

THE PETITION OF SWEYNHEYM AND PANNARTZ TO SIXTUS IV.

WHAT little information we possess as to the career of Conrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz, the first printers at Rome, has hitherto largely derived from one single source. This is the famous appeal to Pope Sixtus IV written in the name of the two partners by their editor, Bishop Joannes Andreae of Aleria, and prefixed to the fifth volume of their edition of Nicolaus de Lyra's 'Postilla super Bibliam' (Hain *10363), completed 13th March, 1472. 'We first among the Germans,' Sweynheym and Pannartz are made to say, 'brought the printing art to Rome, at great labour and expense. We battled against difficulties which others refused to meet, and as a result our money is spent, and our house is full of unsold quires, but empty of the means of subsistence. Broken in strength we implore your gracious help, in return for which we will gladly give you as many copies of our handiwork as you choose to have.' Such is the substance of the appeal, which is followed by the catalogue of the printers' productions, together with the number of copies of each work struck off.

The document has, of course, been well known to students of early printing ever since the date of

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Audiffredi's *Catalogus*, if not earlier, but it seems to have escaped attention that the Bishop of Aleria's flowing periods were reinforced by a direct and very businesslike petition addressed to the Pope by Sweynheym and Pannartz in person, although the evidence for this has been in print for nearly twenty years. It is contained in an article by Dr. Joseph Schlecht, entitled 'Sixtus IV und die deutschen Drucker in Rom,' occupying pp. 207-11 of a 'Festschrift zum elfhundert-jährigen Jubiläum des deutschen Campo Santo in Rom,' edited by Dr. Stephan Ehses and published at Freiburg i. B. in 1897. Dr. Schlecht came across this most interesting and valuable record while looking through a volume of miscellaneous petitions¹ presented in the first year of Sixtus IV (10th August, 1471-9th August, 1472); its precise date is not indicated, but it must be supposed to have synchronized more or less closely with the date of the preface to the *Lyra* quoted above, and may thus be assigned to March, 1472. The name of Bishop Joannes, in the form 'Io. An. Aleriensis,' is written in the margin, presumably as that of the backer of the petition. The text runs as follows:

Supplicanti sanctitati vestre deuoti oratores vestri
 Conradus Sweynheym et Arnoldus Pannartz clerici
 Maguntine et Coloniensis diocesis impressores librorum
 circa domum Maximi, quatenus eis specialem gratiam
 facientes de duobus canonicatibus duarum cathedra-
 lium etiam metropolitanarum vel collegiatarum cum
 reseruatione totidem inibi prebendarum etiam maiorum
 ac dignitatum personatus administrationis vel officii etiam

¹ Arch. Secr. Vatic. Supplic. Sixti IV, An. 1^o, tom. 1.

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curatorum et electorum alterius earundem ecclesiarum; necnon de uno vel duobus beneficio seu beneficiis ecclesiastico vel ecclesiasticis, etiam si alterum cum cura dignitas personatus aut decanatus vel archipresbyteratus ruralis, seu quodlibet ipsorum canonicatus et prebenda administratio vel officium etiam curatorum vel electorum in eisdem ecclesiis fuerit seu fuerint vacans vel vacatura, spectantia communiter vel diuisim ad collationem etc. omnium et singulorum collatorum seu collatricum secularium vel regularium per eos in confectioe litterarum ubilibet eligendorum etiam ratione dignitatum etc. eisdem Conrado et Arnolfo providere dignemini de gratia speciali cum non obstantibus et clausulis oportunis.

Et sub data kalendis ianuarii pontificatus vestri anno primo.

Et ad duas collationes et totidem beneficia.

Et ad canonicatus et prebendam in cathedralibus etiam metropolitanis.

Et ad dignitates ac supradictas prebendas in eisdem.

Et cum derogatione statuti de optando.

Et quod non obstantibus ipsorum oratorum habeantur pro expressis.

Et cum clausulis absolucionis a censuris etc. quoad effectum etc.

Et quod littere apostolice desuper ubique gratis expediantur, etiam in taxa abbreviatorum.

At the end of the main petition the Pope has written 'Fiat ut petitur de expectatiuis pro ambobus,' while along the margin, so as to include the whole document, are added the words 'Fiat ut supra. F.'

Bibliographically speaking, the chief interest of this petition lies in the first lines, which tell us, what we did not know before, that Sweynheim and Pannartz were clerics, like so many of their

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fellow-craftsmen both at Rome and elsewhere. Sweynheim, it is to be presumed, was of the diocese of Mainz, and Pannartz of the diocese of Cologne; this would certainly support the conjectural identification of 'Sweynheim' with the village of Schwanheim on the Main between Mainz and Frankfort, but on the other hand seems to dispose of the statement that Pannartz was a native of Prague—a statement which the present writer has not been able to trace to its source, although it appears to be comparatively modern. As for the substance of the petition, it is clear that the two partners, having once made up their minds to beg, begged hardily. Their demands (as summarized by Dr. Schlecht) are, firstly, a canonry each in a cathedral church, with the prebends attaching thereto, even though these should be 'major' prebends, or conditional on personal ministry: secondly, one or two benefices each, even though these should be connected with a rural deanery or other office (for which a *locum tenens* would have to be found), conferable in any diocese whatsoever, in whosoever gift the benefice might ordinarily be: further, the bull conferring these favours to be dated back to the first of January of the first year of the Pontificate and all necessary absolutions and immunities to be taken as granted: finally, all official fees to be remitted, even those payable to the Apostolic Chancellery itself. The whole document, no doubt in accordance with precedent, is as formally and methodically drawn up as any contract or conveyance.

13 It has hitherto been usual to suppose that the

Pope turned a deaf ear to the printers' appeal. The record under discussion shows that, on the contrary, he accorded all that they asked of him freely and fully. No doubt the Bishop of Aleria, whom he had just appointed chief librarian of the Vatican Library, proved a powerful advocate on their behalf, but in any case Sixtus IV was not the man to refuse his help to so notable a pair of craftsmen as Sweynheym and Pannartz. Presumably it was his timely assistance that enabled the firm to carry on for rather more than another twelvemonth, though how or where the Pope's *gratia exspectatiua* was converted into cash we do not know; the Bishop of Aleria, whose prefaces might have told us, severed his connection with printing as soon as possible after taking up his new post, overjoyed to be quit of the drudgery of editing Latin texts.¹ The partnership was dissolved after the completion of an edition of Pliny's 'Natural History' on 7th May, 1473.² Pannartz resumed printing alone about eighteen months later and died in 1476, Sweynheym, who devoted himself to map-engraving, was dead by 1478.

V. SCHOLDERER.

¹ See his prefatory letter to the first part of the *Lyra* (13th November, 1471).

² The *Polybicus*, bearing the printed date, 'M.CCCC.LXXIII. die iouis ultima decembris' Hain *13246), was in fact completed on the last day of the year 1472, this, and not the last day of 1473, falling on a Thursday.