his learning: the friend, as well as the printer of Sir Thomas More. 31 works.

Robert Coplande [1521—1540] was the assistant of Wynkyn de Worde. He was a poet, as well as a printer. 11 works. We subjoin his mark in the next page.

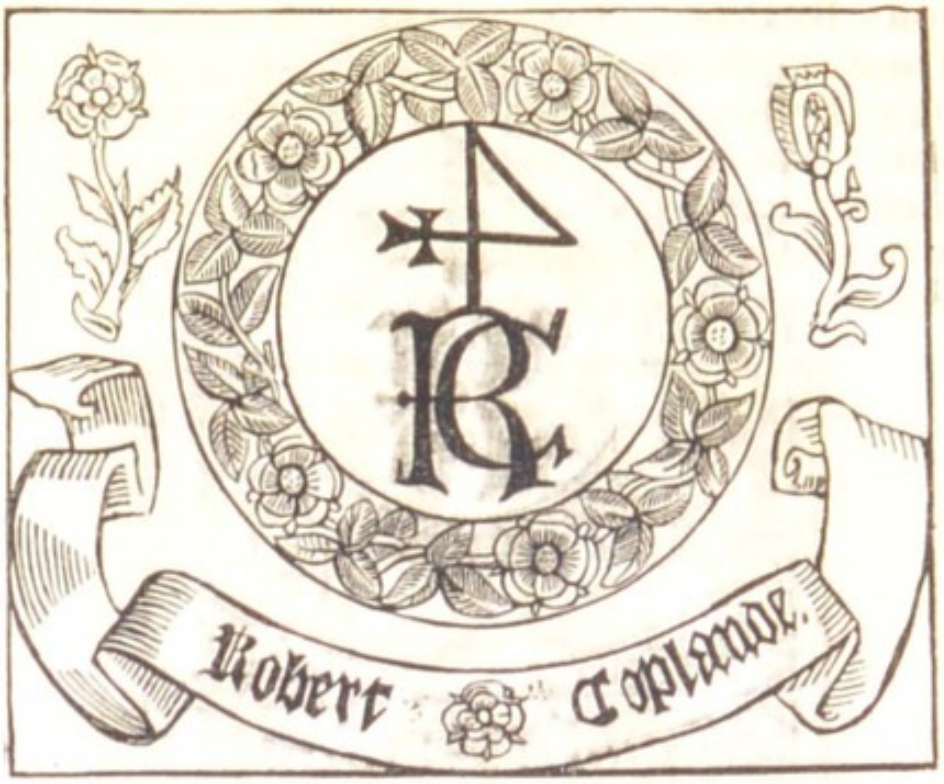
William Copland. [1548 — 1568.] A great printer of romances and ballads. 63 works.

Robert Wyer. [1527—1542.] 71 works. (See his mark in the next page.)

Robert Redman and Elizabeth Redman. [1523—1540.] 96 works.

Richard Bankes. [1525—1542.] 19 works.

Laurence Andrewe. [1527.] 3 works.


Robert Toplande.


ROBERT WYER

John Reynes. [1527—1544.] 5 works.

Thomas Berthelet [1530—1554] was the second King's Printer, and the first who was so created by patent. He was a learned, industrious, and skilful printer and publisher, and did more than any man of his time to advance the literature of his age, by undertaking works of real value. 218 works are ascribed to him.

Richard Fawkes. [1509—1530.] 8 works.

William Rastell. [1531—1534.] 16 works.

John Byddell. [1533—1544.] 33 works.

Thomas Gibson. [1535—1539.] 5 works.

John Gowghe or Gough. [1536—1543.] 18 works.

Richard Grafton [1537—1553] was an author of repute, and wrote much of Hall's Chronicle, which he printed. He wrote also a Chronicle under his own name; but he had the greater honour of being the first

publisher of the Bible in this country. 'The Byble,' which he brought out in 1537, in conjunction with his partner Whitchurch, but without a printed name, was printed at Zürich. The letter with which Grafton accompanied his present to Lord Cromwell of six copies of this Bible, contains this remarkable passage: "Your lordship, moving our Most Gracious Prince to the allowance and licensing of such a work, hath wrought such an act worthy of praise, as never was mentioned in any chronicle in this realm." In 1540 Grafton printed Cranmer's Bible, the first printed in England. To Grafton are assigned 90 works.

NOTE.—Having thus brought up our list of the successors of Caxton to the time when the press at Westminster, set up in 1474, produced the Bible of 1537, we may properly treat the subject of the progress of printing more generally, closing our list with a few of the more eminent printers to the end of the first century of the English press.

REYNOLD WOLFE [1542—1573], a skilful antiquary and good scholar, was the first who had a patent for being Printer to the King in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. 60 works.

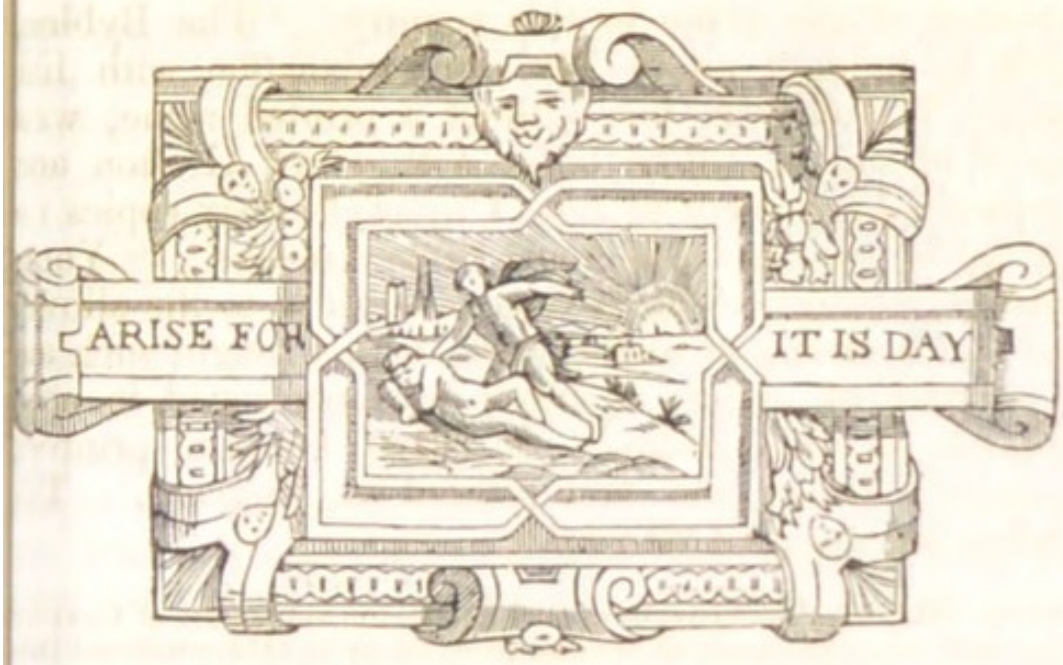
JOHN DAY [1546—1580] was the great printer of the Reformation. Upon his tomb-stone in the parish church of Bradly-Parva, Suffolk, is a long inscription in verse, commencing thus:—

> "Here lyes the Daye that darkness could not blind
> When Popish fogges had overcaste the sunne.
> * * * * *
> He set a Fox to wright how martyrs runne
> By death to life."

His mark is emblematic, we suppose, of the day-spring of the Reformed religion. 244 works proceeded from his press. (See his mark in the next page.)

RICHARD TOTTEL [1553—1594], the great law-printer of his time. 78 works.

From the time of Caxton's press to that of Thomas Hacket, with whose name Dr. Dibdin's work concludes, we have the enumeration of 2926 books. The 'Typo-



aphical Antiquities' of Ames and Herbert comes wn to a later period. They recorded the names of ree hundred and fifty printers in England and Scotd, or of foreign printers engaged in producing books England, that flourished between 1474 and 1600. he same authors have recorded the titles (we have unted with sufficient accuracy to make the assertion) nearly 10,000 distinct works printed amongst us ring the same period. Many of these works, hower, were only single sheets; but, on the other hand, ere are doubtless many not here registered. Dividing e total number of books printed during these 130 ars, we find that the average number of distinct works oduced each year was 75.

When Leo X. gave a privilege, in 1553, to the second ldus for printing 'Varro,' the Pope required that the ok should be sold cheap. Cheapness in books is a ative term: it must depend upon the probable number purchasers. If 'Varro' were likely to be extensively d, Aldus could afford to sell it cheaply: if he counted dly on a small impression, it must of necessity have en dear. The principle that chiefly determines price, the commerce of books, is the number of the purasers. It is sufficiently evident that, long after the vention of printing, and its introduction into England,

books were dear. In the 'Privy Purse Accounts of Elizabeth of York,' published by Sir H. Nicolas, we find that, in 1505, twenty pence were paid for a 'Primer' and a 'Psalter.' In 1505 twenty pence would have bought half a load of barley, and were equal to six days' work of a labourer. In 1516 'Fitzherbert's Abridgment,' a large folio law-book, then first published, was sold for forty shillings. At that time forty shillings would have bought three fat oxen. Books gradually became cheaper as the printers ventured to rely upon a larger number of purchasers. The exclusive privileges that were given to individuals for printing all sorts of books, during the reigns of Henry VIII., Mary, and Elizabeth,—although they were in accordance with the spirit of monopoly which characterized that age, and were often granted to prevent the spread of books,—offer a proof that the market was not large enough to enable the producers to incur the risk of competition. One with another, 200 copies may be estimated to have been printed of each book during the period we have been noticing; we think that proportion would have been quite adequate to the supply of the limited number of readers,—to many of whom the power of reading was a novelty unsanctioned by the practice of their forefathers.

And here we may pause to consider what mighty results had been produced in a hundred and fifty years, by the discovery of the art of printing from moveable types by John Guttenberg, at Mentz. During that period the Holy Scriptures had become the best possession of the people, and the Reformation had been accomplished in many countries; the great productions of classical antiquity had been made accessible to the humblest scholar—and the rudiments of knowledge had even partially descended to the mechanic and the peasant. The keys of learning were within the reach of all. The basso-relievos on the pedestal of Guttenberg's statue exhibit a part of the process by which this change was accomplished. The printer is examining a matrix for casting types, and he is comparing a printed sheet with a manuscript. If he could have foreseen the entire con-

sequences of the apparently simple mechanical arrangements which he was perfecting, it is just possible that Guttenberg might have become dizzy with the prospect, and, negligent of some minute point upon which much depended, have left an incomplete discovery to another generation, instead of the perfect art which printing so soon became. It is to him and his ingenious associates that we must ascribe the blessing that England, so soon after the first invention of printing, had her Caxton, and thas Caxton raised up by his example and by his success, at labourers to follow in the same field, so many zealous and able men, who for the most part conducted their business of printing and publishing (and the trades were then united) in a high and liberal spirit; feeling that their work was to be set about upon no mercenary principle,—but that, in working for profit, as they were bound to do, they were also working for the best advantage of their fellow-subjects, high and low.

II. The second period of the English press, from the accession of James I. to the Revolution, is, perhaps, all circumstances considered, the least favourable to the diffusion of knowledge of any period in our whole literary history. In the reign of the first Stuart came an inundation of pedantry, which surrounded the court with verbal criticism and solemn quibble;—the people, indeed, had their glorious dramatists, but Bacon was looked upon as an impracticable dreamer. Controversy, too, began to be rife in England; and the spirit at last exploded in such a torrent of civil and ecclesiastical violence in the reign of James's successor, as left the many little leisure for the cultivation of their understandings. The press was absorbed by the productions of this furious spirit. There is, in the British Museum, a collection of 2000 volumes of Tracts issued between the years 1640 and 1660, the whole number of which several publications amounts to the enormous quantity of 30,000. This most curious collection was made by a bookseller of the name of Tomlinson, in the times when the tracts were printed;—was bargained for, but not bought, by Charles II.;—and was eventually bought by George III., and

presented by him to the British Museum. The number of impressions of new books unconnected with controversial subjects, printed during these stormy days, must have been very small.

At the Restoration our national literature, with a very few grand exceptions, put on the lowest garb in which literature can be arrayed; it was the toy of the king and his courtezans. Charles II. and his followers brought hither the spirit of the literary parasites of Louis XIV., with whom the great were everything, the people nothing. Small, indeed, must have been the consumption of books amongst those who

"Hated not learning worse than asp or toad,"—

looking upon men of letters as the old monarchs looked upon their jesters. Under such a state of things, Milton received fifteen pounds for the copy of 'Paradise Lost;' and an Act of Parliament was passed that only twenty printers should practise their art in the kingdom. We see by a petition to Parliament in 1666, that there were only 140 "working printers" in London. They were quite enough to produce the gimcracks of literature for the court.* Burton, who lived near those days, has drawn a fearful picture of the abject condition of men of learning, before they had a public to rely upon:—"Rhetoric only serves them to curse their bad fortunes; and many of them, for want of means, are driven to hard shifts. From grasshoppers they turn humble-bees and wasps, plain parasites, and make the Muses mules, to satisfy their hunger-starved paunches, and get a meal's meat." Nearly all that is glorious and enduring in our literature has been built upon the demands of the people. Our dramatists were essentially the ministers of taste, ay, and of knowledge, to the people; and so were our fine old divines. Who have perished?—the verbal pedants (we forget even their names), who were doing

* "La letteratura era una chingaglieria per la corte."—See an able dissertation, by Count Pecchio, on the application of the general laws of production to literary and scientific productions,—*Lugano*, 1832.

homage to the first James as the Solomon of his age, or the Beaumonts and Jonsons, who were living upon the breath of the mob's applause at the Globe Theatre? Who are banished to utter oblivion?—the Sedleys and Rochesters, who were exciting the gross passions of the second Charles; or the Taylors and Souths, who were pouring forth their fervid eloquence and their poignant wit upon the vulgar many?

At the fire of London, in 1666, the booksellers dwelling about St. Paul's lost an immense stock of books in quires, amounting, according to Evelyn, to 200,000*l.*, which they were accustomed to stow in the vaults of the metropolitan cathedral, and of other neighbouring churches. At that time the people were beginning to read again, and to think;—and as new capital naturally rushed in to replace the consumed stock of books, there was considerable activity once more in printing. The laws regulating the number of printers soon after fell into disuse, as they had long fallen into contempt. We have before us a catalogue (the first compiled in this country) of 'all the books printed in England since the dreadful fire, 1666, to the end of Trinity Term, 1680,' which catalogue is continued to 1685, year by year. A great many—we may fairly say one-half—of these books, are single sermons and tracts. The whole number of books printed during the fourteen years from 1666 to 1680, we ascertain, by counting, was 3550, of which 947 were divinity, 420 law, and 153 physic,—so that two-fifths of the whole were professional books; 397 were school-books, and 253 on subjects of geography and navigation, including maps. Taking the average of these 14 years, the total number of works produced yearly was 253; but deducting the reprints, pamphlets, single sermons, and maps, we may fairly assume that the yearly average of new books was much under 100. Of the number of copies constituting an edition we have no record; we apprehend it must have been small, for the price of a book, as far as we can ascertain it, was considerable. Roger North, speaking of those booksellers of his day who had the knack of getting up

volumes on temporary matters, says, "They crack their brains to find out selling subjects, and keep hirelings in garrets, on hard meat, to write and correct by the grate; so puff up an *octavo* to a sufficient thickness, and there is *six shillings* current for an hour and a half's reading." In a catalogue, with prices, printed twenty-two years after the one we have just noticed, we find that the ordinary cost of an octavo was *five shillings*.

III. We have arrived at the third stage of our rapid sketch—from the Revolution to the accession of George III.

This period will be ever memorable in our literary history for the creation, in great part, of periodical literature. Till newspapers, and magazines, and reviews, and cyclopædias were established, the people, even the middle classes, could not fairly be said to have possessed themselves of the keys of knowledge.

The publication of *intelligence* began during the wars of Charles I. and his Parliament. But the 'Mercuries' of those days were little more than occasional pamphlets. Burton speaks of a "Pamphlet of News." Before the Revolution there were several London papers, regulated, however, by privileges and surveyors of the press. Soon after the beginning of the eighteenth century (1709) London had one daily paper, fifteen three times a week, and one twice a week: this was before a stamp-duty was imposed on papers. After the stamp-duty in 1724 there were three daily papers, six weekly, and ten three times a week. Provincial newspapers had been established in several places at this period. The reign of Anne also saw a new and most successful species of literature—the issue of a periodical paper, which should contain something less exciting and more conducive to a healthy state of the public intellect than the mere rumours of foreign wars or domestic scandals.

The creation of another new species of literature in this period is to be ascribed to the strong good sense of a printer, who saw that, even with their daily and weekly papers, the middle classes were ill-supplied with miscellaneous information. Cave, in this spirit, pro-

jected the 'Gentleman's Magazine.' He offered a share in it to half the booksellers in London; they one and all rejected the project as absurd. They had not learnt, even by the success of the 'Essayists,' to rely upon a large number of purchasers. In 1731, Cave, at his own

Edward Cave.

risk, produced the first Magazine printed in England—the 'Gentleman's.' Its success was so great, that in the following year the booksellers, who could not understand Cave's project till they knew its value by experiment, set up a rival magazine, 'The London.' In 1749 the first Review, 'The Monthly,' was started; and in a few years was followed by 'The Critical.' It is not our purpose to trace the history of our monthly reviews and magazines. They did an immense deal for literature and

the literary character. They took the patronage of men of letters out of the hands of the great and the fashionable, and confided it to the people. They might not create poets and philosophers, but they prevented kings and lords pretending to create them.

> 'Un Auguste peut aisément faire un Virgile'
> ('An Augustus may easily make a Virgil'),

looked like a truism in the court of Louis XIV.; it became a bad joke when, relying upon the humble printer of the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' Johnson dared to describe "the patron and the gaol" as the common curses of the scholar. Johnson learnt in the school of the people to depend upon the people, through their interpreters the booksellers, as the only patrons whose resources would last beyond the hour of sunshine. He was in the transition state from the patronage of the few to the patronage of the many, and he therefore endured great privations. But he clearly saw the time was coming, when the literary man would find, in the extension of the demand for knowledge, the broadest and surest foundation for his own reward as a labourer in the vineyard of knowledge.

The periodical literature of the era we are speaking of swallowed up a vast number of the pamphlets through which writers used to communicate their thoughts to the world. Disputants in a little circle found in the magazines a vent for their opinions, theological, moral, political, and antiquarian. This circumstance, of course, greatly reduced the number of merely temporary books; and it had thus the advantage of imparting to our literature a more solid character. Making a proportionate deduction for the pamphlets inserted in the catalogues we have already referred to, it appears to us, however, that the great influx of periodical literature, although constituting a most important branch of literary commerce, had in some degree the effect of narrowing the publication of new books; and perhaps wholesomely so. That the growth of periodical literature would produce the incontestible effect of general knowledge, that of

causing the appetite to grow by what it feeds upon, we cannot doubt; but the new body of readers that periodical literature had won from the *middle* classes might rather desire the old solid dishes than crave after hastily-produced novelties. Be this as it may, the number of *new* books published in this period was not large. We have before us a 'Complete Catalogue of Modern Books published from the beginning of the century to 1756;'—from which "all pamphlets and other tracts" are excluded. We find that in these fifty-seven years 5280 new works appeared, which exhibits only an average of ninety-three new works each year.

We are inclined to think that the numbers of an edition printed had been increased; for, however strange it may appear, the general prices of the works in this catalogue are as low, if not lower, than in a priced catalogue we also have of books printed in the years 1702 and 1703. A quarto published in the first half of the last century seems to have averaged from 10*s.* to 12*s.* per volume; an octavo, from 5*s.* to 6*s.*; and a duodecimo from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 3*s.* In the earlier catalogue we have mentioned, pretty much the same prices exist: and yet an excise had been laid upon paper; the prices of authorship, even for the humblest labours, were raised at least two hundred per cent. above the prices of the time of John Dunton, a bookseller, who says "his great talent lies at *collection*, and he will do it for you at six shillings a sheet;" and, more than all, the cost of the necessaries of life was much advanced. We can only account for this upon the principle, that the publishers of the first half of the eighteenth century knew their trade, and, printing larger numbers, adapted their prices to the extension of the market. They also, in many cases, lessened their risk by publishing by subscription—a practice now almost disreputable from the change of fashion, but possessing great advantages for the production of costly books. This was in many respects the golden age for publishers, when large and certain fortunes were made,—when there was not a great deal of

a gambling spirit in the business. Perhaps much of this proceeded from the publishers aiming less to produce novelty than excellence—selling *large impressions of few books*, and not distracting the public with their noisy competition in the manufacture of new wares for the market of the hour. Publishers thus grew into higher influence in society. They had long ceased to carry their books to Bristol or Stourbridge fairs, or to hawk them about the country in auctions for the unwary. The trade of books had gone into regular commercial channels.

IV. The period from the accession of George III. to the close of the eighteenth century, is marked by the rapid increase of the demand for popular literature, rather than by any prominent features of originality in literary production. Periodical literature spread on every side; newspapers, magazines, reviews, were multiplied; and the old system of selling books by hawkers was extended to the rural districts and small provincial towns. Of the *number-books* thus produced, the quality was indifferent, with a few exceptions; and the cost of these works was considerable. The principle, however, was then first developed, of extending the market by coming into it at regular intervals with fractions of a book, so that the humblest customer might lay by each week in a savings-bank of knowledge. This was an important step, which has produced great effects, but which is even now capable of a much more universal application than it has ever yet received. Smollett's 'History of England' was one of the most successful number-books; it sold to the extent of 20,000 copies.

We may exhibit the rapid growth of the publication of *new* books, by examining the catalogues of the latter part of the eighteenth century, passing over the earlier years of the reign of George III. In the 'Modern Catalogue of Books,' from 1792 to the end of 1802, eleven years, we find that 4096 *new* works were published, exclusive of reprints not altered in price, and also exclusive of pamphlets: deducting one-fifth for

reprints, we have an average of 372 new books per year. This is a prodigious stride beyond the average of 93 per year of the previous period. But we are not sure that our literature was in a more healthy condition. From some cause or other, the selling price of books had increased, in most cases 50 per cent., in others 100 per cent. The 2*s.* 6*d.* duodecimo had become 4*s.*; the 6*s.* octavo, 10*s.* 6*d.*; and the 12*s.* quarto, 1*l.* 1*s.* It would appear from this that the exclusive market was principally sought for new books; that the publishers of novelties did not rely upon the increasing number of readers; and that the periodical works constituted the principal supply of the many. The aggregate increase of the commerce in books must, however, have become enormous, when compared with the previous fifty years; and the effect was highly beneficial to the literary character. The age of patronage was gone.

V. Of the last period—the most remarkable for the great extension of the commerce in books—we shall present the accounts of the first twenty-seven years collectively, and of the last sixteen years in detail.

The number of new publications issued from 1800 to 1827, including reprints altered in size and price, but excluding pamphlets, was, according to the London catalogue, 19,860. Deducting one-fifth for the reprints, we have 15,888 new books in twenty-seven years; showing an average of 588 new books per year, being an increase of 216 per year over the last eleven years of the previous century. Books, however, were still rising in price. The 4*s.* duodecimo of the former period became 6*s.*, or was converted into a small 8vo. at 10*s.* 6*d.*; the 10*s.* 6*d.* octavo became 12*s.* or 14*s.*, and the guinea quarto very commonly two guineas. The demand for new books, even at the very high cost of those days, was principally maintained by Reading Societies and Circulating Libraries. When these new modes of diffusing knowledge were first established, it was predicted that they would destroy the trade of publishing. But the Reading Societies and the Circulating Libraries, by

enabling many to read new books at a small expense, created a much larger market than the desires of individual purchasers for ephemeral works could have formed; and a very large class of books were expressly produced for this market.

But a much larger class of book-buyers had sprung up, principally out of the middle ranks. For these a new species of literature had to be produced,—that of books conveying sterling information in a popular form, and published at a very cheap rate. In the year 1827 'Constable's Miscellany' led the way in this novel attempt; the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge commenced its operations; and several publishers of eminence soon directed their capital into the same channels. Subsequently editions of our great writers have been multiplied at very reasonable prices; and many a tradesman's and mechanic's house now contains a well-selected stock of books, which, through an annual expenditure of 2*l.* or 3*l.*, has brought the means of intellectual improvement, and all the tranquil enjoyment that attends the practice of family reading, home to his own fireside.

The increasing desire for knowledge amongst the masses of the people was, however, not yet supplied. In 1832 the 'Penny Magazine' and 'Chambers's Journal' commenced to be published; and subsequently the 'Saturday Magazine.' The 'Penny Sheet' of the reign of Queen Anne was revived in the reign of William IV., with a much wider range of usefulness. The wonderful success of this class of publications led a few persons, who did not know the great truth that the more people read the more they will read, to proclaim that the trade in books would be destroyed. They asserted also that the rewards of authorship would be destroyed, necessarily, at the same time. 'The Penny Cyclopædia' was deemed the most daring attempt at this double destruction. That work has returned about 150,000*l.* to the commerce of literature, and 40,000*l.* have been distributed amongst the authors and artists engaged in its

production, of which sum more than three-fourths have been laboriously earned by the unwearied diligence of its original writers.

There is a mode, however, of testing whether cheap literature has destroyed the publication of *new books*, without including reprints and pamphlets. We take the four years from 1829 to 1832, as computed by ourselves, from the London Catalogues; and the four years from 1839 to 1842, as computed by Mr. M'Culloch in the last edition of his 'Commercial Dictionary:'—

NEW WORKS, 1829 to 1832.

Years.	Vols.	Value at Publication price.
1829	1413	£879 1*s.* 0*d.*
1830	1592	873 5 3
1831	1619	959 9 3
1832	1525	807 19 6

NEW WORKS, 1839 to 1842.

Years.	Vols.	Value at Publication price.
1839	2302	£966 11*s.* 2*d.*
1840	2091	943 3 5
1841	2011	902 5 9
1842	2193	968 2 6

In the four years ending 1832 were published, of new books, 6149 volumes; in the four years ending 1842 were published 8597 volumes. The cost of a single copy of the 6149 volumes was 3499*l.*; of the 8597 volumes, 3780*l.* The average price per volume in the first period was 11*s.* 5*d.*; in the second period, 8*s.* 9½*d.*

Mr. M'Culloch has also given the following table of reprints, from 1839 to 1842:—

REPRINTS AND NEW EDITIONS.

No. of Vols.	Value at Publication price. £	*s.*	*d.*
773	296	7	8
821	327	16	10
741	314	12	7
684	295	9	6

The same careful writer thus sums up the yearly amount of the commerce in *new books*:—

"From inquiries we have made with much care and labour, we find that, at an average of the four years ending with 1842, 2149 volumes of new works, and

755 volumes of new editions and reprints (exclusive of pamphlets and periodical publications), were annually published in Great Britain; and we have further ascertained that the publication price of the former was 8*s.* 9½*d.*, and of the latter 8*s.* 2*d.* a volume. Hence, if we suppose the average impression of each work to have been 750 copies, it will be seen that the total value of the new works annually produced, if they were sold at their publication price, would be 708,498*l.* 8*s.* 9*d.*, and that of the new editions and reprints, 231,218*l.* 15*s.* We believe, however, that if we estimate the price at which the entire impressions of both descriptions of works actually sells at 4*s.* a volume, we shall not be far from the mark; and if so, the real value of the books annually produced will be 435,600*l.* a year."

But the most remarkable characteristic of the press of this country is its *periodical* literature. Looking back to the first half-century of printing, we see Guttenberg and his successors slowly producing a few costly books, for which they had great difficulty in finding purchasers. We think that it might be asserted, without exaggeration, that the periodical works issued in Great Britain during one year comprise more sheets than all the books printed in Europe from the period of Guttenberg's discovery to the year 1500.

The number of *weekly periodical works* (not newspapers) issued in London on Saturday, May 4, 1844, was about sixty. Of these the weekly sale of 'Chambers's Journal,' the 'Penny Magazine,' the 'Saturday Magazine,' the 'Mirror,' the 'Mechanics' Magazine,' the 'Athenæum,' the 'Literary Gazette,' the 'Lancet,' the 'Church of England Magazine,' 'Punch,' and of several others of the more important, amounts to little less than 300,000 copies, or about fifteen millions annually. The greater number of these are devoted to the supply of persons who have only a very small sum to expend weekly upon their home reading. They are not adapted to the principle of association in book-clubs. They are taken home, read, laid aside, perhaps destroyed, and sometimes, we

trust, preserved and bound. With few exceptions, they are innocuous. The love of excitement is perhaps too much cultivated, but, on the whole, we have no hesitation in affirming that they have superseded much that was positively injurious in the cheaper literature. The author of this little volume takes this occasion to repeat what he said in addressing a literary society in his native place ten years ago:—"There are those who have loudly proclaimed that all this flood of cheap literature will overwhelm and destroy the land, and who, pointing to the few frivolous or wicked publications of this class, maintain that all are equally powerful for evil and inefficient for good. To such I answer, fearlessly and advisedly, that the proportion of what is trashy and evil in the publications for the poor does not at all approach in quantity to what is trashy and evil in the publications for the rich. It is the unavoidable misfortune of all great instruments of power (and that of printing is one of the greatest) that they may be abused as well as used. Fortunately in the case of the printing-press the more its wholesome employment is extended, the more will its detrimental exercise be restricted. The steady advance of every portion of society in the attainment of a higher tone of morals and of taste will very soon banish from our popular literature whatever is gross and revolting. Let us endeavour more and more to raise the standard of enjoyment amongst all classes,—and if we raise the standard of enjoyment we raise the standard of principle,—and in due time the corruptions of false knowledge will be as completely thrust out from the literature of the cottage, as the gross licentiousness, such as has consigned the writers of the time of Charles the Second to an infamy which no wit can redeem, is now banished from the literature of the court."

Of the weekly publications, independent of the sale of many of them in monthly parts, we may fairly estimate that the annual Returns are little short of 100,000*l*.

The *monthly* issue of periodical literature from London is unequalled by any similar commercial operation in

Europe. 227 monthly periodical works were sent out on the last day of May, 1844, to every corner of the United Kingdom, from Paternoster Row. There are also 38 periodical works published quarterly: making a total of 265.

A bookseller, who has been many years conversant with the industry of the great literary hive of London on Magazine-day, has favoured us with the following computations, which we have every reason to believe perfectly accurate:—

The periodical works sold on the last day of the month amount to 500,000 copies.

The amount of cash expended in the purchase of these 500,000 copies is 25,000*l.*

The parcels dispatched into the country, of which very few remain over the day, are 2000.

The annual returns of periodical works, according to our estimate, amount to 300,000*l.* Mr. M'Culloch estimates them at 264,000*l.*

The number of newspapers published in the United Kingdom, in the year 1843, the returns of which can be obtained with the greatest accuracy through the Stamp Office, was 447. The stamps consumed by them in that year were 60,592,001. Their proportions are as follows:—

1843.

79	London newspapers . . .	31,692,092
212	English provincial . . .	17,058,056
8	Welsh	339,500
69	Scotch	5,027,589
79	Irish	6,474,764
447		60,592,001

The average price of these papers is, as near as may be, fivepence; so that the sum annually expended in newspapers is about 1,250,000*l.* The quantity of paper required for the annual supply of these newspapers is 121,184 reams, some of which paper is of an enormous

size. In a petition to the pope in 1471, from Sweynheim and Pannartz, printers at Rome, they bitterly complain of the want of demand for their books, their stock amounting to 12,000 volumes; and they say, "You will admire how and where we could procure a sufficient quantity of paper, or even rags, for such a number of volumes." About 1200 reams of paper would have produced all the poor printers' stock. Such are the changes of four centuries.

We recapitulate these estimated annual returns of the commerce of the press:—

New books and reprints	£435,600
Weekly publications, not newspapers .	100,000
Monthly publications	300,000
Newspapers	1,250,000
	£2,085,600

The literary returns of the United Kingdom, in 1743, were unquestionably little more than 100,000*l.* per annum. What has multiplied them twenty-fold? Is it the contraction or the widening of the market—the exclusion or the diffusion of knowledge? The whole course of our literature has been that of a gradual and certain spread from the few to the many—from a luxury to a necessary—as much so as the spread of the cotton or the silk trade. Henry VIII. paid 12*s.* a yard for a silk gown for Anne Boleyn—a sum equal to five guineas a yard of our day. Upon whom do the silk-mercers now rely—upon the few Anne Boleyns, or the thousands who can buy a silk gown at half-a-crown a yard? The PRINTING-MACHINE has done for the commerce of literature what the mule and the Jacquard loom have done for the commerce of silk. It has made literature accessible to all. It has given *us* the power of producing A WEEKLY VOLUME FOR ONE SHILLING, FOR ALL READERS. We say emphatically, *for* ALL *Readers*. The lowly and the exalted have long each stood upon a common ground—that of the Faith which knows no

distinctions of persons. We venture to believe that they should meet in the same manner upon the common ground of knowledge. The more this platform of opinion is extended, the more it will be acknowledged that distinctions of rank and of property must prevail in the world; that it would be impossible to remove them, even for a single day; and that such a removal would be profitless and deeply injurious, even if it were possible. But while we feel that sound knowledge will tend to keep up the real importance of these distinctions, we think it will also lessen the artificial pretensions which are engrafted upon them. A great deal of the unhappiness of the world proceeds from our not forming a correct estimate of our own position, and of the position of our neighbours; and thus, one man is too much inclined to envy another for some possession which he wants himself, and to look down upon another because he himself possesses what another wants. These jealousies and heartburnings will be considerably removed as we all become more instructed. The great bulk of the people in the most prosperous state of society must labour. Labour is the condition by which we live. It is the scaffolding and the building of all private and public wealth. Without its constant exercise there would be no sustenance for the day, and no accumulation for the sustenance of the morrow. In the eye of reason, the humblest workman who puts a spade into the ground, and the highest functionary who watches over the just appropriation of the produce of his labour, are equally promoting, each in their several stations, the public happiness and prosperity. Surely there will be a prodigious increase of social comfort when men universally come to feel the real dignity of all useful employments, and when it is understood that a toilsome occupation is not necessarily connected with a servile and ignorant mind. There will be great differences of talent, and of all other power, in the pursuit of our various employments; but the more the bulk of the people advance in knowledge, the more will *he* be respected who does his

duty, in whatever station his lot may be cast. "The proud man's contumely" is, no doubt, one of the many causes that make youth and inexperience impatient under a course of mechanical drudgery. The influence of such narrow assumptions of superiority will greatly abate when the proud man learns that his supposed inferior is treading hard upon his heels in all that constitutes the real distinctions between the brethren of the family of mankind—our greater or less advances in knowledge and virtue. The object of the general diffusion of knowledge is not to render men discontented with their lot—to make the peasant yearn to become an artisan, or the artisan dream of the honours and riches of a profession—but to give the means of content to those who, for the most part, must necessarily remain in that station which requires great self-denial and great endurance; but which is capable of becoming not only a condition of comfort, but of enjoyment, through the exercise of these very virtues, in connexion with a desire for that improvement of the understanding which, to a large extent, is independent of rank and riches. It is a most fortunate circumstance, and one which seems especially ordained by Him who wills the happiness of his creatures, that the highest, and the purest, and the most lasting sources of enjoyment are the most accessible to all. The great distinction that has hitherto prevailed in the world is this,—that those who have the command of riches and of leisure have alone been able, in any considerable degree, to cultivate the tastes that open these common sources of enjoyment. The first desire of every man is, no doubt, to secure a sufficiency for the supply of the physical necessities of our nature; but in the equal dispensations of Providence it is not any especial portion of the state even of the humblest among us who labours with his hands to earn his daily bread, that his mind should be shut out from the gratifications which belong to the exercise of our observing and reflecting faculties. In this exercise all men may be, to a certain extent, equal. To advance this equality—a safe

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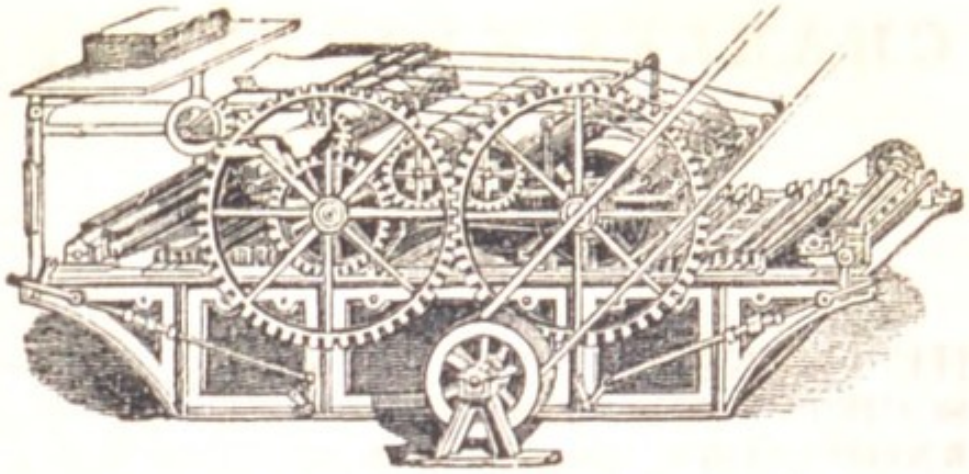

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