

FIRST EDITIONS OF MODERN BOOKS.

SOME people are apt to scoff at the book-lover's pride in the possession of the first edition of any modern work, and to question the value, often very considerable, placed on copies of the *editio princeps* of a famous book. In the case of older books the steady decline in accuracy of each successive reprint is gradually being recognized, but for more modern masterpieces any copy which contains the author's full text is often regarded as all that is needed, and the later or most recent edition is preferred to the earlier one, especially if the former has been 'revised and corrected by the author.'

It is not, however, solely on account of its relative rarity that the first edition is coveted by the bibliographer; there are many cases in which the earlier issue is capable of solving questions as to date, which are of importance, or of bringing to light points that cannot be established from subsequent editions of the work. A comparison of the different issues may in some instances, moreover, reveal the workings of the author's mind, or enable deductions to be made concerning his original plan.

FIRST EDITIONS OF MODERN BOOKS. 27

In order to illustrate these views, it may not be amiss to describe the first editions of certain famous and familiar books which will last as long as our language endures; books, moreover, which belong to our own era and which cannot, we think, fail to have countless admirers. Let us begin with 'The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,' the masterpiece of Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The 'Autocrat' first made his bow in a guise that presents some difficulties to the bibliographer, and which deprives, what we desire to claim as the first edition, of the merit of being the earliest appearance of these essays in print, since the work, as many will probably know, was originally published in parts in 'The Atlantic Monthly' in 1857. There are those who would have us bind together extracts from the numbers of that magazine, in which the book was from time to time issued, prepare for them a special title-page, and regard the result as the first edition, and to these purists our present copy, published at Boston in 1858, would only be the 'first edition in book form.'

We are inclined to admit that in certain cases, as for example that of the immortal 'Pickwick Papers,' in which the work first came out in separate parts, not incorporated along with other matter in a periodical, these parts must be bound up together (with the wrappers preserved), in order to obtain a true first edition, but we think that when the publication originally took place as a series of magazine articles, the first issue of the complete work in the form of a book constitutes a genuine *editio princeps*. If this view is the correct

one, the neat little cloth-covered octavo now before us is the veritable first edition of 'The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.'

The title-page, very indifferently set out, is printed in alternate lines of red and black, with the motto in the centre in minute type: 'Every man his own Boswell.' The publishers are Phillips, Sampson and Company of Boston, and the date, 1858, is at the foot in Roman numerals. On the verso of the title-page is the copyright entry by the author 'in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts' and the imprint—'Riverside, Cambridge: stereotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton and Company.'

Perhaps the most notable feature of the book is what follows next: in the place where we might expect to encounter the preface is an article entitled: 'The Autocrat's Autobiography,'—which occupies four pages, numbered in Roman numerals (V) to VIII. This introductory matter is signed 'Oliver Wendell Holmes' and is dated 'Boston Nov. 1st 1858.' Then we have the charming disquisition itself, on pages (1) to 364, while the very copious index is contained on the remaining pages (365) to 373. The verso of the last leaf is blank, and finally appear two pages of advertisements of 'valuable books' issued by the above publishers. The end papers are also used to display the titles of more of the publications of the firm. The cover is of brown cloth, with a circular central panel, lettered 'Autocrat, P. S. and Co.' both on the upper and under sides. On the back, in gold, is the title in Gothic letters 'Autocrat / of the / Break-

fast / Table / Holmes,' the author's name being in Roman capitals.

This description of certain of the chief features of the book will be sufficient for the purposes of identification, without unduly tiring the reader with mere bibliographical details. We should perhaps add that the work contains eight illustrations by Hoppin on separate leaves, which are not numbered.

In the numerous English editions of this book, or at any rate in many of them which we have been able to consult, the 'Autocrat's autobiography' is absent, and is replaced by a brief life of the author. There is, however, no autobiography and no life in the first English issue, published by Alexr. Strahan and Co., in 1859, where the work is divided moreover into 'XII Breakfasts'! The story of the genesis of the book, which is thus lost to so many of the readers in this country, contains numerous features of interest, not the least of which is the fact that the title belongs properly to two articles, published by Holmes, so far back as November 1831 and February 1832, in the 'New England Magazine' of Boston. In his opening paragraph the Author of the 'Autocrat' tells us that he was going to say when he 'was interrupted, that one of the many ways of classifying minds is under the heads of arithmetical and algebraical intellects.' In the 'Autobiography' he announces that 'the interruption referred to in the first sentence of the first of these papers was just a quarter of a century in duration' and he proceeds to tell us of the earlier articles of 'his uncombed literary

boyhood.' From these he gives a few extracts, and he assures us that they will not be reprinted. He playfully speaks of the authorship of the former essays as follows: 'This son of mine, whom I have not seen for these twenty-five years, generously counted, was a self-willed youth, always too ready to utter his unchastised fancies. He, like too many American young people, got the spur when he should have had the rein. He therefore helped to fill the market with that unripe fruit which his father says in one of these papers abounds in the marts of his native country.'

It is delightful to find in a book which contains so much that is quotable such a full index. The reader can at once turn to the simile of the 'Huma' that 'odious fowl,' the Elzevir 'Erasmus,' with the names of its forgotten owners, or 'the schoolmistress' with her experiences of life and the episode at 'the long path.'

Somehow or other the illustrations will bring to many a reader a sense of disappointment, especially if they come before him after he has read and re-read these charming essays, without such aids to his imagination. Perhaps the best of them is the counterfeit presentment of 'Our Benj. Franklin,' the boy of the landlady, and 'The Deacon,' contemplating the design for 'the wonderful "one-hoss-shay."' Holmes has made many of these characters so real to us that we are liable to expect too much from the artist. The earliest illustrated edition in this Country was, we believe, that of Alexr. Strahan in 1865, with small woodcuts by J. G. Thomson.

We have lingered unduly long over the first of the books chosen, and we must examine our second treasure with less demands upon the readers' patience. Let us turn to another well known work, which also made its first appearance in a monthly magazine,—ten years before Holmes began to write,—namely the 'Confessions of an English Opium-eater' by Thomas De Quincey.

The forerunner of countless editions of this fragment of autobiography, after having passed through the pages of the 'London Magazine' in October and November 1821, was published in boards, as a small duodecimo volume, of which the following is the full title-page: 'Confessions / of an / English Opium-eater. / London: / Printed for Taylor and Hessey, Fleet Street, / 1822.' / The imprint on the verso of the bastard-title is 'London:—Printed by J. Moyes, Greville Street.'

The work begins with a 'Notice to the Reader,' occupying two pages, (V) and VI, and dated at the end 'Oct. 1, 1821.' The 'Confessions' extend from page (1) to page 185, the verso of which is blank. Pages (187) to 206 are occupied by the 'Appendix,' which is end-dated 'Sept. 30th, 1822,' and is followed by 'The end.' At the foot of the page is the same imprint as that already quoted. The Appendix explains the reason for the non-appearance in the 'London Magazine' of a promised 'Third Part' and gives a medical account of his case, written by the author in the first person.

From the 'Notice to the reader' we learn that the period included in the narrative 'lies between
3. the early part of July, 1802 and the beginning or

middle of March, 1803.' It may be interesting to bear in mind that from De Quincey's 'Suspiria de Profundis,' it would seem that 'the object of the work was to reveal something of the grandeur which belongs potentially to human dreams.' In what is called the 'Original Preface to the Confessions in the year 1821,' in the sixteen-volume edition of De Quincey's works, 'carefully revised by the Author, and greatly enlarged,' published by Adam and Charles Black of Edinburgh in 1862, we find that what the Author 'contemplated in these Confessions was to emblazon the power of opium—not over bodily disease and pain, but over the grander and more shadowy world of dreams.'

Few works with which we are acquainted have been more completely changed under the hands of their Author than these 'Confessions' have been, and even the 'Original Preface of 1821' as set forth in the edition of 1862 bears but a faint resemblance to that preface as it appears in the *editio princeps*, now before us: the words that we have quoted above are not to be found therein.

It is a matter of some difficulty to discover in the 'Confessions' of 1862 the true Confessions of 1821. Not only is the form of the narrative altered, but even the object with which it was written. We are not aware that any serious attempt has ever been made to trace the workings of De Quincey's mind in the changes that were from time to time effected in his wonderful essay, but the facts would we think well repay careful study. The Appendix of the first edition vanishes entirely later on, but we find some allusion to it in the 'Suspiria,' where

De Quincey says—‘At the close of this little work, the reader was instructed to believe and *truly* instructed that I had mastered the tyranny of opium.’ But he goes on to show that this was a fallacy and that he subsequently ‘became profoundly aware that this was impossible.’

It is in view of such changes as those undergone in later editions by the ‘Confessions of an English Opium-eater’ that the first edition possesses so many features of interest and importance, and we trust we may have here said enough to induce the courteous reader to bear with us in our deep admiration for the rare little book we have just been attempting to describe.

GILBERT R. REDGRAVE.