

A bibliophile's letter from Great Britain

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JOHN RYDER (LONDON)

A BIBLIOPHILE'S LETTER FROM GREAT BRITAIN

(Another fragment of autobiography, alas)

All my letters are somewhat autobiographical but the first true fragment was delivered to Zürich in 1963. In it I described the journey to town and naturally I wish to spare you any repetition but maybe I should enlarge on the King's Road stretch since no one with a lively mind "goes through" Chelsea without becoming aware that he is at the centre of world fashion. Paris is for laughs, but here are the clothes people actually wear and, incidentally, the people who create them.

Chelsea is a streetscape with girls. There are a few male eccentrics with flowing hair, with antique military gear, with bells and knee-length op-art shirts in evidence, but the famous antiquarian bookseller, Alan Thomas, hides behind the anonymity of a bank address. However, this whole scene is visually arresting and I had it fixed by Roy Spencer on a calendar for the Stellar Press. Spencer's lively drawings came out well and Mary Quant ought to have had copies, but somehow she never saw it. Perhaps we shall meet by chance and together cut a new pattern in calendars.

Chance meetings are a matter of expectation in London. It is quite natural to be walking in central London and to be touched on the elbow by Sem Hartz. He will say, simply and firmly, "Come on then, where shall we have lunch?" This summer my chance meeting with James Wells of the Newberry Library of Chicago proved to be a foundation stone for Nattali & Maurice (see below).

My first meeting with Jan Tschichold was different. During his several year's work over here we never met. But this year he stayed in London for two days and we met by careful appointment and exchanged

notes on early writing-books. I had recently helped with the selling of *The Pen-mans Paradis both Pleasant & Profitable Invented and Performed By John Seddon*, c. 1695, in the form of an elegant reproduction arranged by Jan Tschichold. Then with his help I had managed to purchase from Hamburg a copy of Louis Barbedor's writing-book of 1647—a long out-of-print reproduction also arranged by Tschichold and published at Basel.

When we met in March, Tschichold told me of his plans after Seddon and I him of my experimental plans with the printing colleges. At that time six English colleges were engaged in making reproductions from writing-manuals, but so little progress has been made in the last twelve months that I have gone through a period of despair and emerged with a new publishing venture under the kindly wing of The Bodley Head backed and encouraged by Max Reinhardt. This is the bibliographical imprint, Nattali & Maurice Ltd, which I have several times mentioned in connexion with antiquarian bookselling and in connexion with the original aquatint plates engraved by William Daniell for his *A Voyage Round Great Britain*. Now it is an established publishing imprint whose first issue was *The Remarkable Story of a Book Made in Padua in 1477* written and printed by Dr Mardersteig in a small edition of 200 copies. It was happily oversubscribed before publication on August 24. This will be followed by Stanley Morison on writing-books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and by facsimiles of early writing manuals including Ugo da Carpi, Cresci, Tozzi, Palatino and perhaps some early lace pattern books including Vecellio's *Corona delle nobili*, etc. (see illustration 1).

The Tozzi writing manual of 1604 has lace pattern borders around the model scripts and although there are copies of this work in the Victoria and Albert Museum library, London, in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and in the Newberry Library, Chicago, there is no copy in the British Museum. The Victoria and Albert copy is housed in the lace manual collection. Lotz includes it in his bibliography of pattern books as does Bury Palliser in her *History of Lace*.

The chance meeting with James Wells led to contacts of importance to any reissues of the pattern books because through him I met Esther Potter. Mrs Potter has special knowledge in this field and may perhaps guide me and set the scene. I also met by chance at that same lunch Mr Skelton, recently retired chief of the map department at the British Museum, and he led me to a contact with Dr Arthur Osley who has written a study of Mercator's script. Giovanni Mardersteig published in 1930 a facsimile of Mercator's writing manual and recently Chris Brand and Ben Engelhart published a brief study of Mercator which Dr Osley reprinted in *Calligraphy & Palaeography*, London 1965.

During that brief lunchtime with Mr Wells a *modus operandi* for the publishing venture of Nattali & Maurice began to take shape. This not only concerned the selection of titles and editions but also the problem of getting information into the hands of interested parties which of course has a pre-problem of knowing who is likely to be interested. Most encouraging is the fact that a number of customers, on seeing the first projected list of titles, have asked for them all. And with small editions a publisher needs only a handful of interested booksellers to establish distribution.

I must go back several years now to take in the beginnings of some contacts bearing on Nattali & Maurice projects.

A girl, whom I did not employ when she applied for a job, subsequently became a de-

signer for Bodley Head and by chance led Nattali & Maurice to an American contact, Gordon Williams, who offered a transcription of the unpublished last letters of Thomas Bewick. These letters, now deposited in the British Museum, are addressed to John Dovaston between 1824 and 1828. With an introduction by Gordon Williams and perhaps some original prints from Bewick blocks in the Hunter Middleton collection, Chicago, and Bewick's portrait of Dovaston, the letters will be issued, I hope, in 1968. The volume will also contain a fragment from the unpublished journal of Dovaston (see illustration 2) in which is described his visit to the Bewick family. The letters are informative on Bewick's work and publishing ventures and also reveal something of the depth of his human tenderness. Dovaston, in his journal, shows awe for the master wood-engraver and considerable tenderness towards Bewick's eldest daughter, Jane. These two accounts of the same meeting came together in the hands of Nattali & Maurice by chance—the letters as I have described, and the journal belongs to one of my colleagues at Bow Street, Iain Bain. He is secretary to the Printing Historical Society, and is now printing from the original steel-plate engravings five of Albert Schloss's miniature English Bijou Almanacs (1839–1843) for Nattali & Maurice to publish. Iain Bain has researched and written an account of Schloss's almanacs which will be printed at the Stellar Press. I should also mention that Stellar's managing director, Bill Hummerstone, has joined the board of Nattali & Maurice. Some books will be printed at the Officina Bodoni (the first was printed at the Valdonega Press) and at least one at the University Press, Cambridge, and a reprint of Tallis's *London Street Views* at the Gresham Press, but most of the work will be done at Stellar.

Mr Hummerstone and I, taking our roles in this connexion seriously, and realizing that we already have the typographical materials and skills we need, spent some

time this summer discussing the problem of making paper to meet our requirements. Fortunately I had visited a number of English paper mills during the first years with Bodley Head and long ago had set my hopes on one particular machine, in fact the only machine at the Old Turkey Mill, Maidstone. This is a Fourdrinier built in 1911 by Bertrams in Edinburgh.

Two years ago I was hunting for facsimiles of sixteenth century writing-books before going to press with *Lines of the Alphabet* (now out of print) and the last two books that came to my notice were both Arrighi reproductions. It was Chris Brand, calligrapher, type-designer, and teacher at Breda, who told me about one published in 1958 by Tidens Forlag, Stockholm. Chris Brand designed the Albertina typeface issued by Monotype this year, and I dare say several of our separate activities are of mutual interest, yet we maintain only a tenuous thread of contact by letter. Tenuous, that is to say, until last July when Lies Jansen arrived in London on a look-around visit for postgraduate studies here. Miss Jansen is a student-practitioner in lettering and calligraphy, an advocate of the Brand method of teaching, and a person with enough talent and imagination to make her work known in quite a short time. Of course, she is working on a typeface with some affinities to Albertina, but these are early student days and the development may well take in a Schneidler flourish and a distinguished display face. Her student development has already appeared on the skyline of Amsterdam in large-scale neon letters.

The writing of bibliographical notes on twentieth-century books and presses may sometimes lack more detail than notes written about a book printed in Padua in 1477. Of course, one day, Dr Mardersteig's Officina Bodoni will get the bibliographical account it deserves and the world will know what has been going on at Montagnola and Verona for forty-odd years. At the moment

confusions exist. I have just bought a book printed at Montagnola in 1926 on paper watermarked with the device of the press. It is not to be found in the 1964 exhibition catalogue although it appeared in the list of "all books printed on the hand-press" given in *The Officina Bodoni*, 1929. The book I bought for £10 is a type-specimen, printed in an edition of 25 copies, showing Bodoni's twelve-point Cuneo. The text is from Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. What is more, the 1929 list begins with *Poliziano, Orphei Tragedia*, 1923, whereas the 1964 catalogue begins with *Goethes Urworte, Orphisch*, 1922 (10 copies).

In 1955 my search for early examples of printed flowers led me to write to Jan van Krimpen at Enschedé. I knew, of course, from John Dreyfus's account of his work that van Krimpen eschewed the fleuron and perhaps used the five-pointed star twice in his life. But I also thought that the historic wealth of material at Haarlem might speak out, despite personal prejudice. I was wrong about this but Harry Carter replied from Oxford with an interesting "specimen of types from matrices at the Plantin- Moretus museum cast by H.G.C., 1954" and some other illustrated notes. Then I wrote to Stanley Morison and part of his most excellent reply was a fascicule, the title-page of which is reproduced here (see illustration 3). In addition to this corrected proof he also sent me a companion fascicule on flowers.

Here began my knowledge and interest in *John Fell: The University Press and the "Fell" Types* by Stanley Morison with the assistance of Harry Carter, Oxford 1967. In fact this book has just been published (October 12) at £25 in an edition of 1000 copies. Any doubts concerning Mr Morison's claim to this century's outstanding scholar of printing historical research must surely fade.

John Fell was born in 1625 and in 1925 the Clarendon Press at Oxford published a tribute to Fell's great gift of types entitled: *Specimens of books printed at Oxford with the*

types given to the University circa 1690 by Dr John Fell, and two pages of notes by Stanley Morison. It is interesting to see that the title is given differently in John Carter's *A Handlist of the writings of Stanley Morison*, 1950, as: *The Roman, Italic and Black Letter given to the University c. 1672 by John Fell*.

In the same year the draft of an octavo specimen was set up. It condensed Horace Hart's researches and was several times revised and reproofed without ever being regarded by Stanley Morison as satisfactory to print. Horace Hart had published his *Notes on a Century of Typography at the University Press, Oxford, 1693-1794* in 1900 in an edition of 150 copies. He had been printer to the University from 1883 to 1915. The Fell material "had come into his hands in a state of rust and confusion".

Before the fascicule shown here was set up, Charles Batey asked for a specimen of Fell types to be produced in the form of a small book. This Stanley Morison found possible to do and Charles Batey printed it in 1950 in an edition of 100 copies. The book, so much admired in America, was subsequently reset to a shorter measure and issued by The Typophiles, New York, in 1951, in an edition of 475 copies as Chap-book No. 26. In the introduction to this specimen Mr Morison refers to an earlier Fell catalogue: "*A specimen of several sorts of letter given to the University by Dr John Fell late Lord Bishop of Oxford*, printed at the Sheldonian Theatre in 1693. It includes a list of books printed at that place." But Mr Morison explains, this 1693 specimen "begins with three founts which were in use at Oxford and elsewhere before Fell was active". He also explains, these "several sorts of letter", usually described as of seventeenth-century Dutch origin, are in part correctly ascribed, but some are of French origin and of about 100 years earlier. Some types were traced to Antwerp and Frankfurt sources and were verified by Sydney Squires who was typefounder to the Press around 1930.

Of course this has necessitated a wider European search than was at first thought necessary. Since 1950 the University Press at Oxford has issued a number of broad-sheets including:

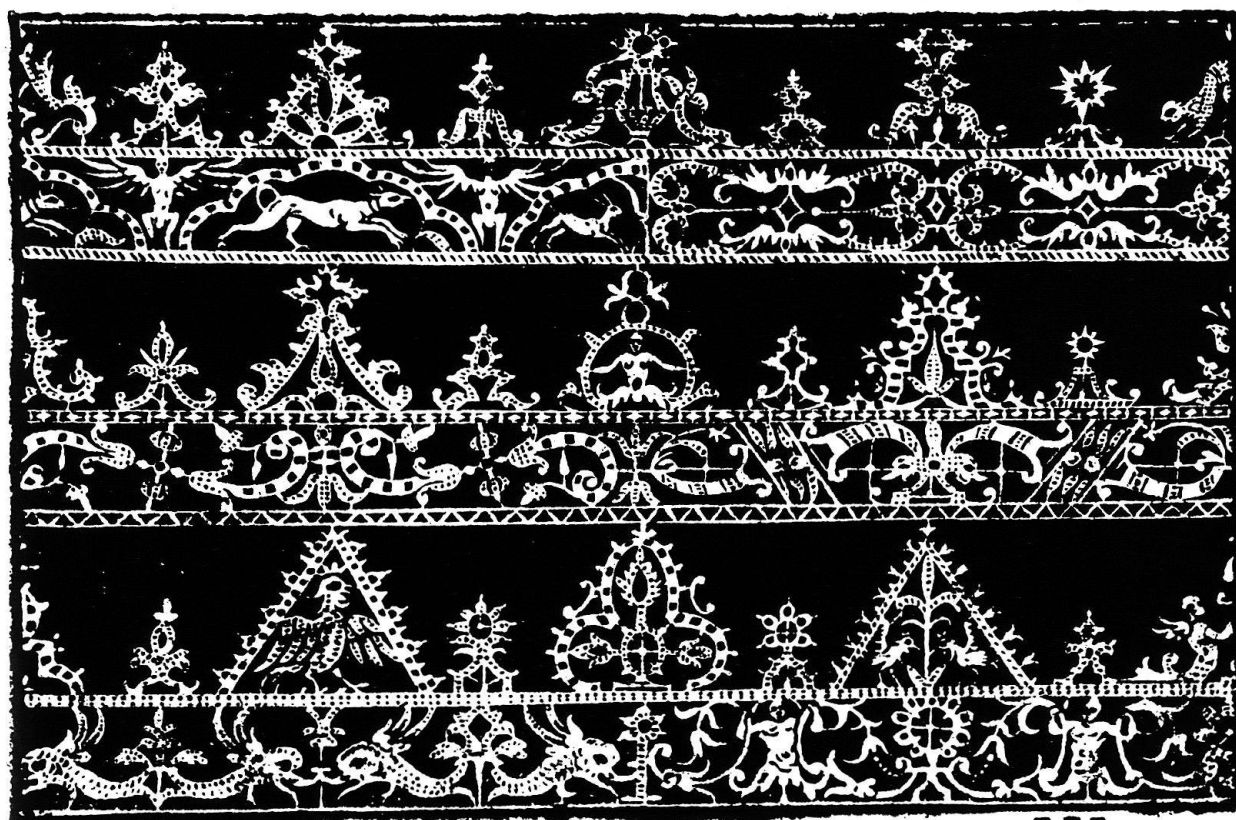
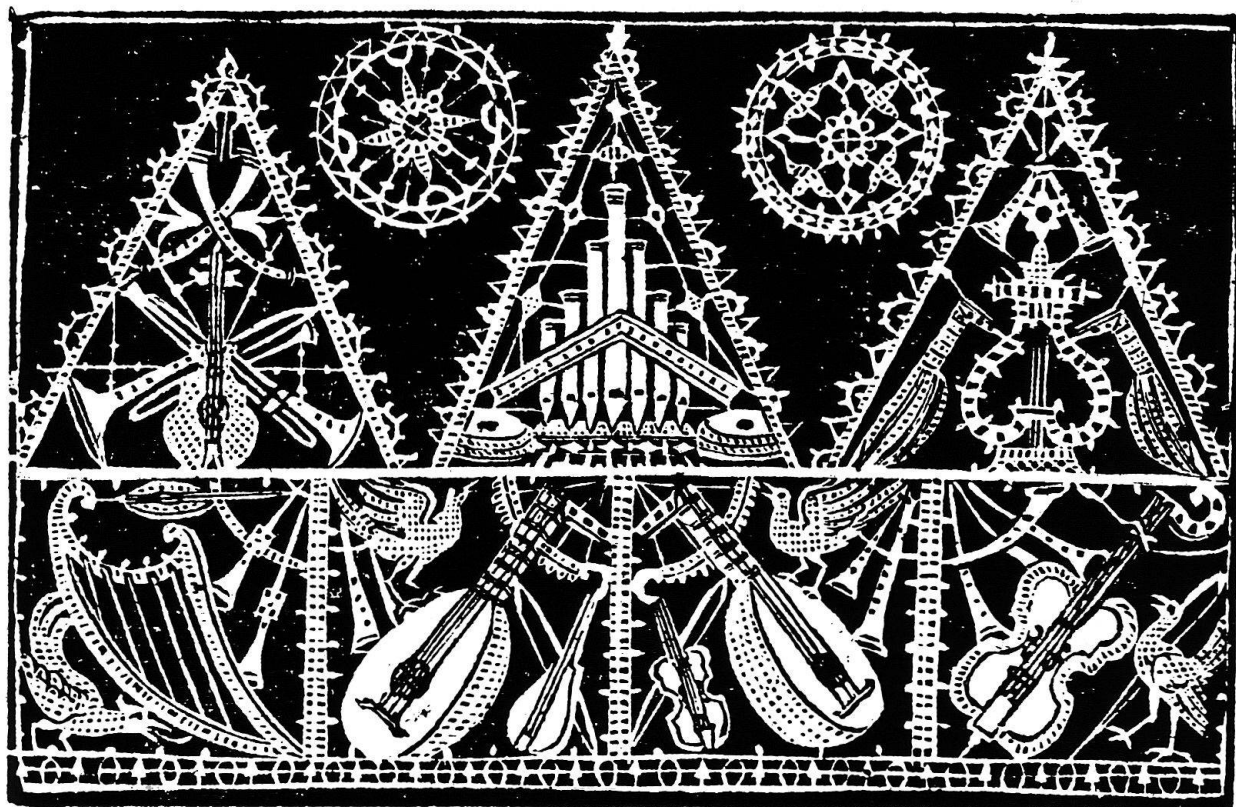
1. Reproductions from a specimen of Plan-
tin's types compiled about 1572 (Charles
Batey, 1955).
2. A specimen of the types attributable to
Peter de Walpergen cut for the Univer-
sity of Oxford, 1672-1702 (Charles Batey,
1957).
3. A specimen of types cast at the Univer-
sity Press, Oxford, in matrices believed
to have been bought at Leyden in 1637
(Charles Batey, 1957).
4. The types bought in Holland by John
Fell and Thomas Yate for the University
of Oxford, 1670-1672 (Vivian Ridler,
1959).

Thus, with the publication of this defini-
tive (?) account of John Fell, the whole
task of "testing and setting forth the
history of no fewer than 7632 rusty punches
and 2906 disordered matrices" has been
justified.

An exhibition was set up by Harry Carter
to celebrate the end of Mr Morison's ap-
pointed task. It was opened by Sir Francis
Meynell on publication day at Ely House
in Dover Street and it contained a great
wealth of Fell documents and material—
even a wood-cut illustration block recently
found under the floor of the Sheldonian
Theatre, a block which was cut for a publi-
cation issued from the Theatre in 1695. It

CAPTIONS FOR PAGES 163-166

- 1 Two illustrations from Vecellio's lace pattern book,
Corona delle nobili et virtuose donne, etc., Venice
1593.
- 2 A page of John Dovaston's journal describing his
visit to Thomas Bewick in 1826. Original page size
117 × 192 mm.
- 3 Proof title-page of one of Stanley Morison's fas-
cicules on the Fell types with corrections in Morison's
hand, Oxford 1953.
- 4 Inside pages of the Double Crown Club menu for
Will Carter's paper on the making of the Vicentino
typeface, London 1962.



EE

But who shall give any outline of his eldest, and darling daughter Jane? The formation of her person and deportment is particularly graceful and fascinating; her features lovely, and brilliantly animated with intelligence, and her gentle spirit gives a glow to all her numerous excellencies. Her conversation is frank & unreserved, yet with modest demeanour, speaking her mind without regard to the opinions of others, yet giving offence to none. Her manner & countenance are so bewitching, that she may say what she pleases "in sweet sounds, that give delight, and hurt not." She is mistress of her father's house, which she ~~conducts~~ ^{conducts} with a silent and quiet management, that everything is done as it were by magic, without bustle or disturbance. She also corrects the proofs for his works, and looks after the getting of them up; writes his letters of business; keeps his house and shops in order. Her great delight is in his fame, and his great delight is in her. She has given me several specimens of his original drawings of the Birds, and tale-pieces, which I shall preserve and prize more than gems, not only for their intrinsic merit, but for love of the fair lady, who so kindly gave what I know she so very dearly valued, from her collection. She has mounted in books, the drawings, and fine impressions on India paper, of most of his multitudinous works; at which he is absolutely indefatigable; even sometimes sitting at work at a table by the window, while his friends are drinking wine. It is curious to see his economy of box-wood, which is scarce, dear, & difficult to be procured. He has it sawn on the round to the thickness of the letter-types; and made very smooth on the surface: the pieces being circular, he divides them according to his designs, so as to lose little or none; and should there be a flaw or bit of decayed spot, he contrives to bring that into a

part of the drawing that is to be white, so that it will be cut out. Many people suppose that his later editions

NOTES
TOWARDS A SPECIMEN OF
THE ANCIENT
TYPOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS
PRINCIPALLY COLLECTED
AND BEQUEATHED TO
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

By
D^r JOHN FELL
d. 1686

II
TYPES
FOR LATIN AND THE VERNACULAR
BLACK LETTER
[ROMAN/ITALIC]



PRINTED PRIVATELY

UNIVERSITY
PRESS OXFORD
23 SEP 1953

Stanley Morison, Notes on Ancient Typographical Materials
as DDP

Please return these proofs

*Review phase to S.M.
27.10.53.*

R.H.

*6pts # in
6pts in*

Will Carter
will speak
on
Frederic Ward's
Arrigo Italia
The
President
Ian Parsons
in the Chair

The Menu

Gnocchi à la romaine
Caneton rôti aux cerises
Pommes d'orées
Petits pois à la française
Pêche Melba
Café



was a happy celebration of achievement, more for Morison than Fell, since Morison had died a few hours before the exhibition opened.

The Printing Historical Society has published a reproduction of Vincent Figgin's Type Specimens of 1801 and 1815 introduced by Berthold Wolpe. The 1801 specimen is taken from a unique broadsheet owned by Mr Wolpe. The 1815 specimen book is from one of seven known copies and both these specimens are early and good examples of the many new letter forms sprung into vogue by nineteenth-century expanding commerce.

Will Carter has recently set and printed a poem of some length for the Chilmark Press, New York. It is his first use of the Vicentino typeface (a recutting of one of Arrighi's italics) and he appends a note based on a paper read to the Double Crown Club (see illustration 4). It is a typographical note uncovering some already hazy facts concerning the production of Vicentino and a variation known as Vicenza. Will Carter offers the evidence, partly obscured by lack of documents and partly by the natural blunting of memory of the surviving participants, and builds for the first time a complete picture.

It is a story involving, amongst others, Giovanni Mardersteig at whose press a facsimile of Arrighi's two writing-manuals was printed in 1926. An introduction by Morison was set in the Vicentino types. Later that year the *Crito* of Plato was set in Vicenza. Also in 1926, and before the press was moved to Verona, Frederic Warde (one of the participants who has since died) had plans for setting up an Accademia Tipografica in Florence with "Hans" Mardersteig. The plans included the printing of a prospectus but developed no further.

The punches and matrices of these Arrighi types suffered a novel fate. The River Thames at Hammersmith was the usual repository for private press material but Frederic Warde found a buyer in the

Metropolitan Museum, New York, in 1934. Nobody has made a fuss about this even though there are three other contestants to legal ownership. A possible source of information on this point might have revealed itself in the cut-away dedicatory leaf (pp. iii & iv) of the Arrighi facsimile. Dr Mardersteig, I am sure, if he had a complete copy, would prefer to remain discreetly silent.

For Dr Robert Leslie of "Gallery 303", New York, John Dreyfus has written an account of the work of Giovanni Mardersteig. A small edition of 135 copies, dated 5 October 1966, has been printed at Officina Bodoni. Of course, I have read the story by Mardersteig himself in his *Officina Bodoni*, 1929. Friedrich Ewald wrote it in *The Fleuron*, 1930. Hans Schmoller wrote it in *Penrose Annual*, 1958. Adriana Ramelli wrote it in the *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* in 1955. Stanley Morison wrote it briefly in the Exhibition catalogue of 1954 and this was reprinted at my instigation in *The Book Collector*. Mardersteig again wrote it in the Exhibition catalogue of 1965. But I never tire of reading it. It is my particular real live OPERA and I read it in any and every form again and again and, of course, for each new account Dr Giovanni recalls a little more deeply from the scholarly and printerly aspects of his past.

Until now I only knew of the Bodoni types that "exclusive permission to use these had been granted to the Officina by the Italian Government". But, thanks to John Dreyfus helping Mardersteig to reminisce, I am able to add a new scene to my OPERA. Giovanni had a friend in Rome with whom he intended to set up a printing office in Switzerland. Influential friends of this man's father "obtained permission from the authorities for type to be cast for their use from Bodoni's original matrices". When Mardersteig set up at Montagnola in 1922 with a small number of Bodoni founts, he did so alone, for his friend, a victim of gas warfare, became too ill ever to join the press he had helped to found.

Quite an early book from Montagnola was printed for the Société des Bibliophiles Suisses. Set in Bodoni, it was the Latin text of the *Rütli Pact* with translations into the four languages of Switzerland. In June 1925 276 copies were printed (1 on vellum).

There are many other bibliographical events and publications I ought to have mentioned and if this is to be my LAST letter (because my letters are becoming too long and too ragged) then I MUST draw attention to Casamassima's *Trattati di*

Scrittura del Cinquecento Italiano, published by Polifilo, Milan 1966. Emanuele Casamassima, director of the National Central Library, Florence, has written this book for the *Documenti sulle arti del libro* series and the physical qualities of the large quarto volume are near to breathtaking. It contains just over 100 reproductions and is the first proper study of Italian Renaissance lettering. Casamassima critically compares 22 writing manuals from Pacioli to the end of the sixteenth century.

HERMANN ESCHER (1857-1938)

BUCH UND ZEITUNG ALS UNTERRICHTSGEGENSTÄNDE IN DEN USA

Der bedeutende Schweizer Bibliothekar Hermann Escher, der Gründer und erste Leiter der Zürcher Zentralbibliothek und große Förderer der Volksbüchereien, unternahm im Herbst 1919 eine Studienreise durch die Vereinigten Staaten. Was dieser lebendig teilnehmende, die weiten Horizonte liebende Geist an Eindrücken in sich aufnahm, gab er freudig anregend an die Zeitgenossen weiter. Seine Berichte erschienen zuerst in der «Neuen Zürcher Zeitung», im Jahr 1923 dann zusammengefaßt zu der Schrift «Aus dem amerikanischen Bibliothekswesen» im Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) in Tübingen. Wir entnehmen ihr das nachfolgende Kapitel. Interessenten sei zur Kenntnis gebracht, daß das 96 Seiten umfassende Büchlein beim Verlag noch erhältlich ist (gebunden DM 2.70).

Es ist nur folgerichtig, wenn die Schule ein so wichtiges Bildungsmittel, wie es sich ihr in der Bibliothek darstellt, auch mit besonderem Unterricht bedenkt. Wie das geschieht, möge am Beispiel von Wisconsin gezeigt werden. Der Unterricht setzt in der Elementarschule ein und dauert alle acht Klassen an, um hierauf eine noch einläßlichere Fortsetzung an der High School zu finden. Für kleinere Elementarschulen bis auf 75 Schüler mag er von einem Lehrer im Nebenamt erteilt werden, der ihm täglich eine Stunde zu widmen hat. Größere Schülerzahlen verlangen eine ausgiebigere Betätigung und entsprechende anderweitige Entlastung des Lehrerbibliothekars oder vielmehr – da Lehrer und Bibliothekare meist weiblichen Geschlechts sind – der Lehrerbibliothekarin. Schulen mit 600 und mehr

Schülern sollen einen ausschließlichen Bibliothekar anstellen.

Der Unterricht fängt schon in der untersten Klasse an. Die Kinder lernen, wie man die Bücher zur Hand nimmt, zumal auch Bilderbücher – denn auch solche gehören zur Schulbibliothek –, wie man insbesondere mit neuen Büchern umgeht, um den Rücken nicht zu brechen. Man weist sie an – wir folgen einer gedruckten Anleitung für den Unterricht –, vor der Lektüre die Hände zu waschen, die Seiten nicht mit benetzten Fingern umzuwenden, keine Eselsohren einzubiegen, die Bücher auf dem Tische nicht neben Speisen zu legen, sie auch nicht «zum Behälter zu machen für alle möglichen fremden Gegenstände, wie Bleistifte, Scheren usf.»: kurz, jene vielen Dinge, die jedermann weiß, aber nicht jedermann auch tut.