

# THE LIBRARY.

## TWO LOST CAUSES

### AND WHAT MAY BE SAID IN DEFENCE OF THEM.

**T**HE defenders of a losing or lost cause have, if they are honest in purpose, at least this point in common with the victorious attackers, that they are endeavouring to discover and establish the truth, to whatever issue it may lead. At any rate in the field of bibliographical encounters we may charitably affect a belief in this community of aim. By the courtesy of the editors of 'THE LIBRARY' some notes on two literary problems which are in one way or another connected with Oxford (the 'home of lost causes'), and are generally regarded as *res judicatae*, are accorded publicity in its pages. As soon as any proof positive is forthcoming all defence of the causes will be given up. In the absence of any overmastering consideration there is still a certain piquancy about the questions at issue which may claim the interest of readers during an idle half hour, and may even, let us hope, lead in the near future to decisive results.

The two 'Lost Causes' concern the '1468' Oxford printed book, and a supposed Shakespeare autograph in the Bodleian Library. The former has been regarded as a closed question by all bibliographers of the first class, beginning with that prince of book-men, Henry Bradshaw. The second has been ably and weightily discussed by the veteran palæographer, Sir Edward Maunde Thompson ('LIBRARY,' vol. viii [1917], pp. 208-17), and unhesitatingly condemned as a clumsy fabrication. What room is left for any further argument, in the face of such pronouncements? The reply is that in both these questions, though proof is quite possible and probably existent, that proof is not at present forthcoming.

#### A. THE OXFORD 'JEROME' OF '1468.'

The Oxford 'Expositio sancti Ieronymi in symbolum apostolorum' bears the clear colophon ' . . . Impressa Oxonie Et finita An | no domini. M.cccc. lxxvij. xvij. die | decembris.' The year-date is stated to be undoubtedly 1478, an *x* having dropped out.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that the onus of proof lies on those who believe in 1478. The date is clearly printed, the line is not crowded (there is room for another *x*), and it is believed that in no one of the thirteen copies known is there any correction of the date in manuscript; whereas in the third Oxford book, the 1479 'Aegidius,' all the three copies known

<sup>1</sup> It is not pretended that mistakes in date are uncommon in early printing, but I think they never occur in the first product of a press, and without correction till 250 years after the occurrence.

contain a manuscript correction of a faulty piece of grammar in the colophon. The ordinary arguments are :

1. *The presence of signatures.* The book bears printed signatures, close beneath the text of the *recto* of each leaf in the first half of each sheet. These are first found elsewhere in printing of 1472 and next in 1474 (both at Cologne). Could an isolated printer in a provincial town of England have invented them in 1468? It is not always remembered that every manuscript and probably every early printed book bears, or bore, *written* signatures (for the guidance of the binder), and that all the invention needed was to put the manuscript marks into print in the only position in which they could readily be printed. And if signature-printing in 1468 is voted impossible, what of the 1472 book? It is an equally awkward phenomenon, exhibiting the same want of precedent, the same absence of imitators, the same isolated appearance. As Blades says, 'It is dangerous to assert that a book is wrongly dated because you cannot make it fit into a bibliographical theory.'

2. *The similarity of the printing of '1468' and 1479.* 'In fact,' says Blades, 'if a leaf of the "Jerome" was extracted and inserted in the "Aretinus" (1479), it would, typographically, excite no remark.'

But is this true? The 'Jerome' allows unevenness at the right hand edge of a column; not so the 'Aretinus.' The 'Jerome' starts printing on a i, the 'Aretinus' on a ii. In the 'Jerome' there is a peculiar use of H and Q, not found afterwards. And in 1479 new letters and new colligated forms

are found. There is also the important detail that the 'Jerome' was printed one page at a time, and the 'Aretinus' two pages at a time. In all these points there is a notable difference between the two.

A cessation of some years is by no means uncommon. At Bamberg there was printing in 1461-2; and next in 1481-4, 1487, 1490-1 by the same printer; at Saragossa very similar type was used in 1475 and 1478, but not between; and the next occurrence of printing is in 1481. So at Speier there was printing in 1471-2 and then 1477; and at Lübeck in 1475-6, 1478, 1483. At Reggio d'Emilia a printer named Albertus printed in 1481-1482, and with the *same type* in 1487, but there was no printing at Reggio between those dates. A study of Proctor or Copinger or Burger on incunabula provides plenty more examples.

3. A strong argument for 1478 is derived from a consideration of the *type used*. It is certainly derived from Cologne, and has been developed from Zel's letters. Zel began printing in 1466 at latest. It is more like Arnold ther Hoernen's printing (Cologne, from 1470), and especially Gerard ten Raem de Bercka, of Cologne, whose only *dated* book is of 1478. This argument from Gerard's type is only just not decisive.

4. The argument from other books found bound with the 'Jerome' is quite unsafe, until we find an offset from the '1468' book on books which were bound with it so soon after its issue from the press that the ink had not had time to dry.

When the advocate of 1478 lays out his detailed argument on these four points, the result is a

decided cumulative probability in his favour, and in 1895 and 1912 ('Oxford Books,' vols. 1 and 2), I had to confess that the attack was severe, and that no fresh defending forces were in sight. Indeed, up to this point my readers may well complain that I have served up 'crambe repetita' for their regalement.

But the strange thing is that two more quite fresh arguments can now be adduced, one first available in 1915 and the other in 1917! These are derived from (1) watermarks, (2) the facts about Theoderic Rood's appearance in Oxford. But again, neither is decisive against 1468.

5. *Watermarks.* In 1915 the Rev. Dr. P. H. Aitken, who was then hard at work in the Oxford College Libraries, investigating and listing early books, found time to look closely at the seven watermarks of the 'Jerome,' and to note what is stated about them in Briquet and Likačev. I fully expected that one or more of the seven would be demonstrably impossible so early as 1468. It is truly remarkable that, according to his researches, every one of the seven is found in paper *of, or earlier than*, 1468. If then the printing be of 1479 all the paper used could have been at least ten years old—a most unusual possibility. A further careful investigation should be made in this direction.<sup>1</sup>

6. *Theoderic Rood in Oxford.* The Rev. H. E.

<sup>1</sup> The facts about the watermarks of the earliest Oxford Press are remarkable. Out of 50, no less than 26 are in the first group (the 'Jerome,' 'Aretinus,' and 'Aegidius,' '1468'-1479). The 'Jerome' has seven, of which three are peculiar to itself, but one is shared with the Latteburius of 1482, two run through the whole group of sixteen, and one is shared with the 'Aretinus' only.

Salter has lately been printing the existing records of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem at Oxford, on the site of which part of Magdalen College now stands. He has most ably edited for the College and the Oxford Historical Society (in three volumes) the Hospital's Cartulary and Rentals, and in the course of his work has discovered, not only the precise position of the bookshop in which John Dorne in 1520 sold his almanacs and ballads and books, but also the very spot (now 35 and 36 High Street, just half-way between All Souls and Queen's) where Theoderic Rood lived and printed. The new facts are chiefly to be found in the existing Rentals of the Hospital.<sup>1</sup>

The entries which immediately concern us are as follows, it being premised that the only existing rentals between 1450 and 1490 are for Michaelmas of the years 1453, 1478, 1480, 1481, 1482, 1484, and 1487. The tenement in question, formerly part of George Hall, is thus described:

- 1453. xx. De domo quam Johannes Mathew tenet.  
vis. viiid. De schopa proxima; idem Johannes.
- 1478. xxvis. viiid. Pro tenemento quod Johannes Ducheman nuper tenuit.
- 1480. xxvis. viiid. De domo in qua manet Dyryke Dowcheman.
- 1481. xxvis. viiid. (*The same.*)
- 1482. xxvis. viiid. Dyryk Rode.

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note, as Mr. Salter warns us, that a rental of 29th September, 1400, for instance, is a prospective, and not a retrospective document. It shows the probable income to be expected from payments between 29th September, 1400, and 28th September, 1401, and *not* the actual income received during the year ending on 29th September, 1400.

1484. xxvis. vii<sup>id</sup>. De tenemento in quo manet Johannes Myssyndene.

1487. xxvis. vii<sup>id</sup>. Johannes Myssynden taylour.

These interesting and authentic entries show that (1) on 29th September, 1478, a 'Dutchman' named John had recently vacated the house, (2) not later than 29th September, 1480, a 'Dutchman' named Theoderic Rood was occupier of the house until at least 29th September, 1482, and left not later than 29th September, 1484.

Compare this with the ascertained facts of the early Oxford Press. Type 1 (the kind based on Zel's) is found on 17th December, '1468,' in 1479, and on 14th March, 1480. Type 2 (known to be used by 'Theodoricus Rood de Colonia') is found, probably in 1480, certainly from 11th October, 1481, to 31st July, 1482. In 1485 Th. Rood and Thomas Hunte are found, with new type first used probably in 1483, as partners in printing. The last known product of the Oxford Press is dated 19th March, 1487.

Obviously the two sets of data suggest, in perfect accord, that Rood settled in Oxford before September of 1480, and left his house, when he entered into partnership with Hunt, soon after September, 1482.

But our real interest is in the printer (if so be) who used type 1 before Rood came. Rood probably arrived in 1479 or 1480, and certainly became tenant of a house recently occupied by a countryman of his own, named John. He came to print, and some printer with Cologne type had recently, it would seem, ceased to print. It is quite possible

that John was that first printer, and there is nothing whatever in the new evidence to disprove the contention that John first printed in 1468.

The following is suggested as a working hypothesis. John, a 'Dutchman,' came to Oxford in 1468 with Cologne type, founded on Zel's who began to print in 1466 at latest. By 1467 Zel in his attempts to settle the best size for an octavo page had gradually brought down his number of lines in one page from 34 to 27. The first Oxford printer always has 25. In Oxford John of Cologne printed one book at the close of 1468, and then, whether from the opposition of the numerous professional scribes and copyists in the University, or from the failure of the book to bring in money, gave over printing, but kept his type and paper. Time passed, and after ten years of other work he again essayed a book, being not ignorant of the continuous development of printing, nor perhaps of the impending arrival of his countryman. He even improved his fount, but before September, 1478, had given up his house, though he managed to produce, or to arrange that Rood should produce (from the old type, with some additions, and with the old stock of paper) at least two books, the 'Aretinus' in 1479 and the 'Aegidius' in 1480. After this he is heard of no more. Theodoric Rood takes his place, and late in 1480 introduces his new type, and issues the first edition of a classical author in England, the Cicero 'Pro Milone.'

The only point of this part of the article is that, however much probabilities may point to other



conclusions, the conjectural hypothesis just stated does not at present conflict with ascertained facts. If it elicits at last some decisive disproof, it will not have been put forward in vain.

## B. A SUPPOSED SHAKESPEARE AUTOGRAPH.

An Aldine edition of the 'Metamorphoses' of Ovid, printed at Venice in 1502 in small octavo, and now in the Bodleian Library, bears many Latin sixteenth century notes in foreign hands, and on the title-page, just above the Aldine anchor, 'W<sup>m</sup> Sh<sup>r</sup>' or perhaps 'W<sup>m</sup> Sh<sup>re</sup>.' On the inside front cover of the book opposite the inscription (for there is now no fly-leaf between the two) is written in a rather rough hand, 'This little Booke of Ovid was given to me by W Hall who sayd it was once Will Shakesperes. T. N. 1682,' followed by a kind of Abracadabra knot. A collotype facsimile of the two pages is Plate VII in the quarto (five shilling) edition of the Bodleian 'Catalogue of the Shakespeare Exhibition,' 1916, which can still be purchased from the Bodleian Library.

The little book is a small, dumpy, well-worn volume of 534 pages, with no printed pagination.<sup>1</sup> It was certainly in foreign hands during the sixteenth century, and its blind-tooled binding is German work of about 1550. The first half of the text of the 'Metamorphoses' is copiously annotated in Latin with a fine pen. There are

<sup>1</sup> The Index Fabularum is constructed as if the body of the work *were* paged, and the reader is naively requested to paginate it himself, if he wishes to use the index!

also a few German notes. Then, presumably late in the same century, a schoolboy has drawn gibbets and hanging figures, and sometimes heads or faces in the margin. Only one pen-and-ink sketch has any merit whatever, that on p. 42, illustrating a 'nemus gelidum' and issuant spring of water ('Metam.' ii, 455).

The volume is worn, and while the title-page is smooth and unwrinkled, the front inside cover which faces it, and bears the Note of attestation, is soiled, uneven in surface, and in places wrinkled and rubbed. To write on such a surface with any regularity was difficult, and further wear and tear has affected the writing thus attempted. The theory is that the book was knocking about in some country town such as Stratford-on-Avon, was embellished as described by a grammar school boy, and was picked up by Shakespeare after his retirement to his native town, between 1611 and 1616,<sup>1</sup> and inscribed with his name. His presumably increasing ill-health would tell on his handwriting, and after his death the little Ovid would remain in the family till his grand-daughter (a Hall) died in 1670, and might pass through a relative of her to T. N. in 1682. Dr. Macray remarks that a William Hall was living in Stratford from 1660 to at least 1684, and that the Nash family was

<sup>1</sup> To show Shakespeare's interest in Ovid from youth to age it is sufficient to refer to Sir Sidney Lee's 'Life of Shakespeare' (1915), p. 20, 'Ovid's poetry filled the predominant place among the studies of Shakespeare's schooldays,' and to the notes about his special indebtedness to the 'Metamorphoses.' As Lee remarks, the name of Titania is from Ovid's Latin text, while the early English translations represent it by Diana.

closely connected with Shakespeare's. Nothing is known of its later history until at the Elkins sale in January, 1865, it was purchased by the Bodleian.

Obviously if the signature is genuine the note is probably genuine; but if the signature is forged, the note may or may not be genuine, for the signature may have been forged to suit a genuine note, or the forger may have fabricated both. Sir Edward Maunde Thompson's powerful and destructive artillery is directed against both signature and note. Of the signature he writes, 'This is a forgery. The letters *W* and *S* are copied from those letters in the principal signatures to Shakespeare's Will. . . . In the case of the *S* the forger has come to grief completely. . . . It is a grotesque idea to imagine Shakespeare writing his name in his books in his death-bed hand.' 'It is a relief to dismiss this clumsy fabrication.' Of the Note he writes, 'The vagaries of this wild impostor,' who makes 'the poet's name like nothing written in heaven or earth.' 'It is an absurd attempt.'

It may seem odd that there should be anything whatever to say, after these denunciations.

### THE NOTE.

The Note may be taken first. Let us assume for a moment that it is genuine. It is obviously a note which would not naturally be written until some years after Shakespeare's death—the expression 'once Will Shakespeare's' shows that. That expression, moreover, may well be, not T. N.'s, but W. Hall's language, in handing on the relic to

a younger generation. As I have stated, Shakespeare's grand-daughter Elizabeth (who was a Hall) did not die till 1670, so the date given in the note, namely 1682, is not an impossible one.

But Sir Edward will have it that the date is 1602, and that the forger wrote the note in 'a style that might, he hoped, be taken for the Elizabethan hand of that period'; in fact he 'tried to give his writing a pseudo-antiquated aspect by introducing pseudo-archaic forms and clumsy exaggerations.' 'The style of writing is not the English script' of 1602. Having set up this puppet of 1602 Sir Edward has no difficulty at all in knocking it over by contrasting it with a specimen of Elizabethan handwriting. 'Why, so can I, or so can any man.' The note is dated 1682, and the writing agrees with that date, and not with 1602.

Every large library of manuscripts has some collection of historical papers bound in chronological order, and if fortunate has so long a series that the papers of a single year may occupy a volume of two or three hundred leaves. The Tanner Collection at the Bodleian Library includes a set of 61 folio volumes covering the period 1559 to 1699. Having the date 1682 for the note, I consulted the volume for that year. I expected to find some of the forms of the note, and not others. The volume (MS. Tanner 34) contains, on 293 leaves, correspondence of, and petitions addressed to, Archbishop Sancroft, written by persons of almost every class of life, from bishops to such as I suppose T. N. to have been, fairly educated men living in out-of-the-way country towns. In fact,

the letter which most nearly resembles in general style and appearance the present note is that of the Rev. John Hodson, who states that he has no servant and has to tend his horse and cows with his own hands, and make the hay (MS. Tanner 34, foll. 126-9).

The result was that I found practically every form of letter used by T. N., and by making allowance for the uneven surface—the appearance of which even a collotype cannot well reproduce—the whole sentence can be fairly represented from scripts of the date 1682. It is impossible to enter much into detail, but the forms regarded as impossible or hardly possible by the critic must receive consideration, though he has 1602 in his mind, and not 1682.

As to the date 1682. The figure 8, when allowance is made for dirt and attrition is the ordinary flat-topped 8,<sup>1</sup> as found on foll. 35, 40, 100, 181, 233, 267, 293, etc. (the reference is to the leaves of MS. Tanner 34). There is no reason for imagining it to be anything else, or of any other year.

The next stumbling block is the ‘Tthis.’ My view is that T. N. did begin his note with *this*, and did suddenly bethink himself that it would be better with a capital T, and did superpose the T, without erasing the *t*. A careless mistake, and such as a forger clever enough to stand modern

<sup>1</sup> A comparison of the collotype in the Shakespeare Exhibition Catalogue and the half-tone block in ‘THE LIBRARY’ shows well that the latter process is not fine enough for satisfactory reasoning about details.

criticism and ingenious enough to aim at being 'pseudo-archaic,' would not have allowed for a moment. Erasure would have cured it at once. As to the form of the T, it was T. N., no doubt, who wrote the scribble 'Michael T[ur?]le' above, so naturally he uses the T form familiar to him.

'The *h* is of the modern type, and quite unlike the Elizabethan letter.' I agree: it was impossible in 1602, but common in 1682. Similarly with the *s* final.

'The two *tt*'s . . . should not be crossed high up the shafts: this is quite contrary to the old English tradition.' Indeed it is, but it is on fol. 265, quite in place in 1682.

'The *B* of *Booke* is the creation of the writer's fancy.' Then on foll. 128<sup>v</sup>, 129<sup>v</sup>, it is the creation of John Hodson's fancy, and on fol. 14 the creation of Dudley Loftus's fancy, both in 1682.

'The *k* here is a monstrous letter which I think I have seen in other forgeries of past years.' The formation is found on foll. 12, 101, 135, 157—which are not forgeries.

'The *f* of *of* is simply impossible.' I have not found the precise form in MS. Tanner 34, but the shape was familiar to every writer of that date as the first half of a double *f* and of *F* when written as *ff*, and near approximations can be found on foll. 149, 174, 180, 190<sup>v</sup>.

The other letters do not require to be considered in detail, but following the order of the criticism, for *v* see foll. 20, 34; for *w* passim; *g*, a careless form, see near approximation at foll. 30, 190<sup>v</sup>, 212, 258, 271; *b* and *y* passim; *W*. and *H*. passim; *s*

fol. 9, 34; *c*, *S* passim; *k*, see above: *p*, see fol. 104, 126, 141, 149; *r* is nearly as fol. 125, 129<sup>v</sup>, 164; *h* passim; *s* medial, passim.

The *Will*, supposed to be first written *Wicc* and then altered, is only made thus peculiar by the proximity of a deep wrinkle in the paper. No forger would write *Wicc*. Why should he? T. N. seems to have had the same difficulty in the *h* of *who*.

It would appear that the unnecessary assumption that 1682 is 1602, and that the 'forger' wished to be archaic, has really permeated the whole of the critic's argument. The writing in detail can be fairly paralleled in 1682, and fol. 126-9 (as stated above) are a letter with a similar *general* appearance to that of the note.

### THE SIGNATURE.

This, though of course much more important, can be treated more briefly.

1. An abbreviated signature, such as the one before us, is undoubtedly possible early in the seventeenth century, but it would be at any time unusual enough to challenge immediate attention. He would be a bold forger who called attention to his effort. On the other hand the fact of abbreviation would entirely justify the book's owner in writing a note of explanation.

2. The writing seems to me to be at any rate earlier than the year (1778) when the *Will* signatures, on which the forger (if he were one) would depend, were first engraved and made available for imitation. Scientific forgeries on the other

hand, such as could stand the criticism of the nineteenth century without collapse, could hardly have been executed before that century. The Chatterton and Ireland forgeries for instance are mere clumsiness.

3. It seems to me quite possible that the *S* is shaped in Shakespeare's way, that is, that the first (upper) curve of the modern *S*-shape is shorter than in *S*, and that the second (lower) curve is continued upwards and sweeps over the top in an arch. Apparently the letter was started too near to the *m* of *W<sup>m</sup>*, and the writer had to complete the second half and the upper part by interruptions of the natural sweep of the pen in at least two places. Moreover, old paper of 1502 in a worn book is not adapted to receive the rising strokes of a fine pen without the point catching in the fibre. It will be noted that in at least two of the three Will signatures there is a failure to carry out the sweep.

4. With respect to the senility of the handwriting, it is true that the *S* is shaky, but the *W* is firmly drawn, and (as has been suggested to me) Shakespeare seems to have written straight lines firmly, while in drawing a curve he appears to be not at his ease. The theory, as before stated, is that he was not far from his end when he acquired the book, and that the surface of the old and worn paper was such that firm, flowing writing was difficult.

5. Perhaps the most cogent argument for genuineness is that the *m* of *W<sup>m</sup>* exhibits a marked peculiarity, in that the third down-stroke is broken-backed, as a man in feeble health might write it. The pen completed half the stroke and then slid



a very little to the right before it went on downwards. This oddity might be accidental, if it stood alone, but it occurs also in one of Shakespeare's undoubted autographs; not in the three Will signatures, but in the Mortgage signature of 11th March, 1613, now in the British Museum. It is a good deal to expect us to believe that the 'forger' had access, not only to the Will (or even, if so be, to the engraved Will signatures), but also to a document which was not engraved till 1790, and was in private hands till 1864, the year before the book was acquired for the Bodleian; and that he was clever enough to notice this minute trick of Shakespeare's and deliberately introduce it. Not only so, but he must have been thorough enough to discover a special knot-mark on p. 63 of the Ovid and imitate it in the mark which he appended (see p. 97 above) to the forged initials.

The sum of the matter is, not that any one can feel sure either of the date '1468' or of the Shakespeare signature—the probabilities are against both—but that, in spite of scientific criticism, neither problem has reached the stage of definite decision. We may find a copy of the 'Jerome' altered in a contemporary hand to 1478, or discover from contemporary evidence that Oxford printing did begin in 1478; and we may come across a confession of the forgery of the signature in modern times, or a form really impossible in 1682; but until some such discoveries are made, it is permissible to hesitate in running counter in the one case to a clearly expressed date and in the other to an attested signature.

F. MADAN.