

## COLLECTORS OF BROADSIDES.



THE collector of broadsides is one of the most useful and deserving of his kind. The illuminated manuscript appeals to us by its beauty, and the rare printed volume by its interest and value; but the proclamation, the news-sheet, the ballad, and the penny garland, most frequently roughly printed on common paper, offer but little inducement for their preservation. Nevertheless, several collectors, foreseeing the future usefulness of these ephemeral productions, have purchased them day by day as they have appeared, and formed collections of them which have proved of great service to the antiquary and the historian. In some instances, too, they have noted on each broadside the date of its publication, and the sum which they paid for it.

One of the earliest of these collectors was Robert Burton, the author of 'The Anatomy of Melancholy,' who seems to have purchased indiscriminately almost everything that was published. The nature of his collection is well described in his address to the reader of his great work: 'I hear new news every day, and those ordinary rumours of war, plagues, fires, inundations, thefts, murders, massacres, meteors, comets, spectrums, prodigies, apparitions, of towns taken, cities besieged in France, Germany, Turkey, Persia, Poland, etc., daily musters and preparations, and such like, which these tempestuous times afford, battles fought, so many men slain, monomachies, shipwrecks, piracies, and sea-fights; peace, leagues, stratagems, and fresh alarms. A vast confusion of vows, wishes, actions, edicts, petitions, law suits, pleas, laws, proclamations, complaints, grievances, are daily brought to our ears.

New books every day, pamphlets, currantoes, stories, whole catalogues of volumes of all sorts, new paradoxes, opinions, schisms, heresies, controversies in philosophy, religion, etc. Now come tidings of weddings, maskings, mummeries, entertainments, jubilees, embassies, tilts and tournaments, trophies, triumphs, revels, sports, plays: then again, as in a new shifted scene, treasons, cheating tricks, robberies, enormous villanies in all kinds, funerals, burials, deaths of princes, new discoveries, expeditions, now comical, then tragical matters.' Burton bequeathed to the Bodleian Library and to the library of his own college, Christ Church, whatever books they required which were in his own collection. A great part of his bequest to the Bodleian Library consisted of the very works which the founder of the library disapproved of, viz., 'almanacs, plays, and an infinite number that are daily printed.' These, in consequence, were not to be found on its shelves, and Burton's ephemeral publications were therefore a valuable addition to the library, and now form some of the rarest and most curious of its treasures.<sup>1</sup> John Selden, the distinguished legal antiquary, historian, and Oriental scholar, was a collector of broadside ballads, which after his death were acquired by Pepys.

The wonderful collection of Civil War Tracts formed by George Thomason, who strove with 'unparalleled labour, charge and pains' to acquire every printed piece issued between the middle of 1640 and the middle of 1661, contains a very large number of broadsides, the first of which was printed in February, 1640, and the last in May, 1661, and they comprise nearly every single-sheet issued in England during that period. They are bound in twenty-five volumes. Thomason's collection, which, after many vicissitudes, was bought in 1761 by King George III. for the sum of £300, and presented by him in the following year to the British Museum, comprises upwards

<sup>1</sup> Macray, 'Annals of the Bodleian Library,' p. 66.

of 22,800 separate pieces, 73 of them being in manuscript, bound in about 1,983 volumes.<sup>1</sup> All the tracts are arranged in chronological order, and from July, 1642, to the end of the collection, Thomason has placed the date of issue on every piece when it is not printed on it, and has also endeavoured to supply the place of printing when not given.

Anthony à Wood was a collector of ballads, and in the Bodleian Library are five volumes of them which once belonged to him. Among them is 'A lamentable Ballad of a Combate lately performed near London, betwixt Sir James Steward and Sir George Wharton Knights, who were both slaine at that time. The tune is Downe Plumptre Parke.' This duel took place on the 8th of November, 1609, when Sir James Stuart and Sir George Wharton, who were intimate friends, but had quarrelled on some little punctilio of honour, fell by each other's hand. Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, who is said to have composed the celebrated song beginning 'To all ye ladies now on land,' possessed a very large collection of old ballads, 'which,' says Hearne, the antiquary, 'he used oftentimes to read with very great delight, much admiring the simplicity and nakedness of the style; and yet he was a man of admirable sense and understanding. I heard the late dean of Christ Church, Dr. Aldrich, say, the last time I was with him, that he would give a good sum of money for a collection of such ballads, whenever he could meet with one.' Dryden and Congreve also collected ballads and penny story-books. Among the most interesting collections in the library of Samuel Pepys, preserved in Magdalene College, Cambridge, is one consisting of eighteen hundred English ballads, bound in five folio volumes. This, Pepys tells us, was begun by John Selden, and continued by himself, for in the first volume he has written 'My collection of ballads, begun by Mr Selden, improv'd by the addition

<sup>1</sup> Madan, 'Bibliographica,' vol. iii., p. 304.

of many pieces elder thereto in time; and the whole continued to the year 1700.' The collection is arranged under the following heads: 1. Devotion and Morality; 2. History, true and fabulous; 3. Tragedy, viz. murders, executions, judgments of God; 4. State and Times; 5. Love, pleasant; 6. Love, unfortunate; 7. Marriage, cuckoldry; 8. Sea: love, gallantry, and actions; 9. Drinking and good fellowship; 10. Humorous frolics and mirth. Pepys also gathered a number of small penny publications, printed for the most part in black letter, which are bound in four volumes, and lettered: Vol. I. Penny Merriments; Vol. II. Penny Witticisms; Vol. III. Penny Compliments; Vol. IV. Penny Godlinesses.

John Bagford, who formed the extraordinary collection of title-pages and other papers, now preserved in the British Museum, acquired a large number of ballads and other broadsides. Hearne, who himself collected ballads and garlands, informs us that 'when Bagford went abroad he was never idle, but if he could not meet with Things of a better Character, he would divert himself with looking over Ballads, and he was always mightily pleased if he met with any that were old. Anthony à Wood made good Collections, with respect to Ballads, but he was far outdone by Mr. Bagford.' 'Our modern Ballads,' Hearne adds, 'are, for the most part, Romantick, but the old ones contain Matters of Fact, and were generally written by good Scholars. In these old ones were couched the Transactions of our great Heroes; they were a sort of Chronicles. So that the wise Founder of New College permitted them to be sung by the Fellows and Scholars of that College upon extraordinary days. In those Times, the Poets thought they had done their Duty when they had observed Truth, and put the Accounts they undertook to write, into Rhythm, without extravagantly indulging their Fancies. Nobody knew this better than Mr. Bagford; for which reason he always seemed almost ravished when he happened to light upon any old Rhythms, though

they might not, perhaps, be so properly ranged under the Title of Ballads.' In addition to the ballads, which are bound in three volumes, Bagford collected a large number of other broadsides, consisting of proclamations, early almanacs, curious advertisements of tobacco, tea, quack medicines, etc. The ballads have been edited by the Rev. Joseph Woodfall Ebsworth for the Ballad Society.

Narcissus Luttrell, who was born in 1657, formed an extensive library at Shaftesbury House, Little Chelsea, where he resided for many years in seclusion, which Hearne informs us was 'a very extraordinary collection.' A special feature of it was the large and interesting collection of broadsides and other fugitive pieces issued during the reigns of Charles II., James II., William III., and Anne, which Luttrell purchased day by day as they appeared. The broadsides consisted of ballads, elegies, political squibs, accounts of murders, storms, various sieges in Ireland in 1695-96, etc. Sir Walter Scott found this collection, which in his time was chiefly in the possession of the collectors, Mr. Heber and Mr. Bindley, very useful when editing the 'Works of Dryden,' published in eighteen volumes at London in 1808. In the preface he remarks that 'the industrious collector seems to have bought every poetical tract, of whatever merit, which was hawked through the streets in his time, marking carefully the price and date of purchase. His collection contains the earliest editions of many of our most excellent poems, bound up, according to the order of time, with the lowest trash of Grub St.' On Luttrell's death, in 1732, the collection became the property of Francis Luttrell, (presumed to be his son), who died in 1740. It afterwards passed into the possession of Mr. Serjeant Wynne, and from him descended to the Rev. Luttrell Wynne, of All Souls' College, Oxford, by whose direction the library, which had been considerably enlarged by its later possessors, was sold by auction by Messrs. Leigh and Sotheby in 1786. Various portions of the Luttrell collections were bought by Messrs. Heber and Bindley. The greater part

of those purchased by Mr. Bindley were eventually acquired by the British Museum at the Duke of Buckingham's sale in 1849, while those which belonged to Mr. Heber are now to be found on the shelves of the library at Britwell Court, Bucks. Dibdin informs us that 'a great number of poetical tracts was disposed of, previous to the sale, to Dr. Farmer, who gave not more than forty guineas for them.' The Luttrell broadsides in the British Museum are five hundred and eighty-six in number, and are bound in three large folio volumes. The first volume consists of 'Eulogies and Elegies'; the second of 'Humorous, Political, Historical, and Miscellaneous Ballads'; and the third of 'Proclamations, etc.' Luttrell is known as the compiler of a chronicle of contemporary events, which was frequently quoted by Lord Macaulay in his 'History of England'; and of a personal diary in English, but whimsically written in Greek characters, consisting principally of entries recording the hours of his rising and going to bed, the manner in which he spent his time, what friends called to see him, the sermons he heard, where and how he dined, and the occasions, which were not infrequent, when he took too much wine. This manuscript is preserved in the British Museum.

Dr. Richard Rawlinson, the great book-collector, who was born in 1690, and died in 1755, possessed a magnificent and nearly complete series of the original broadside proclamations issued during the reign of Elizabeth, and also a volume of single-sheet ballads, both of which he bequeathed to the Bodleian Library.

The famous collection of old broadside ballads in the British Museum, known as the 'Roxburghe Ballads,' which is perhaps the most extensive and interesting ever formed, was chiefly collected by Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford. It passed successively into the possession of Mr. James West and Major Thomas Pearson, and at the sale of the library of the last-named collector in 1788 it was acquired by the Duke of Roxburghe for £36 4s. 6d. Pearson, with

the help of Isaac Reed, had made valuable additions to the collection, and it was further enlarged by the Duke when he became its possessor. At the sale of the Duke's library in 1812 it was purchased by Mr. Joseph Harding for £477 15s. From Mr. Harding's hands it passed into those of Messrs. Longman of Paternoster Row, from whom it was bought by Mr. B. H. Bright, and at the dispersion of his books in 1845 it was secured by the British Museum for the sum of £535. The collection consists of two thousand and forty-eight broadsides, and is bound in three volumes, with the arms of the Duke of Roxburghe stamped on the covers. The ballads have a great range of subjects, and several of them are quoted by Shakespeare. In addition to those printed in England, there are some early Scotch ones from the press of Robert Lekpreuik of Edinburgh. They have been excellently edited for the Ballad Society by Mr. William Chappell, F.S.A., and the Rev. Joseph Woodfall Ebsworth, F.S.A. The enormous library of Mr. Richard Heber contained a large number of poetical broadsides; and one of the principal treasures of Mr. George Daniel's fine collection of books, which was sold in 1864 for £15,865 12s., was a series of Elizabethan black-letter ballads, which he is said to have purchased for £50 from Mr. William Stevenson Fitch, Postmaster at Ipswich, who is believed to have acquired them from the housekeeper at Helmingham Hall, Suffolk, the residence of the Tollemache family. Of these ballads, seventy-nine were sold to Mr. Heber by Mr. Daniel for £70, and the remaining seventy were bought at the sale of his library for £750 by Mr. Huth, who had them printed for presentation to the members of the Philobiblon Society.

The Society of Antiquaries possesses a very extensive and valuable collection of broadsides, consisting of early indulgences, proclamations, ballads, and historical pieces, ranging from the year 1486 to the present century. The proclamations form one of the most valuable sets in existence. Some of them are believed to have been collected

by Humphrey Dyson, the collector, who was co-editor with Anthony Munday of Stow's 'Survey of London,' published in 1633. Other proclamations which belonged to him are in the British Museum.

Among the ballads are several remarkable ones relating to a controversy respecting the character of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, most of which are probably unique. There are also others forming a contention in verse between Thomas Churchyard, the poet, and a writer who signed himself Thomas Camell. Other ballads of great interest are an epitaph on the death of King Edward VI., two ballads on the accession of Mary I., one on her marriage, and an epitaph on her death, a duet between England and Queen Elizabeth, a 'Doleful Ditty' on the murder of Lord Darnley, and a funeral elegy on the death of James I. An excellent catalogue of the collection was compiled by Mr. Robert Lemon, F.S.A., in 1866.

Large collections of rare broadsides are to be found in several of the great libraries of the present day, notably those of Mr. Huth and the late Mr. Christie-Miller of Britwell Court, the latter of whom acquired the greater part of the Heber broadsides; but those preserved in the library of Lord Crawford at Haigh Hall, Wigan, are specially distinguished for their size and importance. Splendid collections of broadside ballads, broadside proclamations illustrative of English, French, Dutch, German, and Italian history, and a long series of Papal bulls are to be found in this noble library. Some idea of their extent may be formed from a statement made by Lord Crawford at a meeting of the Bibliographical Society on January 17th, 1898, when he mentioned that in the last fourteen or fifteen years he had managed to collect something like nineteen thousand broadsides, including three thousand English, French, German, and Venetian proclamations, eleven thousand Papal bulls, and three thousand English ballads.

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