

Caxton's advertisement : photolithograph of the copy preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, being one of only two copies known / issued, with an introductory note by Edward W.B. Nicholson.

Contributors

Caxton, William, approximately 1422-1491 or 1492.
Nicholson, Edward Williams Byron, 1849-1912.

Publication/Creation

London : Bernard Quaritch, 1892.

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Carton's Advertisement



Photolithograph of the copy preserved
in the Bodleian library, Oxford,
being one of the only two copies known



Issued, with an introductory note
by Edward W. B. Nicholson, M.A.,
Bodley's librarian

London

Bernard Quaritch

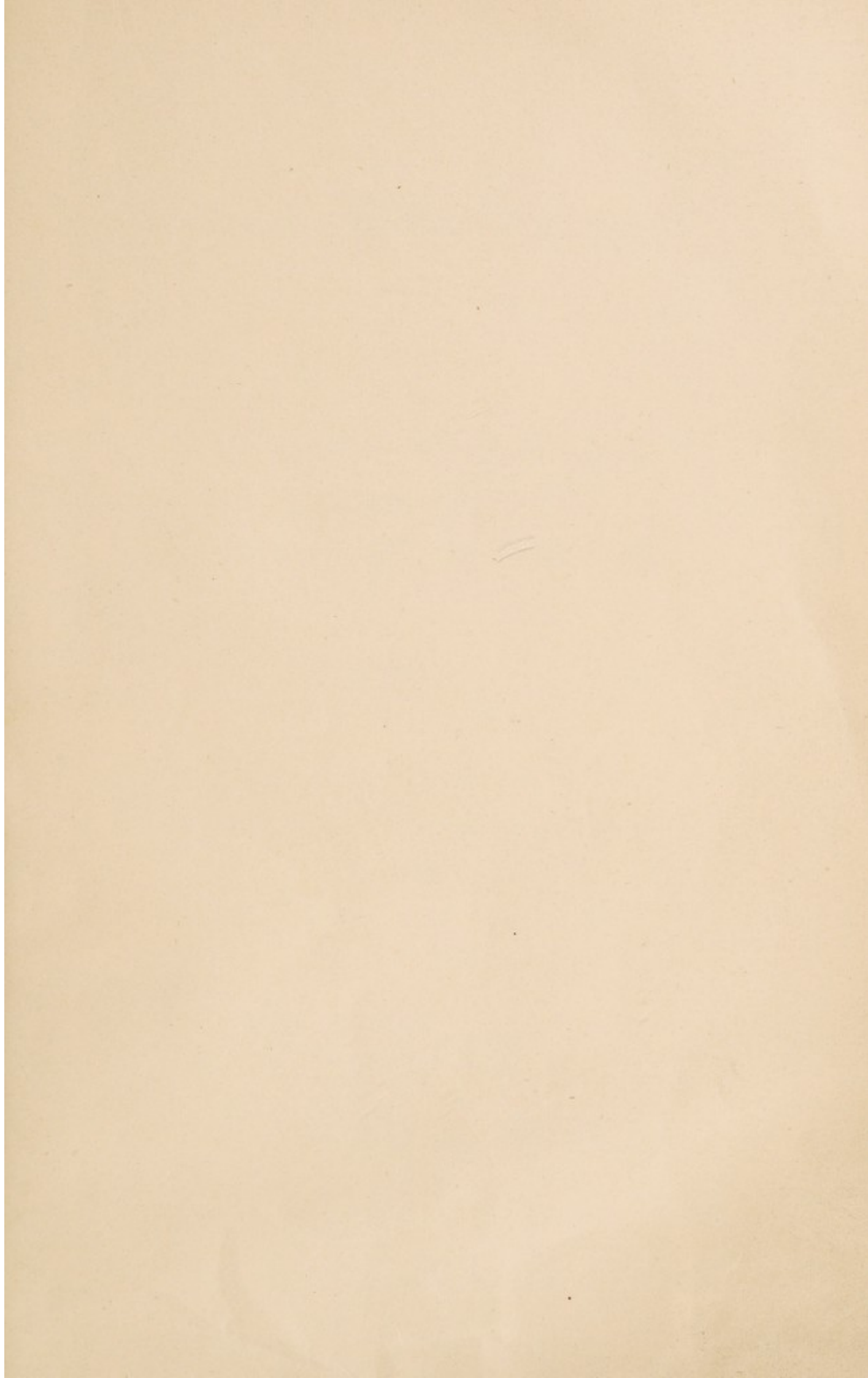
15 Piccadilly, W.


Oxford: Clarendon Press Depository, 116 High Street

Price Sixpence



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Introductory note



HIS advertisement has, as anyone can see at a glance, no printer's name, date, or place, but is in Caxton's no. 3 type. That type was sometimes used by Caxton for headlines, &c., but otherwise only three other productions of his press are known to have been printed in it: all are liturgical, and are supposed to have appeared between 1477 and 1483. The Bodleian copy is printed on coarse whity-brown paper, with chain-lines running across, and without any paper-maker's device. Its letters show many specks of paper fluff on top of the printed surface: this is due to the surface having been laid against other paper before the ink was dry.

The late Mr. William Blades has described the advertisement, as no. 35 in the 2nd ed. of his 'Biography and Typography of William Caxton.' Only two copies of the advertisement are known to exist.

The 'pýes' referred to in it are copies of a Pica or Pye, which was 'the rule for the concurrence

and occurrence of festivals' §. And fragments of a Pye printed in the same type as this advertisement are in the British Museum: they amount to 16 pp.

Mr. Blades places both the Pye and the advertisement about 1477-8. Mr. Bradshaw, the late Librarian of Cambridge University library, whose judgement in all matters relating to early printing and liturgical books commands the highest possible respect, put the Pye in 1477; and doubtless the advertisement would be of the same date with the Pye.

'Salisbury use' was the order of service used in Salisbury cathedral and over most of the south of England.

The meaning of 'two and thre comemoraciōs' seems to have been first perceived by Mr. Bradshaw (*Breviarium &c.*, fasc. III, p. lxiv) †. In Caxton's time it was usual to hold in each week either two or three special services, called commemorations, in place of the canonical Hours. In one of these the Virgin was commemorated; in another the

§ The Rev. Christopher Wordsworth in *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesiae Sarum*, fasc. III, *Cantab.*, 1886, p. lxvi.

† In Mr. Blades's book a widely different explanation, derived from another quarter, will be found. I am no liturgiologist, but that explanation seemed to me so unsatisfactory that I asked the Rev. W. H. Frere whether it was accepted as correct. Mr. Frere at once referred me to the Cambridge edition of the Sarum Breviary, and also lent me his own notes on the subject.

saint to whom the particular church was dedicated—unless it were dedicated to the Virgin; and in another a saint connected with the locality. The Rev. Christopher Wordsworth would define the actual practice as follows (*ib.* pp. lxxiv–v). If the particular church was *not* dedicated to the Virgin, then the saint to whom it was dedicated was commemorated on Thursdays; a local saint (e.g. S. Thomas of Canterbury) on Tuesdays; and the Virgin on Saturdays. If the particular church, like Salisbury cathedral itself, *was* dedicated to the Virgin, then there was no commemoration on Tuesdays, but the Virgin was commemorated on Saturdays and the local saint on Thursdays. Commemorations were liable to be omitted, or shifted to other days, if they clashed with a saint's day, fast, or vigil; and it was the Pye which gave the necessary directions how to deal with all such cases.

'Almonesrye' is probably a printer's mistake (*New English dictionary*) for 'almosnerye'—being derived from the French *aulmosnerie*†. It is our 'almonry.' 'The Almonry was a space within the Abbey precincts, where alms were distributed to the poor; and here the Lady Margaret, mother of King Henry VII, and one of Caxton's patronesses, built

† And we have 'almoner' spelt 'almosner' in another of Caxton's works (*N. E. d.*).

almshouses' (Blades, p. 73): it was 'west-south-west of the western front of the Abbey' (*id.*, p. 74). And various of Caxton's books contain statements that they were printed in the abbey at Westminster (*id.*, pp. 70, 71).

'The reed pale' may mean either a fence painted red, or a signboard bearing a shield with a red 'pale,' i.e. a red central line or band running from top to bottom. The use of shields as printers' devices is common in 15th century books.

Mr. Edward J. L. Scott, Keeper of the MSS. at the British Museum, has published (in the *Athenæum* for May 21 and June 11, 1892) 30 entries by the Prior of Westminster of rent received from Caxton, these entries being found in an account-book still preserved in the Chapter library. They show that at the end of 1483 Caxton paid rent for two *tenementa*, and at Lady-day 1484 for the same, but that at Midsummer 1484 he paid rent not only for these but for a loft over the gate of the Almonry ('pro j^o lofte supra portam Elemosinarie'). This may be the room described in 1486 as the room over the road ('Camera supra viam') and in 1488 as the room over the road in going to the Almonry ('Camera supra viam eundo ad Elemosinariam').

The notice at the foot, equivalent to 'Please don't tear this paper down' (literally, 'I pray, let the paper stand'), is particularly curious from being

in Latin. I conjecture that in the place or places where the advertisement was to be posted an officer might be expected to tear such things down at intervals unless they contained a request to the contrary. The choice of Latin suggests that the words in question were a customary formula for this purpose: perhaps they were used in ecclesiastical or legal precincts—those, for instance, of Westminster Abbey or Westminster Hall.

Mr. Blades rightly speaks of this advertisement as the first broadside known to have been printed in England.

The Bodleian copy came to the library in the magnificent collection bequeathed to it in 1834 by Francis Douce. A facsimile appears on p. 305 of the catalogue of that collection published in 1840, and a previous one in Dibdin's 1810-19 edition of the *Typographical Antiquities* (i, p. cii). Dibdin has also reprinted the advertisement in vol. iv of his *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* (p. 350), seemingly with the other copy before him; so has Blades in both his editions; and so has Mr. Wordsworth in the Cambridge edition of the Sarum Breviary—indeed it is so short and curious that it has probably been reprinted elsewhere also. But I am not aware of any *facsimile* of it besides the two mentioned above.

It it plesse eny man spirituel or temporel to bye ony
pyes of two and thre comemoraciōs of salisbury use
enpryntid after the forme of this presēt lettre whiche
ben wel and truly correct, late hym come to westmo-
nester in to the almonestrye at the reed pale and he shal
haue them good chepe . . .

Supplico stet cedula

