JOHN RYDER (LONDON)

A BIBLIOPHILE'S LETTER FROM GREAT BRITAIN

In my last letter published in this journal (December 1961) brief reference was made to the sale at Sotheby's of the mysterious St. Alban's schoolmaster printer's *Book of Hawking, Hunting and Blasing of Arms*, 1486. This particular copy, which comprises 52 of the total 90 leaves, has three times passed through Sotheby's hands since 1947 and the prices fetched varied between £1600 and £2400. It is one of about seventeen known copies most of which are in more or less imperfect states. The auction catalogue of the third sale last June referred to certain 'old pen-notes'. We now know that these 'old pen-notes', the numerous corrections in a contemporary hand, were in fact made by the press-editor of Wynkyn de Worde's revised edition issued in 1496. It just so happens that this discovery—an intelligent hunch of the Bournemouth bookseller Alan G. Thomas who bought the book confirmed by George Painter of the British Museum—makes it the only known printed press-copy in the incunable period in English printing.

There are only a few surviving fifteenth century manuscripts known to have been used as press-copy for editions by Caxton,

ly sold it for a much smaller sum to the British Museum in the face of a firm order from America.

We must await a detailed account of these 'old pen-notes' from George Painter for their full value to be appreciated. Meanwhile here are a few remarks on the casting-off figures and corrections to be found in this copy based on a brief description already issued from the British Museum.

1. The text has been cast-off into pages by means of marginal figures running 1–12 or 1–8 as the case may be and corresponding to the beginning of the equivalent page in de Worde's quires of six or four leaves. Books of this length were often printed on several presses simultaneously and in order to distribute the copy to the various compositors it was essential to make an accurate estimate of the paging and quiring of the edition about to be printed. The process of casting-off is therefore of basic importance in early printing methods, and the practices and variations to be found in this copy of the St. Alban's book will provide an unrivalled opportunity for study.

It is interesting to note that the first page

Title of the new review THE BLACK ART *(No. 1, Vol. 1, spring 1962)*

Wynkyn de Worde and Pynson, but no other English printed book. It is not surprising, therefore, that Alan Thomas quoted a figure of £12 500 for this unique fragment of English printing history. Yet it may surprise some to learn that he magnanimous-

mark in the cast-off of a quire is not numbered '1' but a squiggle is scratched in the paper with a sharp-pointed tool (the compositor's bodkin, perhaps). A rough paging is marked in pencil in the margin on the left of the text suggesting the page ending

within four or five lines. The final cast-off marks are neatly placed in inked figures (excepting the first page) in the margin on the right of the text showing exactly which line ends the page.

2. The Blasing of Arms section has been extensively corrected. The press-editor found it necessary to revise the obsolete and provincial spelling found in the St. Alban's text which no doubt followed the earlier MS from which it was printed. Such corrections show what was thought intolerable and what acceptable for a London reader in 1496. The compositor has usually followed these corrections, but quite often (as has recently been found to occur in the First Folio of Shakespeare) has not. These annotations will throw light on early compositors' habits. For instance a heading has been re-phrased by the press-editor but remains unaltered in de Worde's new edition.

3. Similar editorial care has been taken with the coloured woodcuts of coats of arms. These cuts are much referred to since they are the first example of colour-printing in England. The colours used are black, red, blue and yellow. Despite the use of several colours certain omissions of colour appear in this copy of the St. Alban's book. The marginal notes were instructions for hand-colouring to be added in the de Worde edition. There are also remarks on the altering of shield shapes.

Whatever final conclusions are reached by the experts, one fact will always astonish
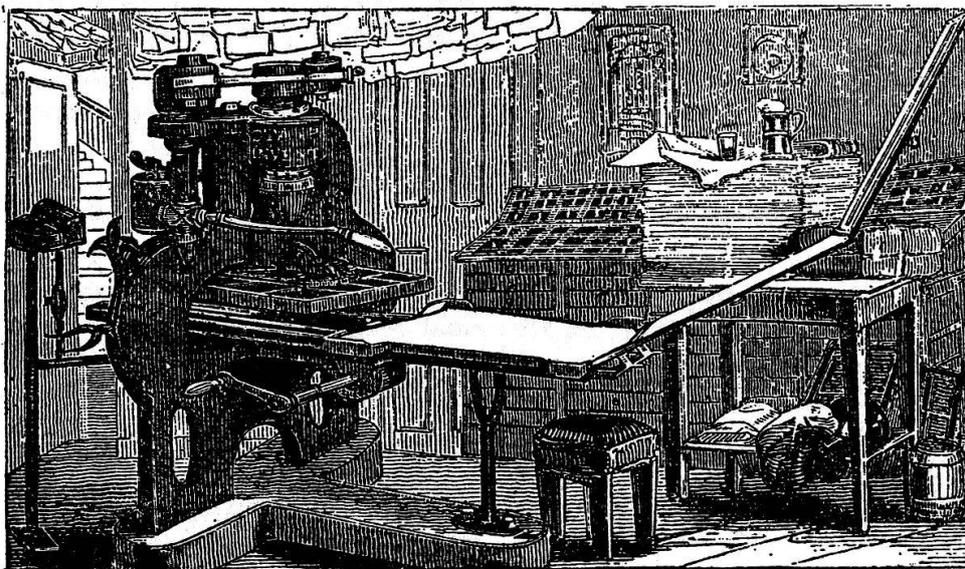
In *1800 the third Earl Stanhope (1753–1816) invented the Stanhope Press (with the assistance of Mr. Walker, an ingenious mechanic). It was the first all-iron press. It employed the screw principle combined with a system of leverage for impressing. The power of the Stanhope Press was first tried in the printing-office of William Bulmer (the Shakespeare Press), where the first press remained till the sale of his partner Mr. Nicol's printing materials in 1854. The illustration is taken from* Typographia *by John Johnson (1824). From* The Black Art, *I, 1.*

me in this story of survival, auction and discovery. Some years ago a previous owner noted on the front flyleaf that the textual corrections in this particular copy of the St. Alban's book corresponded with the new text in the Wynkyn de Worde edition.

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The third Bodley Head edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is now being reprinted with a word changed in the bibliographical details concerning previous editions. This change relates to the second printing, John Rodker's first edition for the Egoist Press London, issued in October 1922. Of the 2000 numbered copies, 500 were sent to America and, according to the first impression of Bodleys Head's third edition, '500 copies

were burned by the New York Post Office Authorities'. In the second impression of the third Bodley Head edition the word 'burned' has been replaced by 'withheld'. Possibilities of subsequent distribution are recognised once the finality of 'burned' is withdrawn. The publishers have done this because so many numbered copies of the 'burned' portion of this edition (serial numbers 500–1000) have turned up at sales and in the hands of private collectors.

Three months after the confiscation and alleged destruction an attempt was made to replace these copies. John Rodker arranged for a third printing in Paris of five hundred copies which were despatched to England, but at Folkestone harbour "499 copies were seized by the Custom's Authorities". Of this presumed lost edition three copies are known to survive. John Rodker's own un-numbered copy is in the Slocum Library, as is the Keynes copy (No 827) which had been presented by Joyce to Mike and Maggy Strator, March 13, 1924, and another un-numbered copy from the James Joyce Paris Library and now at the University of Buffalo.

June 16, 1962 was the fiftieth anniversary of "Bloomsday"—the day around which *Ulysses* was written. In Dublin, on that day, the Martello tower in which Joyce had once lived was opened as a Joyce Museum.

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The gift-book from Cambridge last year, issued by the University Printer, Mr. Brooke Crutchley, was an ingeniously arranged topographical record of the bridges over the River Cam—'Bridges on the Backs' as they are called. Nine bridges are grouped within a short stretch of the river and most of them join, or lead to, buildings of the University. The ingenuity of this production lies in the way in which David Gentleman has drawn the bridges as they appear today and also, by the lifting of overlapping flaps of paper, reveal former bridges as they appeared in their own time. Apart from the architectural interest in Mr. Gentleman's drawings he pointedly shows a change in the character of the river itself from a rather quiet, commercial waterway to a crowded undergraduates' playground. The aptness of this book combined with the excellence of its execution are what we have come to expect of Cambridge Christmas books.

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The Officina Bodoni, Verona, has now issued Feliciano's *Alphabetum Romanum*—a Vatican codex which dates from about 1460, which is the earliest treatise on the construction of Roman capital letters, and which has never before been reproduced in facsimile. The alphabet is reproduced in sepia outline with the colouring added by hand in two tints to show the intended lapidary use of these letters. Construction lines and circles are no longer visible in the original MS but explanatory drawings have been placed with each letter in Dr. Mardersteig's book. Felice Feliciano, born of humble stock in Verona in 1433, was a calligrapher, an archaeologist and collector of inscriptions, and a printer at the village of Poiano, near Verona, where in 1476 he produced his only book, the *Libro degli Huomini famosi* of Petrarch. Among his personal friends were Mantegna and Bellini. He died a victim of the plague in 1479 in the woods of La Storta near Rome, where he had gone in an attempt to escape the plague.

Dr. Mardersteig has now reproduced in superlative editions the early alphabets of:

Feliciano, 1460 (O.B. 1961)
Moyllus, 1483 (O.B. 1927)
Vicentino, 1523 (O.B. 1926)

The Grolier Club, New York, has issued reproductions of the alphabets of:

CAPTIONS TO THE THREE FOLLOWING PICTURES

1 Page of Book of Hawking *showing various kinds of corrections.*

2 Opening of Bridges on the Backs *showing the separate flaps.*

3 Opening from Six on the Black Art *(Wynkyn de Worde Society). All the extracts are illustrated and each by a different hand. This opening is from my own copy in which the artists have drawn extra illustrations. The extra «original» shown here is by Margery Gill.*

¶ Off a cros dowble ptitid florishid

This cros dowble ptitid is varied sum tymys : and then
hit is called a cros dowble partitid florishid . as here .
Neuertheles hit is calde a cros fluzri impropurli
as sum men sayen for hit faylith the myddys of that
flowre as a noon hit shall folow in the next arm
ys . the wich certan myddys by no maner of wyse
in that cros dowble ptitid may be . as a noon it
shall be shewed . Bot he that berith theis armis
latine . ¶ Portat vnam crucem duplam ptitam auream in
campo rubeo . Gallice . ¶ Il porte goullez vng cros double
ptie florettee dor . Anglice . ¶ He berith goulles and a cros
dowble ptitid fluzri of golde ,

¶ Off a cros tripartitid florishid .

Bot as is shewed a fore this cros is calde a cros dowble
ptitid florishid for ther faylith the myddys of the cros by
the wich the cros florishid is made pfite as here
hit is oppyn . the wich certan myddys putt ther to it
shall not be called a cros dowble ptitid florished
Bot rathir it shall be calde a cros threfolde ptitid
fluzri . and then it is well blased . for and it be
dyuidid after the longnes or after the brodenes .
all way oon parte shall abyde triptitid in the myddis of the cros
as it is oppyn i charmys a fore writtyn . And therfore he that be
rith theis armis . latine . ¶ Portat vnā crucē triptitā de az
geo i cāpo de asuro . Gallice . ¶ Il porte assey vng cros
pe ptee florettee argent . Anglice sic . ¶ He berith of asure
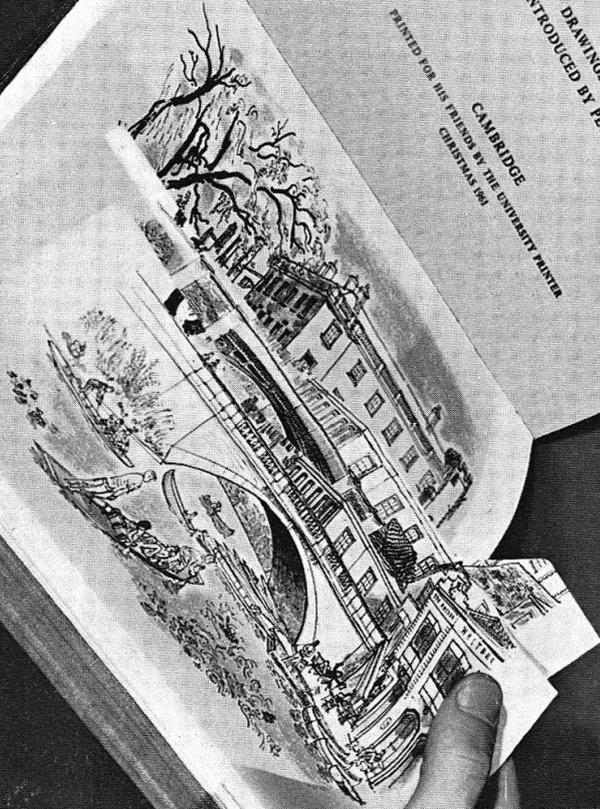with a cros triptitid flore of Siluer .

BRIDGES ON THE BACKS

A SERIES OF DRAWINGS BY DAVID GENTLEMAN

INTRODUCED BY PETER EDEN

PRINTED FOR HIS FRIENDS BY THE UNIVERSITY PRINTER

CAMBRIDGE

CHRISTMAS 1961

Balzac's Old Bear

FOR thirty years Jérôme-Nicolas Séchard had worn the famous municipal tricorne hat that you still occasionally see on the head of the town-crier of a provincial town. His breeches and waistcoat were of greenish velvet; and he wore an old brown great-coat, grey cotton stockings, and silver-buckled shoes. This dress, in which the workman was still visible in the prosperous tradesman, suited his habits and vices so well, so completely expressed his way of life, that the old man might have come ready clad into the world; you could no more imagine him without his clothes than an onion without its skin.

Séchard had been a journeyman printer, a 'bear', according to compositor's slang. The movement to and fro, like that of a bear in a cage, of the printers coming and going from the ink-table to the press, from the press to the table, no doubt suggested the name. In revenge, the 'bears' used to call the compositors 'monkeys', because of those gentlemen's constant employment in picking out letters from the hundred and fifty-two compartments of the type cases. In the disastrous year of 1793 Séchard, who was about fifty at the time and a married man, was passed over in the great conscription which swept the bulk of the workmen of France into the army. The old pressman was the only hand left in the printing-house when the master (otherwise known as 'the boss') died, leaving a widow but no children. The business seemed on the point of closing down altogether. The single-handed

Domat: Blaise Pascal. Portrait à la sanguine
(voir page 95)
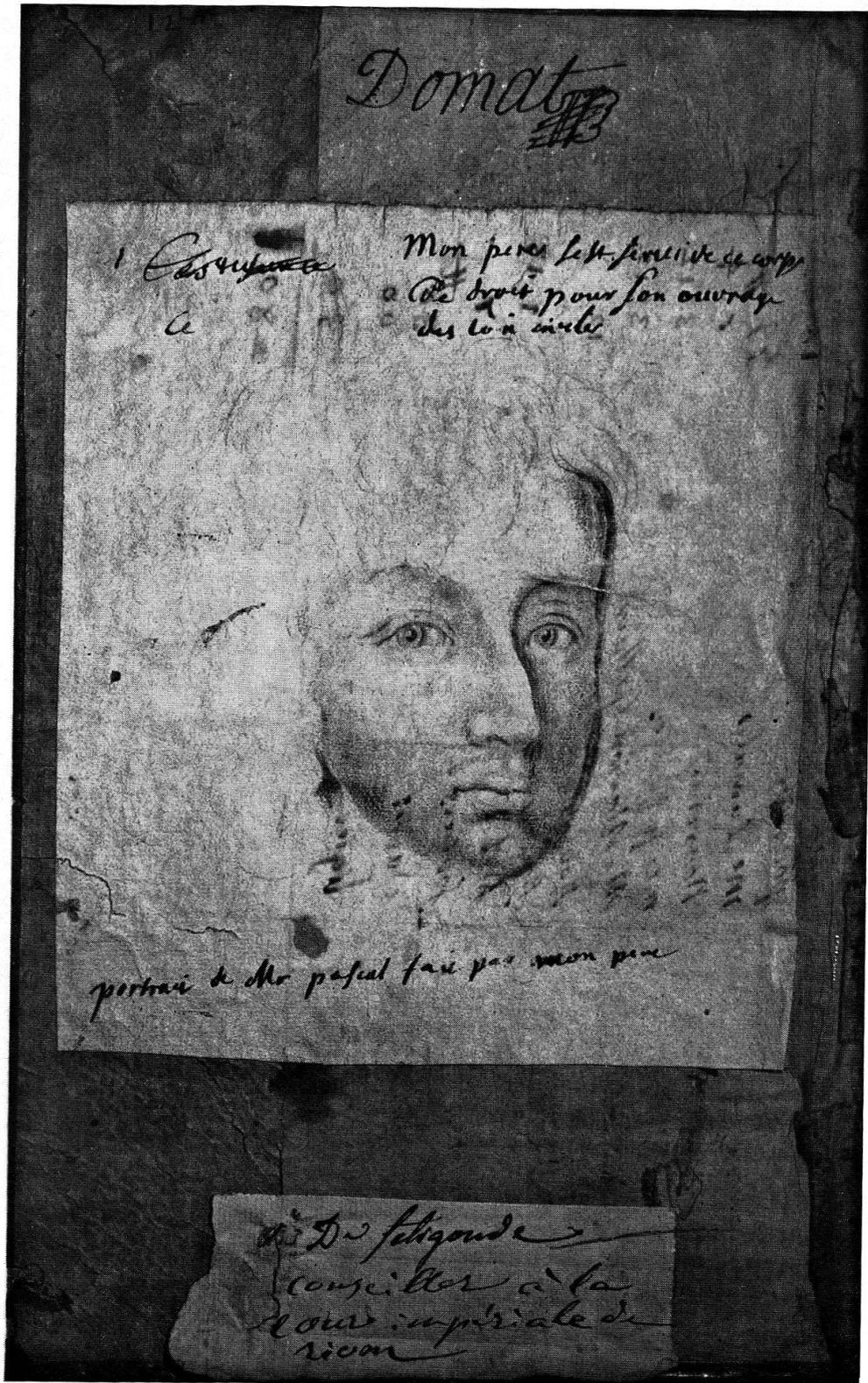
Pacioli, 1483   (G.C. 1933)
Dürer, 1525   (G.C. 1916)
Tory, 1529   (G.C. 1927)

This appears to leave a number of early alphabets still to be re-issued in satisfactory editions:

Fanti, 1514   Verini, 1526
Schedel, 1482 (?) Wyss, 1553
Tornielli, 1517

In 1960 Dr Mardersteig printed an edition of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* for Faber & Faber, London. In 1961 he printed in the same format Hugh MacDiarmid's *The Kind of Poetry I Want* for the Edinburgh bookseller, K.D. Duval. These two fine editions are set in types designed by Mardersteig, the former in Dante, the latter in Griffo.

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In June this year Maximilian Editions, through the distributive offices of Bertram Rota Ltd., the antiquarian bookseller at Vigo Street, London W. 1, published their first book, a reprint of *Deposito Cornuti Typographici*. This is described as a mirthful play performed at the confirmation of a journeyman and is a translation from the German of Johann Rist by William Blades in 1885. This new edition (the Rist version of 1654 derives from an earlier version by Paul de Vise, 1621) has been edited and introduced by James Moran.

The appearance of this first issue from Maximilian Editions Ltd. nearly coincides with the first number of a quarterly journal devoted to 'The Black Art' which is in fact the new journal's name (the title here reproduced is drawn by Mathew Carter, son of Harry Carter, archivist to the University Press, Oxford). Both these ventures were started by their editor James Moran whose activities in journalism for the printing trade have not passed unnoticed in Fleet Street. Outside journalism James Moran read in 1959 a paper on the bibliographical implications of filmsetting, and in 1961 a paper on William Blades as Caxton's biographer, before the London Bibliographical Society. Mr Moran has recently been elected to the famous Double Crown Club, founded in 1924, a dining club meeting about five times a year "to exchange ideas on good printing". This original tenet now finds itself embracing such subjects as television graphics. Another printing club, the Wynkyn de Worde Society, was founded by James Moran in 1957. Both these clubs occasionally produce printed items for their members. Moran, for his Society, wrote a monograph on Wynkyn de Worde in 1960, and, in 1961, produced for me a collection of famous writers' references to printers, mostly in fiction, called *Six on the Black Art*. These writers include Balzac, James Joyce, Arnold Bennett and Benjamin Franklin.

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An exhibition of book design by Gotthard de Beauclair was shown last September in London at the offices of the Monotype Corporation. It was a fine selection of accomplished work scheduled for several showings throughout Europe. De Beauclair's post-war connections with the Stempel typefoundry at Frankfurt and with the publishing house Insel-Verlag are known and much appreciated.

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The Fifth Antiquarian Book Fair opened in London on June 18 this year. Forty-two booksellers took stands and throughout the five days of this fair the attendance of buyers was considered very satisfactory. For the hand-list of exhibitors Lawrence Durrell wrote an introduction and so created a "first edition". Ten copies were printed on hand-made paper and signed and auctioned for charity. At the opening my wife's book-seeking eye noticed at floor level, between a forest of legs, the familiar blue-covered 1922 paper-back, *Ulysses*. I risked my fingers, withdrew the book and examined it. Number 585—officially a packet of ashes but in fact quite a nice copy. It now rests with John Rodker's own corrected copy which my wife had bought some years ago.