The English Provincial Printers, Stationers and Bookbinders to 1557 by E. Gordon Duff

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The Modern Language Review, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Oct., 1912), pp. 545-546

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3713187>

Accessed: 25/06/2014 01:32

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The English Provincial Printers, Stationers and Bookbinders to 1557.
By E. GORDON DUFF. (The Sandars Lectures, 1911.) Cambridge:
University Press. 1912. 8vo. x + 153 pp.

In these Lectures Mr Duff supplements those which he delivered in 1899 and 1904, dealing with the printers, stationers and bookbinders of Westminster and London from 1476 to 1535. The terminal date chosen for the present series is fixed by the year in which the charter was granted to the re-formed Company of Stationers, containing a clause which virtually put an end to provincial printing. With the exception of a few books, Mr Duff says, printed under a special privilege at Norwich between 1566 and 1579, and a doubtful York book of 1579, no book was printed outside London until 1584-5, when the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford once more started their presses. Within the period chosen, printing was exercised in ten towns, and the presses fall roughly into three groups. The first contains Oxford, St Alban's, and York, the second Oxford's revived press, Cambridge, Tavistock, Abingdon, and the second St Alban's press, and the last group Ipswich, Worcester, and Canterbury. Besides these there are the books printed for Hereford and Exeter, and the books with false or misleading imprints, such as Winchester and Greenwich.

The number of books with which Mr Duff treats in these lectures is surprisingly small. Only one hundred and thirty-two books are at present known to have been issued by the English Provincial presses between 1478 and 1556, and it is doubtful if many more remain to be discovered. The difficulties moreover connected with the subject are considerable, for to the books not known from actual inspection must be added the books which have disappeared, books, as Ames would have said, which are asleep. Very slowly, in spite of the remarkable growth in the study of the subject which the last quarter of a century has witnessed, does fresh information come to light. Mr Duff announces one new St Alban's book. He records Mr A. G. Murray's important discovery in connexion with the Ipswich edition of Bale's *Scriptores*, and he notes all work done upon the subject, thus duly recording Mr F. E. M. Beck's paper on the *Plaister for a galled horse*. The bibliography at the end of the book is important and exhaustive. Not the least charm of these lectures lies in the delightful modesty with which Mr Duff relates, or rather conceals, his own discoveries. From the words themselves the fortunate hunter could not be identified. The humour of the writer deserves a passing tribute.

A very valuable Appendix gives a list of all the books from these provincial presses, known or recorded, with a statement as to the present locality of all copies known. The index is not quite perfect. Mr Duff's final paragraph deserves attention :

Perhaps what may have struck you most is how much we have yet to learn on the subject, how little we really know. A good deal of what has been said has been, not about books which we possess, but about books which we have lost. A cloud

of obscurity still hangs over the subject, but the cloud has a silver lining. Think how much there still remains for us to discover.

Any further discoveries can only be made on the lines which Mr Duff has here laid down; and to anyone willing to investigate further this book, small as it is, is indispensable.

CHARLES SAYLE.

CAMBRIDGE.

English Nativity Plays. Edited by SAMUEL B. HEMINGWAY. (Yale Studies in English xxxviii.) New York: Henry Holt and Co. 1909. 8vo. xlviii + 319 pp.

This is a doctoral thesis of a useful type, in which Yale has specialized under the fostering care of Prof. A. S. Cook. Instead of writing 'about it and about,' the ripening student is set down to do a steady bit of textual editing, with introduction and commentary complete. Mr Hemingway's contribution consists of a comparative study of a section of the English miracle-play cycle, covering the episodes known as the Annunciation, the Salutation of Elizabeth, the Suspicion of Joseph (but not, for what seems an inadequate reason, the Purgation of Mary), Augustus and Cyrenius, the Nativity, the Conversion of Octavian and the *Pastores*. The texts brought together are those of the Chester, *Ludus Coventriae*, York and Townley cycles; the Coventry play proper is not included. The Chester text is taken from the Devonshire manuscript, which Mr Hemingway is probably right in thinking the best representative of its group, and on the whole a better version than Harleian MS. 2124, upon which the E.E.T.S. edition is based. For all the plays a careful collation, not only of manuscripts, but also of all important emendations suggested by modern scholars, who have been particularly busy with the York plays, is appended in the form of foot-notes. Mr Hemingway's terminal notes are comprehensive and concern themselves largely with the indication of sources. His introduction gives a good summary of the problems, mostly unsolved, which surround the genesis of the English cycles. He supports the suggested attribution of the Chester plays to Randall Higden by pointing out that two sources used by Higden in the *Polychronicon* are also used in the sixth of the Chester plays. These are the *Supputationes* of Martinus Polonus, from which both writers took the Octavian-Sibyl myth, and the *De Naturis Rerum* of Alexander Neckam, from which both apparently took the Vergilian account of the Temple of Peace. This is a line of investigation which, as Mr Hemingway himself suggests, might with advantage be applied to the rest of the cycle.

E. K. CHAMBERS.

GERRARD'S CROSS.