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CECIL H. CLOUGH (ENGLAND)

**A FORGOTTEN LIBRARY:
THE LEOPOLD VON RANKE COLLECTION OF BOOKS
AND MANUSCRIPTS ***

There is an axiom that Trade follows the Flag, and I should propound that antiques and rarities of all kinds follow wealth. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was in England and in France that the trea-

ures of the world accumulated. Increasingly throughout the nineteenth century England and France were faced with the competition of Prussia, then Germany, and of the United States. It is significant of the stages of economic growth that Leopold von Ranke was able to build up his large library in Berlin, but that after his death it passed to the

* I am most grateful to Mr. John S. Mayfield, Curator of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Syracuse University Library, for all his help.

United States, one of the first "European treasures" to do so.

Now, of course, the purchase of vast libraries in Europe for export to the United States is common enough, and the von Ranke collection is largely forgotten in Europe and in America. Biographers of von Ranke generally make no mention of it, nor does the imposing *Census* of Renaissance manuscripts in North America¹.

The collection itself is a notable research tool of European history, and was used as such by von Ranke. It is important also for any estimate of von Ranke and his place in historiography. In the bibliographical field it can be used to throw light on the dispersal of Italian libraries in the early nineteenth century. What exactly is this collection and where is it? The latter is easiest to answer: it is housed in the Library of Syracuse University, New York State. In the Library of the University there is a card-index which lists all the printed books that came with the von Ranke Library, and the books themselves all have a special bookplate which distinguishes them². These von Ranke books are not shelved apart as a collection, but have been ingested into the University Library, according to the subject matter of the individual book. They number some forty thousand items, bound in about seventeen thousand volumes.

The bulk of this printed material is in German, though in all there are twenty two languages represented, for von Ranke tried to collect the historical material of a country in its own language. In such a large collection there is something of everything, but the main theme is the history of Europe. Looked at in another way, the collection illustrates the history of typography from the early German black-letter and the Aldines to some two thousand uncatalogued pamphlets, which are mainly medical theses submitted to German Universities in the nineteenth century.

To a nineteenth century historian, and one thinks of Carlyle and De Tocqueville,

the French Revolution formed a great watershed. Hence it is not surprising to find that von Ranke accumulated a large quantity of material on the Revolution and its background. There are forty six volumes of pamphlets covering France of *L'Ancien Régime*, and fifty for the period of the Revolution, apart from seventeen volumes of German pamphlets on the Congress of Rastatt. Aside from this exceptional collection of French material, there are numerous source books and histories relating to the Italian Wars, to the Papacy and to the history of the English Monarchy.

There is also manuscript material. Some of this is found in the printed books. For instance, one of the volumes of pamphlets dealing with the French Revolution has inserted sixty three pages of manuscript, which consists of letters, notes and the speculations on the authorship of some anonymous pamphlets. There is a considerable amount of material personal to von Ranke, including his notes on books, letters addressed to him, momentos of his personal life, such as his passport. There are, of course, books and manuscripts in the collection that have been annotated by von Ranke, though a few printed books that were heavily annotated were removed from the Library before it was sent to the United States, and were placed with his literary works³. The University of Syracuse has von Ranke's portrait by Schrader, two paintings that hung for years in his study, and his chair, desk and ink-well. Anyone working on von Ranke ought to be aware of this biographical material.

There is a collection of some four hundred and fifty manuscripts, which can be classed as of two kinds. There are a hundred bound and the rest unbound. The unbound material has not been catalogued and seems to consist of documents copied for von Ranke. This material may be more important than has been assumed, for it may include transcripts of documents otherwise unknown. Recently a catalogue of the bound volumes

of manuscripts has been printed, and is prefaced with an interesting account of the collection, which I have drawn on freely for this article⁴. The bound manuscripts are almost all of Italian interest, and some of them can be related to von Ranke's interest which resulted in his *Latin and Teutonic Nations*... The bulk of them relate specifically to Venice; they deal with her colonial possessions and relations with other powers from the sixteenth century to the end of the Republic in the Revolutionary Wars. Most of the manuscripts are not old, but are copies made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of contemporary documents. Once again the importance should not be underestimated, since some of the documents copied are otherwise unknown. For the period from the Italian Wars to the end of the Republic in particular, the Venetian State Archives have suffered, because of the habit of Venetian patricians of treating the documents, that they had dealt with while in Government service, as personal property. Documents were taken to the family *palazzo* and used to swell the family library. These documents and manuscripts were used to instruct younger members of the family in public affairs, and frequently transcripts were made. In the eighteenth century, as the number of patricians declined, the size of family libraries increased, as the number of libraries was reduced⁵. In the seventeenth century, however, when the Venetian Republic was extolled by Harrington, every *palazzo* had its library. Probably no other city in the world has ever housed so many individual and well furnished libraries as Venice did at that time. A feature of these Venetian libraries was a Venetian chronicle, compiled to give a history of Venice and at the same time exalt the family for whom it was written⁶. No other Italian city has anything like a comparable number of such kind of chronicles, largely because no other city of comparable wealth flourished as a self governing republic for so long after the Italian Wars. The von Ranke

collection of Venetian manuscripts illustrates excellently both the transcripts and the family chronicles, and of the latter there is one of Pietro Dolfin, another of Daniele Barbaro, and one of the sixteenth century with family blazons painted in the margins⁷. Venetian chronicles await a detailed study, and in any such those of von Ranke should find a place. Von Ranke himself intended to use the material for a detailed study on the political nature of the Republic in its last three hundred years of life, but never did so.

Where did von Ranke get this material? The early nineteenth century was the time of bibliomania, fed by the upheavals of the Napoleonic Wars, and by the flood of books and manuscripts from the suppressed monasteries⁸. It was the time too when the nobility of the Italian cities, and of Venice in particular, were attempting to stave off bankruptcy, by selling their family library. It was essentially the English, with the wealth from the Industrial Revolution, who profited. For instance, in the years between 1815 and 1835, Richard Heber, the Earl of Guildford, and the Reverend Walter Sneyd, toured the Continent and brought back with them to England over a million volumes of printed books and manuscripts⁹. Between 1826 and 1831 von Ranke travelled and it was then that he acquired some of the bound manuscripts. Those of Venetian interest came from the famous Nani and Lorenzo Antonio da Ponte libraries, some from that of Pietro Gradenigo. Probably the purchase was made through the Paduan bookseller Adolfo Cesare, who acquired a large portion of the Nani and Da Ponte libraries¹⁰. Von Ranke probably obtained some Da Ponte manuscripts in the late 1830's, after the death of the abate Daniele Francescini of Padua University, who had another large portion of the library. The provenance of other von Ranke manuscripts is from the Soranzo, Foschi and Gian Roberto Papafava Libraries. Hence the von Ranke collection has a part to play in any

study of the dispersal of the Venetian Libraries—a study that has long been overdue¹¹.

Finally, one wants to know something of the circumstances which resulted in the shipping of this collection of Germany's, if not Europe's, greatest historian, to Syracuse, New York. In 1886 von Ranke died at the age of ninety one, and his eldest son and executor, Pastor Otto von Ranke, thought that the German Government would purchase the collection, and make it into a national monument. He had the collection crated and delivered for storage to the Royal Library, Berlin, until such time as the purchase was negotiated. Yet in the following year the whole collection arrived in Syracuse, having been purchased by the Americans, Dr. and Mrs. John M. Ried, for an unknown sum, and presented to the University of Syracuse. Essentially the sale to the Royal Library had broken down because there was not the money available for purchase¹².

At this present time of European economic resurgence, while it is impossible to return the collection to Europe, its value should be recognized and use made of it by Europeans. What is needed is an adequate catalogue of the rare items, available in a printed form, for students of European culture ought to be aware of this largely untapped source.

¹¹ Cf. T. H. von Laue, *Leopold von Ranke . . .* (Princeton, 1950). S. De Ricci and W. J. Wilson, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* (New York, 3 vols., 1935-40); C. U. Faye and W. H. Bond, *Supplement to the Census . . .* (New York, 1962).

¹² See the plate No. 3. Both the manuscripts and books have this bookplate.

³ B. Hoeft, "Das Schicksal der Ranke-Bibliothek", *Historische Studien*, Heft 307 (Berlin, 1937), p. 30.

⁴ H. O. Brogan, A. Pace, A. Weinberger, *The Leopold von Ranke manuscripts of Syracuse University* (Syracuse [1953]).

⁵ Cf. J. C. Davis, *The decline of the Venetian nobility . . .* (Baltimore, 1962).

⁶ The best account of these chronicles is found in M. Foscarini, *Della Letteratura Veneziana* (Venice, 2nd ed., 1854).

⁷ See plate 2, from Ms. 71, f. 417 (see *The Leopold . . . manuscripts*, p. 112).

⁸ Cf. P. Le Coute, "Le vicende delle Biblioteche Monastiche Veneziane dopo la soppressione Napoleonica", *Rivista di Venezia*, VIII (Venice, 1929).

⁹ Cf. S. De Ricci, *English Collectors of Books and Manuscripts* (Bloomington, 1960).

¹⁰ For a Da Ponte bookplate see plate No. 1, from Ms. 15, flyleaf (see *The Leopold . . . manuscripts*, p. 50).

¹¹ For some of these libraries see C. Frati, *Dizionario Bio-Bibliografico dei Bibliotecari e Bibliofili Italiani . . .* (Florence, 1933); Da Ponte was not the librettist and author of the *Memorie*, but a Venetian nobleman of the same name, see G. Moschini, *Della Letteratura Veneziana . . .* (Venice, 1806), II, p. 69.

¹² *The Leopold . . . manuscripts*, pp. 7-8.

CAPTIONS TO THE PLATES

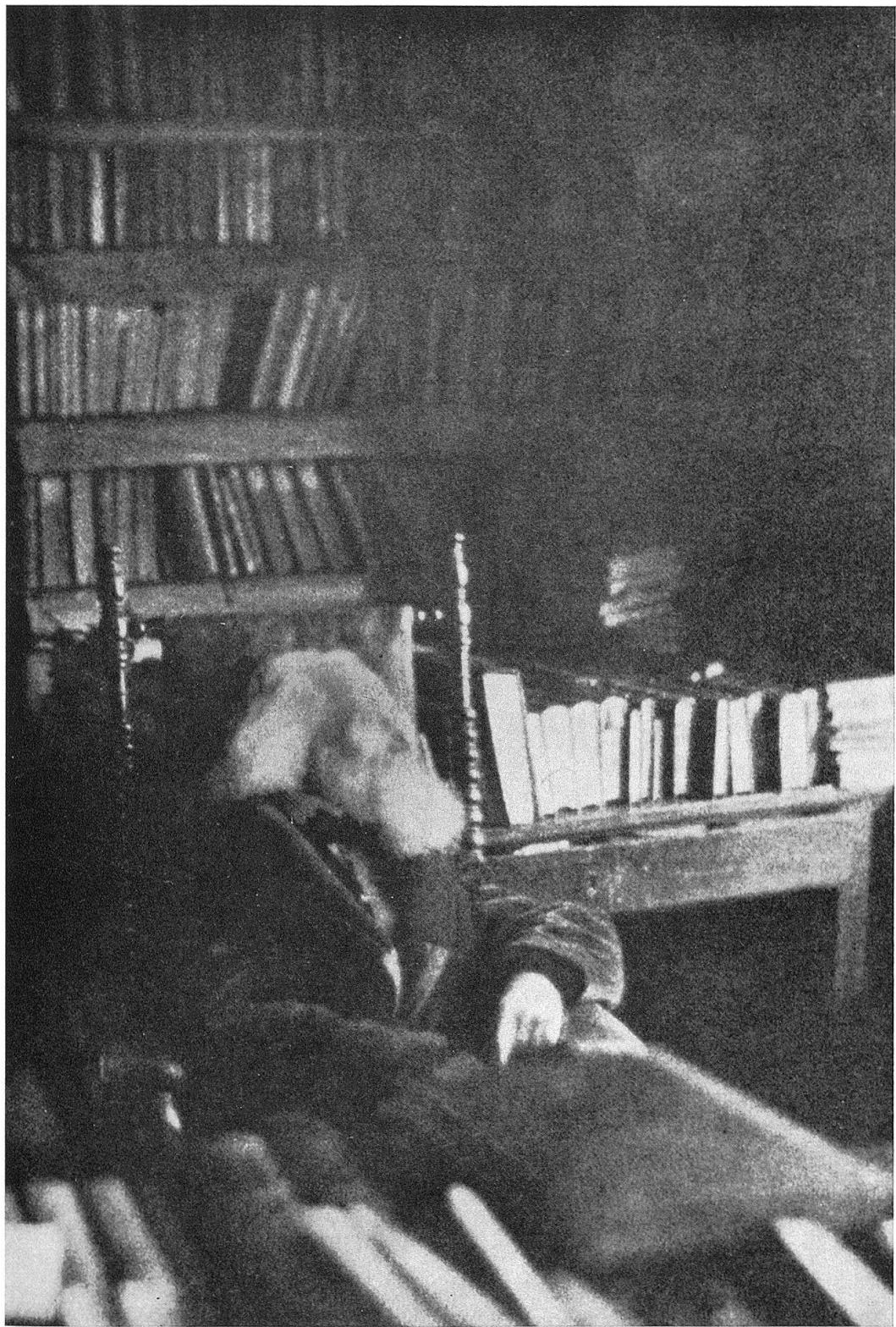
1 A photograph of Ranke in his library.

2 A page of Manuscript No. 71 (f. 417): *Chronicum venetum ab origine ad an. MDLIX*, compiled about 1570.

3 Fly-leaf of von Ranke Manuscript No. 15 showing the bookplate of Lorenzo Antonio Da Ponte and

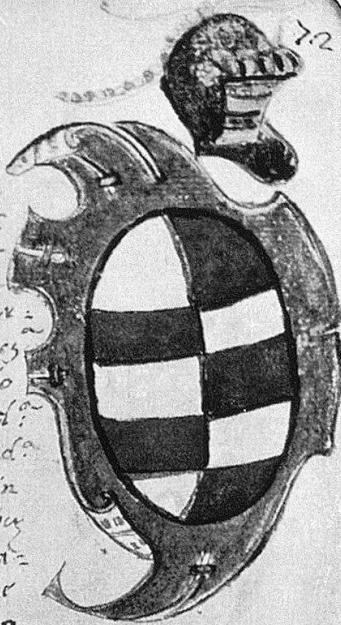
that of the Ranke collection in Syracuse University. The Ms. is entitled: *Serie di veneti patrizi mandati ambasciatori a principi*.

Courtesy of the Curator of manuscripts and rare books, Syracuse University Library, N.Y., USA.



I

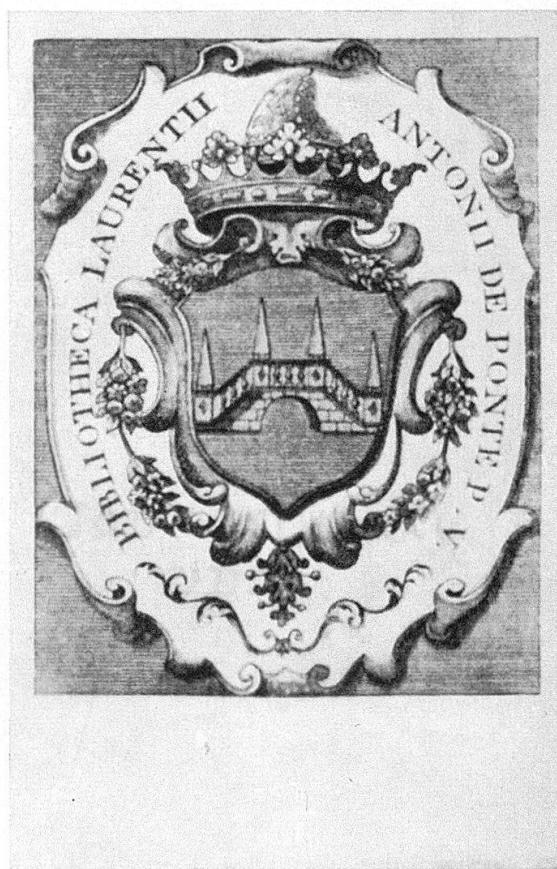
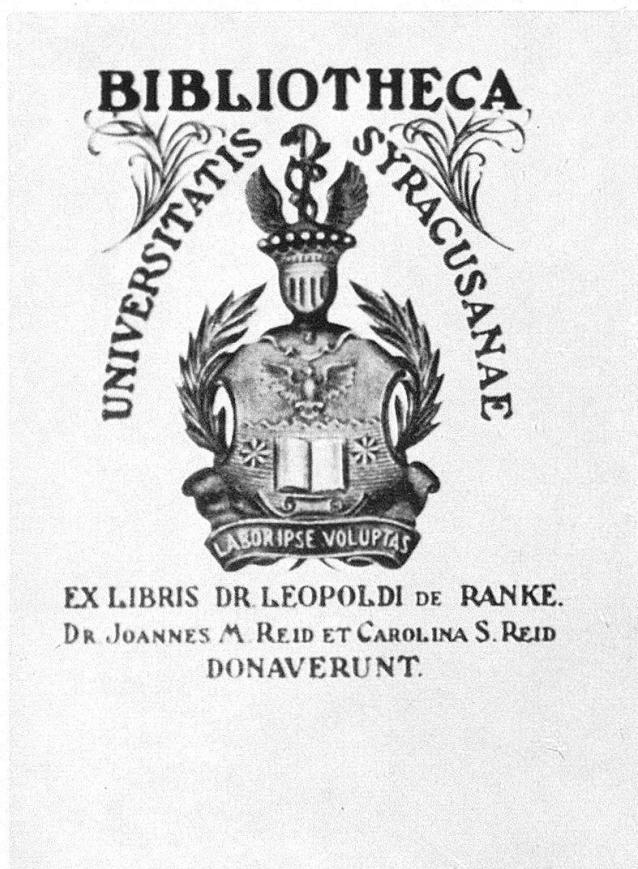
fu fidelissimi al Comu' de Venetia fino al tempo de mr Lorenzo Celci Dose ch' fu del 1363 ad 9 agosto nel qual tempo quei di Candia mosi da Diabolica Inguita partendesi da Dio Rebello al Comun de Venetia et desmesse lo Duchia ch' era my Lunardo Dandolo el Canalice sic ch' fu d' m And^o Dandolo dote et li primi traditori fu And^o Pantaleo de Compagnia cor zorzi da Molin Marco fradello Marco gradenigo, Tito venier fecerit mudaro Questi clesseno marco gradenigo Duce Il qual And^o co 700 persone fu morto da uanch la porta di Candia ad 9 marzo 1364.

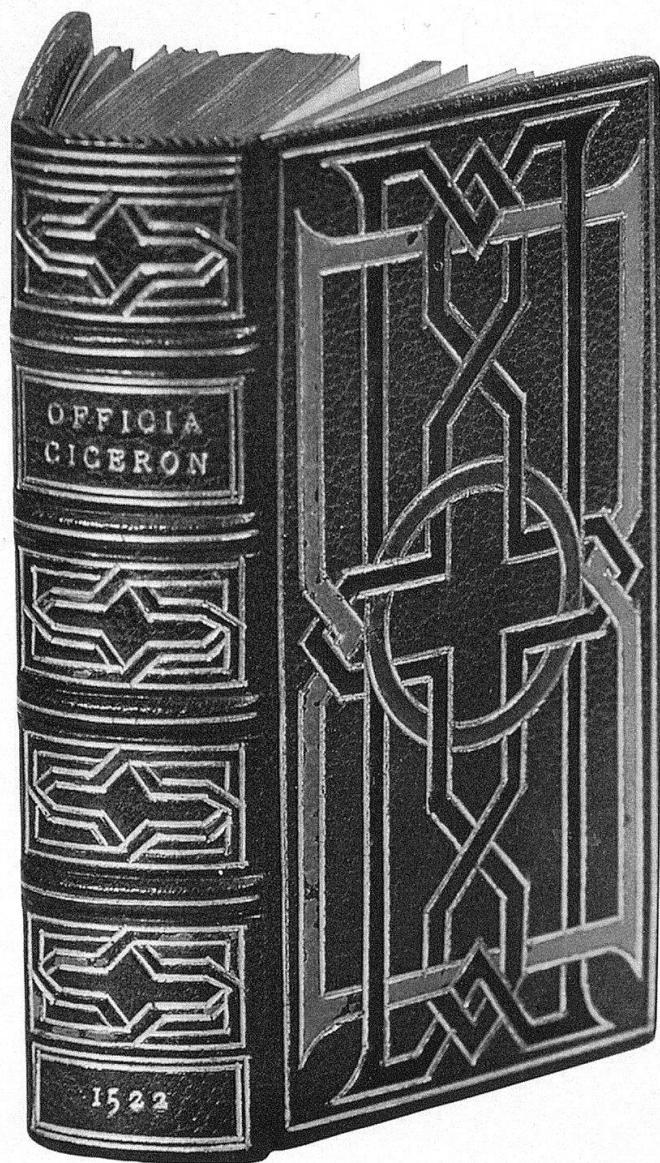


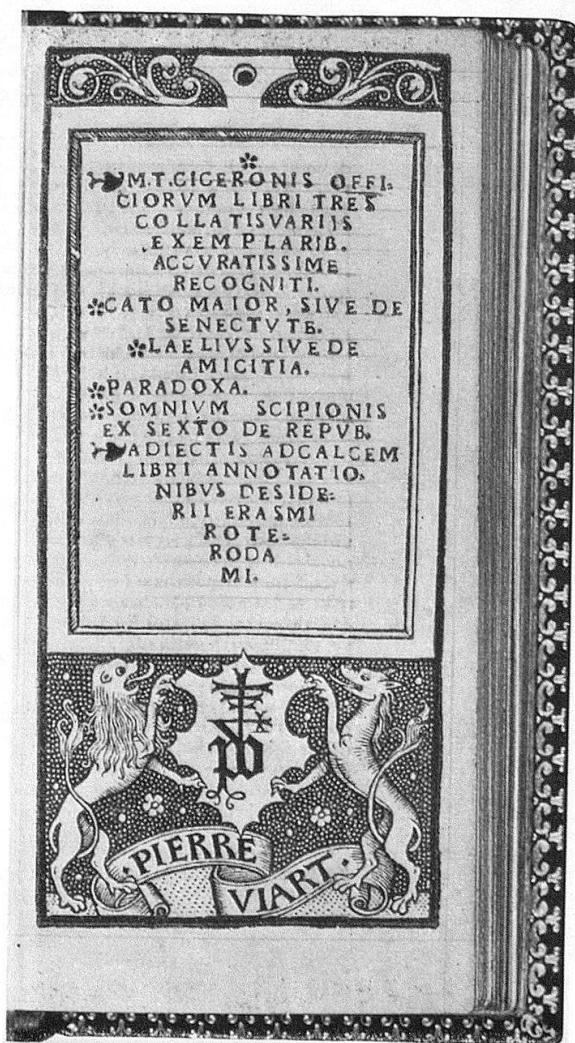
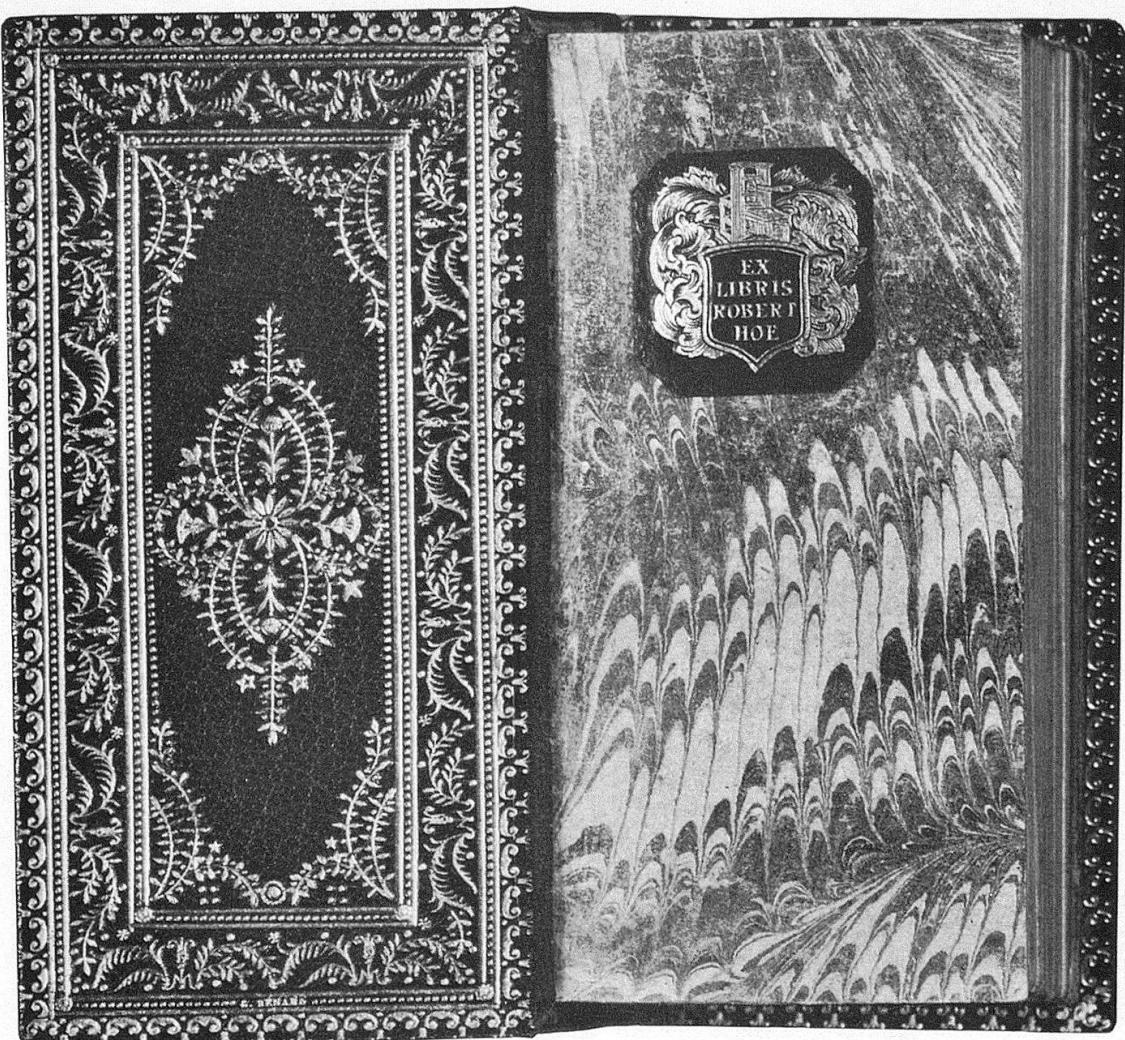
Bargnasi Vene da malamoco vecchio al 1292 et fono homini Sanij et g^o maestri de edificij questi co li suoi vicini fecer la chiesa di s. greguol manco questa famiglia in Panthalon Essendo Sep: il lido al 1290 et al 1300 creando p di Venetia my Zorzi il qual mori al 1300.

Polenta Sono S^o de Ravenna questi vene ad habitare in Venetia al 1309 li quali molto si eseritauano ni fatti d'Arme li ghi p li suoi boni portamenti di fecer lo S^o obbligo alla guerra di padova fu fatto al Consiglio manco questa famiglia nel ostasio suo fello essendo ale Confinie in Candia al 1441.









lenter erras, si libris De Officiis. M. Telli
libri nihil cū Christiana disciplina puenire pu-
tas. Nam ut sint in ijs quædā, q̄ Christiani
auersari debcam⁹, vt si sunt certe pauca, illa
est suscipias oportet, q̄ad Euangelicæ ve-
ritatis normam quāvis exacta leuere, si-
deat. Alioquin q̄ æquitas sit, cūgnicio-
sa exerceris, ac despiciat salubritas nō am-
plicet, & amare! Atqui salubritas hic plu-
rima esse, ne tu quidem incisiari possis, q̄
tam maligne ḡerilias fatas. Sed hucusq;
tecum iocari ſit. Non ut enim optime, Mar-
tialis, ac testis multoq; inſtar eſſe poſſum,
quantiū hmoſ literarum peritius, ita etiā
ſtudioſus ſis. Quo ſane factū eſt, ut puden-
dum militi non ducerem, id tibi opus, vel
laborē poſſum in eo opere recognoſcēdo
meū, dedicare, quod te ſapientia ſumma cū
animi voluntate legiſte certo ſcire & de-
inceps lecturū conſiderē. Porro hoc meo
laborē, quantiū pſecerim, eſſi tunc inire le-
gendo reſtationem poſſis, tibi tamen,
ac careris item, q̄ hoc legent opus, teſta-
tum eſſe volo, loca meno paucā reſtituiſ-
ſe ex fide veterum codicium, neq; a com-
mētariis, quantiū diſere l; ſitelleſta, neq;
ab ijs aſſiduerſa, q̄ idem, qd ego, neq;
iū caſtigāti pauciſ ante annis ſucepti,
Interim & te in primis, & careris, ad q̄
fructū ſide aliq; manauerit, admonitor ve-
lum, ut neq; d id ē qd accessit, moditari,
nō tā mihi (neq; em id ambo) q̄ā ve-
ſtis codicib⁹ acceptum reſerat, quos ad id
exq; ſigni illa, & Alexadrinæ ſemula bi-
bliotheca Coenobiij Dñi vicitoris ad vrbē
poſmodato accepi. Petr⁹ Parvus Roſafon-
tanus, amicus noster ſyncerus, & puriorū
literarum amator, te ſalutar. Vale.
Lutetia Parisorum Calendis Aprilis.

LIBER. I.
MARCI TULLII
CICERONIS OF-
FICIORVM LI.
BER PRI.
MVS.

AD MARCVM FILIVM

V A N Q V A M T E
Marec fili, annum iam
audientem Cratippum,
idq; Athenis, abundare
oportet præcepti, inſta-
tutis, philoſophiæ, pa-
per ſumiam. & docto-
ritatioritate, & vrbis; quorum alter te
ſcienzi augere poneſt, altera exempli:
mē ut ipſe ad meam vtilitatem ſemper
cum graeci latini coniunxineſt id i phi-
loſophia ſolum, ſed etiam in diſcendi ex-
erſitatiōne ſeu, idem tibi ceneo ſaciē-
dūnivit par ſis in vtriusq; oratiōis facili-
tate. Quā quidē ad rem, nos (ut videmur)
magnum adiumentū atulimus hoībus
noſtris, ut nō modo ḡeārum literarum
tudes, ſed etiā docti aliquantū ſe arbitre-
rū adeptos, & ad diſcendū, & ad iudican-
dū. Quā obre diſces tu quidē a prin-
cipe hui⁹ etati philoſophorū; & diſces quā
diu voletiāndū aut velle deſebit; quoad
te, quāntum pſicias, non pœnitibit. Sed
tamen noſtra legens non nulēa Peripa-
teciis diſſidentia, qm̄ vtriq; & ſocratici,
& Platonicis volumus eſſe: de rebus ipſis
veritato in ſcienzi mihi em̄ ſpedio, oratio
rem aut ſatinam efficiet, pſecto legendis
noſtri pleniorē. Nec vō arrogāter hoc
diſcū exiſtūmari velim, Nā philoſophiam

A iiij