

SOME EARLY BOOKSELLERS AND THEIR CUSTOMERS.



ON Tuesday, the tenth of February, 1354,—in other words, in the twenty-eighth year of Edward the Third—a very serious affray between town and gown broke out at Oxford.

Some students entered the Mermaid Tavern, then known as Swyndlestoks, or Swynstocks, and called for wine. John de Croydon, vintner, served them; but the wine was not to their liking, and they told him so. It is possible that they were only indulging in a little banter at his expense, and that he, being a slow-witted or super-sensitive man, took the matter seriously and resented their remarks. But whatever the cause of the quarrel, angry words led one of the students to hurl wine and vessel at the vintner's head. He called for help, his friends and neighbours rushed in, and the gownsmen had to fight for their lives. There was always a latent hostility between the scholars and the townsmen, the latter resenting the power over them that was given to the Chancellor of the University. The slightest provocation was enough to bring masters and apprentices, and even women, into the streets, armed with bows and arrows, sticks and stones, for an attack on the students, and on this occasion the

signal was given by the ringing of the town bell at St. Martin's. On the other hand, the gowmsmen summoned their fellows by ringing the University bell at St. Mary's.

Few, if any, of the colleges, as we know them now, were then in existence, the clerks or scholars living with the professors under whom they were studying in what were known as hostels or inns. The Chancellor of the University at that time was Humphrey de Cherleton, who narrowly escaped being transfixd by an arrow on venturing into the streets to try to quell this disturbance. Nothing more serious than broken heads resulted before darkness put an end to the scrimmage, and the Chancellor no doubt thought that, as on previous occasions, a night's reflection would bring peace between the combatants. But in this he was mistaken. Early the following morning the townsmen, summoned by the ringing of the town bell, gathered in large numbers, and not content with attacking any student who happened to be abroad, made an organised attack on the hostels or inns in which they lived, killing the inmates and destroying their books and furniture.

This went on for two or three days, with the result that most of the clerks or students who were resident in the town were either killed or fled into the surrounding country. Amongst those who appear to have remained was Lewis de Cherleton, brother of the Chancellor, afterwards Bishop of Hereford, but then merely a teacher in the University, taking private pupils in theology, civil law, and mathematics. The house in which he lived was known

414 SOME EARLY BOOKSELLERS

as Cherleton's Inn, and stood on the site of All Souls' College. In all probability it escaped attack by the turbulent citizens, but on this point there is no information. It can, however, be readily believed that Lewis de Cherleton, as well as his brother the Chancellor, must have been an eye-witness of, if not an actual participator in, the wild scenes enacted in Oxford during those eventful days. At any rate, both of them set to work to restore peace without delay, and obtained from the King the release of some of the townsmen who had been imprisoned for their share in the riot, as well as his protection for the scholars—an act of generosity that led to their names being enrolled in the album of benefactors, and an annual mass for their souls being celebrated on St. Edmund's Day.

Another citizen of Oxford at that time was Richard Lynne, stationer to the University. His shop was perhaps in Cat Street, which seems to have been the home of stationers of a later date. At any rate, he was a dealer in books, and is certainly one of the earliest provincial stationers of whom we have any record. Amongst his customers was Lewis de Cherleton, who on the 8th February, 1358 (? 1359), bought of him a copy of the '*Historia Scholastica*' of Petrus Comestor. This book is now in the possession of New College, and is described by Coxe as a folio, written in double columns in a hand of the thirteenth century. The volume had previously been in the possession of John and Stephen de Harnesby, by whom it had been pledged on the Monday next before the feast of St. Gregory, in

1354, and was afterwards in the hands of an unknown scholar, who also placed it as a 'cautio,' or bond, 'in cista de Turwille . . . crastino Sancti Vincentii anno Domini m.ccc.lvi.,' all which interesting information is duly recorded in the volume itself, and has been faithfully set down by Coxe in his catalogue.

New College also possesses another copy of the same work, or the second part of it, which belonged to an Oxford man of note, Thomas Cranley, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin. He began his college career as a Fellow of Merton in 1366, and successively held the offices of Principal of Hart Hall and Warden of New. It was probably about that time that he bought this book of John Brown, stationer, of Oxford, a fact which he duly recorded at the commencement of the manuscript, but without saying when, or what he gave for it. At any rate, we may be grateful to him for preserving this stationer's name. Archbishop Cranley was a great book-collector, and many of his treasured volumes are still on the shelves of New College, to which he bequeathed them.

Particulars of another interesting book-sale are recorded by Coxe in his description of the manuscripts of University College, Oxford. The work is described as, '*Gulielmi Peraldi Lugdunensis opus de vitiis septem in partes totidem distinctum*,' a folio of 228 leaves, in a thirteenth-century hand. This book was bought by William Palmer, sometime precentor of the church at Crediton, in Devon, of Thomas Veysey, stationer, of London, in August, 1433, for the sum of £1 13s. 4d., and was afterwards

416 SOME EARLY BOOKSELLERS

given to the dean and parishioners of Crediton by William Palmer's executor, John Lyndon. Of the purchaser we know no more than this note tells us; but Thomas Veysey, the stationer, can be traced on the De Banco Rolls as late as the year 1478. (De Banco Roll, Mich. 18 Ed. 4, roll 868 m, 490 verso.)

Passing now from Oxford to Cambridge, I am indebted to Mr. G. J. Gray for the following note from Dr. James's Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College. No. 164 is a small folio in a hand of the fourteenth century, containing Ralph Higden's 'Polychronicon,' the 'Biblia Pauperum,' and other works, and at the foot of the first folio is written—

'liber m. Johannis Gunthorp decani Wellensis emptus a david lyenel 13^a Julii a^o. vij^o h. vij^m pro iiij^s iiij^d.'

The purchaser in this case was an ecclesiastic, who, like Wolsey and Cromwell in later times, rose to great power in the State. Some accounts say that he was educated at Balliol College, Oxford, and that with John Free or Freas he studied in foreign universities. In 1483 he was appointed Keeper of the Privy Seal, with a salary of twenty shillings a day, to be taken from the subsidies of the ports of Sandwich, Poole, Bristol, and Bridgewater. He also held the office of Clerk of the Parliament, with an annual salary of £40. In addition to this, he was King's Almoner, Secretary to the Queen, Prebendary of St. Stephen's, Westminster, Master or Warden of Queen's Hall, Cambridge, and, finally, Dean of Wells, where he died in 1498.

There is no doubt that John Gunthorp possessed a large number of books, many of which he had picked up during his travels abroad, while others, like the one above noted, were purchased in London.

It will be noticed that nothing is said by Gunthorp to show that David Lyenel was a 'stationer,' but we learn this from the De Banco Rolls, on which his name occurs twice in the years 1484-5. In the first he figures as 'David Leonell stationer and serjeant at arms,' and as defendant in a suit brought by John Pery, grocer. In the second he went bail for a certain Hugh Lyonell, goldsmith, of London, possibly a brother. (De Banco Rolls, 890 m 438 recto, and 894 m 28 verso.)

He was appointed one of the King's Sergeants-at-Arms in 1474, and received twelve pence for his wages from the fee farm of the City of London, and a livery of the suit of esquires of the household yearly at Christmas at the Great Wardrobe. (Calendar of Patents, Edward IV—Henry VI, p. 461.) In some accounts of the reign of Edward IV, preserved amongst the Harleian Manuscripts, is a payment of £18 5s. to 'David Leonell serjeant at arms.' (Harl. 433, f. 310^b.)

Here then we have four 'stationers' who prove to have been dealers in books, and the fact that the names of Thomas Veysey and David Lyenel as stationers came to light before the discovery of these book sales, emphasizes the importance of making a note of all 'stationers,' wherever they may be found. Thanks to the De Banco Roll

418 SOME EARLY BOOKSELLERS.

entries, we now know that Thomas Veysey's life-work covered a period of at least forty-five years, while David Lyenel can be traced from the year 1474, when he was made sergeant-at-arms, until 1491, the year in which he sold John Gunthorp the copy of Higden's 'Polychronicon,' now on the shelves of Corpus Christi College.

HENRY R. PLOMER.