

MISCELLANEOUS.

A RICH MEDIEVAL LIBRARY.

THE JOHN M. WING FOUNDATION AT THE NEWBERRY SOON TO BE
OPEN TO PUBLIC VIEW.

Old wine, old friends, old books, says a philosopher, are our most prized possessions. Omar added "Thou" but Omar was suspected of heresy. Old wine, we now cannot; old friends we soon may not, for they are fast leaving us, but old books, like the poor, we have always with us—hence we are rich. And scarcely anywhere are they to be found in more aristocratic antiquity or in greater profusion than in Chicago. Mr. George B. Utley, president of the Newberry Library, announces that the John M. Wing Foundation is soon to be opened to the public. Mr. Wing came to Chicago in 1865 from Oswego, N. Y., when a young man, with barely a week's board in his pocket. Getting a reporter's job on *Storey's Times* he quickly made good and was given the city editor's chair. Doing correspondence for eastern papers he was engaged by the editor of *The Boston Herald* to conduct his son on a world tour. This gave the young editor the opportunity of his dreams—to travel and to buy books. And buy books he did, and his taste was singularly good. He died in 1917, leaving his collections, with a substantial fund for their care, to the Newberry Library. Pierce Butler, a qualified scholar, was placed in charge as custodian.

Dominie Sampson might well exclaim: "Prodigious!" To begin with, here is an "incunabulum", printing in its cradle, a genuine block-book, that is neither the work of the scribe or the typesetter, but is printed from solid blocks like a child's picture book, as indeed it is. It is catalogued as "*Apocalypsis S. Johannis*, about 1450. Impressions of 48 blocks, each leaf being printed on one side only. Figures colored roughly by contemporary hand, green morocco, extra gilt borders, inside edges tooled." "Which, being interpreted, means that it is some book and its price is above rubies. There are believed to be only three others of the kind in this country.

"This volume," says Pierce Butler, "has a distinct and permanent value as an original document for the student of medieval art

and culture. It illustrates the popular religious manuals of the late Middle Ages which, though apparently produced in large numbers, survive in very few examples. These books, being designed for the edification of the common people, few of whom could read, taught their lessons through pictures with only so much printed text as was necessary to identify the various parts of the design. The drawing is vigorous and impressive though it shows but little sense of design or precision in execution. Similarly the colors, laid on by hand after the book was printed, seem to have been chosen solely to attract attention without much thought of their verity to nature. But it is an example of typography that the book will arouse the greatest interest. It represents the transitional stage between the manuscript and true printing from movable type. In the effort to devise a method of rapid and cheap reproduction of the written manuscript, two distinct methods were invented, the stencil and the stamp. Though used to some extent for book decoration, these two methods were found most useful in the manufacture of playing cards. The application of this process to the manufacture of picture books was easy and followed in due course. Just as the method of playing card manufacture had been extended and applied to picture books the new process seems to have been further developed and used in the manufacture of true books in which pages consisted of words instead of pictures. So far as we know, wooden types sawed out of block-book pages were never used successfully, but tradition seems to justify the assumption that unsuccessful experiments on this line first led men to the notion of casting individual letters and then fitting them together into words and sentences." The evolution may be expressed: manuscript, playing cards, block books, bibles.

After the block book we naturally turn to the work of the press of Mainz. Peter Schoeffer's connection with Gutenberg is well known. Suffice it to say that in the *Catholicon*, or dictionary, of 1460, the invention of printing is claimed for the towered city of the Rheingau, and from 1467 this claim was taken over by Fust's son-in-law, Peter Schoeffer, who in the colophons of his books again and again celebrated Mainz as the city singled out by divine favor to give the art of printing to the world; the original town booster. Fust and Schoeffer did not claim the honor for themselves, but for Mainz, from which it is inferred that the priority of Gutenberg was understood. There are five Schoeffer's in the collection, one being a fine Thomas Aquinas of 1467. This is the earliest dated book of European origin in the library. There is also a fragment of the *Catholicon* of 1460, a leaf printed on vellum, rubricated in blue and red, and probably salvaged from some ancient binder's later work. There are only eight examples on vellum of the 41 specimens of the Mainz printer known to exist. Showing how the old bookbinders cut up the used parchments that came to their hand, there is here the *Cosmographi Geographica* of Pomponius Mela, printed by Erhard Ratdolt at Venice in 1482, showing on a map of the world

where west meets east, a map which the Genoese sailor must have seen some years before 1492.

Of Fifteenth century Bibles the Wing library has a round dozen, nine of them being in Latin and three in German text. Of the former, two are from Strasburg without date, four from Venice, 1476 to 1480, two from Nuremberg and one Basel. The German texts are from Cologne presses, in the Low German, Low Saxon and Luebeck dialects. In the Newberry Library proper there is a magnificent Biblia latina printed by Franciscus Renner de Heilbrun on vellum, Venice, 1480, and bound by Grolier, "*magnifique, exemplaire imprimé sur velin, en petits caractères dits lettres de somme. L'exécution typographique est admirable. Edition précieuse et de la plus grande rareté.*" The rubricated initials are in gold and colors that time has not faded and the superb panels are in richly flowered designs. Miniatures, placed on the inferior margins, represent St. Jerome in the desert, the creation of Eve and the nativity of Jesus. Altogether it is one of the finest examples of Fifteenth century bookcraft and of the art of manuscript illumination as cultivated in the monasteries of the Renaissance. Among the missals is a fine Plantin, notable as being one of the more recent productions of that old Antwerp press when it was under the management of the widow of Francois Moretus, bearing date of 1765. It is printed in the "missal type" or "double primer" and the chants are in the antique square and lozenge. Four dignitaries of the church bear testimony to the correctness of the liturgy. There is another end older Plantin that is perhaps of more interest to the laity, an Emblemata of Andea Alciati, 1577, with curious woodcuts and handsomely cut Greek and Latin text. Alciati preceded both Pia Hugo and Francis Quarles in the curious cult of emblems.

We pass now to the *Chronicarum liber, cum figuris et ymaginibus*, etc. Nuremberg Anton Koberger, 1493. This is the first edition of the famous Nuremberg Chronicle, a comprehensive description of the world and its history, plus *ymaginibus*. The book, which is described as the best work of this old Fifteenth century Nuremberg printer, has over 2,200 woodcuts, most of them executed by Michael Wohlgenuth, to whom was apprenticed, in 1486, Albrecht Durer, "the evangelist of art." These consist of portraits of illustrious persons, characters of sacred and profane history, all bearing the rugged features and the costume of medieval Bavaria, and views of walled and moated cities from Babylon to Wurzburg. What if the portraits and the bird's eye views are a bit apochryphal, and made to do more than double duty - Have we not had our Mrs. Jarley, and have we not our movies?

We should not overlook the Caxtons. A rare and right noble volume is the Chronicles of England, from Bryan Fairfax's catalogue. It is in the number 4 type, 182 pages. Title pages were not yet in vogue and the work begins abruptly: "IN the yere of thycarnacyon of our lord Jhu crist M/CCCC/Ixxx / And in the xx yere of the Regne of kyng Edward the fourth / Atte request of diuerse gentylmen I

haue endeuyryd me to emprynte the Cronycles of Englund/ as in this book shal by the suffraunce of god folowe" There is no punctuation but the long comma. There are no illustrations, as Caxton only began the use of woodcuts until the year following the undertaking of the Chronicle, nor did the cabalistic trade mark with the W C appear until 1487. The colophon reads: "Thus endeth this present book of the Cronycles of Englund / Emprynted by me William Caxton in thabbej of westmestre by london/ Fynnysshed and accomplysshed the/ viij/ day of Octobre/ The yere of the yncarnacyon of our lord God/ M/CCCC/lxxxij| And in the xxij yere of kynge Edward the fourth" The work is based on the "Cronicle of Brute" and brought down to the battle of Towton.

If these are considered dull or childish—the world was younger then—we may turn to a lordly copy of the *Tewrdannekh*, Nurnberg, 1517 (*De Greuerlichkeiten und einsteils der Geschichten des loblichen streyparen und hochberumbten Helds und Ritters Herz Tewrdannekhs*), a beautiful folio in black morocco, tooled, of course. This is the first and rarest edition of the famous metrical romance which records the chivalrous deeds of the emperor Maximilian the First, who is supposed to have furnished the incidents for the poet laureate to turn into rhyme. The long poem, or series of versified stories, was written by Melchoir Pfintzing between 1512 and 1516 for the pleasure of the young king of Spain, afterwards the emperor Charles the Fifth. It embodies in romantic and allegorical form the romance of the wooing of Mary of Burgundy by the young and knightly Maximilian, then archduke of Austria.

The Florentine Homer of 1488, Bartolomeo Libri's first edition, in two volumes beautifully printed and elegantly clothed in levant by Duru, is one of the gems of the collection. Aldus Manutius followed Libri in 1495, and of his famous press, the Wing Foundation, possesses eleven fine examples. Perhaps the most notable is the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* of Francesco Colonna, 1499. This noble volume has a story of archeological romance which appealed greatly to the dilettanti, for whose benefit Leonardo Crassus, a juriconsult, commissioned Aldus to print it. Impressive from its size and the profusion of the 168 illustrations of various sizes, the extraordinary variety of the latter and the excellence of their cutting add to its attractiveness. The story, as the title is intended to indicate, "Strife of Love in a Dream," reveals, by the aid of the illustrations, the Renaissance interest in antique architecture and art, "*per proprii vocabuli ello desrive vum elegante stilo, pyramidi, obelisce, ruine marime di edificii, la differentia di colonne,*" etc.

A folio Dante from the press of Nicolaus Laurenti, of Florence (Laurenz of Breslau), 1481, is one of the earliest examples of the use of copperplates, and of the difficulties encountered in their printing with type. The plates are twenty in number, or, more exactly, two copperplates and eighteen drawings, formerly ascribed to Baldini but now believed to be the work of Botticelli, preceding the more ambitious series which he designed for the manuscript executed for

Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco. This copy is one of four containing the twenty plates, which was not, as the blanks left by the printer show, the full number intended. These blanks indicate, probably, the departure of Botticelli for Rome, where he was engaged in the great work of decorating the Sistine chapel, in which his fame is joined with that of Michelangelo.

As the old monasteries had chained Bibles, the monks for their diversion had their *Gesta Romanorum*. One of these, by the anonymous printer of the 1483 Jordanus, is the medieval collection of stories told by travelers at the guests' bench in the monastery refectory; a later Arabian Nights' Entertainment, an earlier Canterbury Tales, the Boccaccio of the cloisters, more or less moral in their application, as befitted the shaven transcribers. A more venerable tome, though not so ancient, is the Cicero, *Cato maior*, Philadelphia, 1744, "Printed and Sold by B. Franklin." Adding to the interest of this little book is an insert of an order on David Rittenhouse, Treasurer, for 641, 5s., in favor of a widow pensioner, dated Mch. 15. 1788, signed by Franklin who was then president of the council.

But the patriarch of the collection is the *T'ung kien kang mu* of the Chinese scholar Chu Hsi, being an abridgment of the Mirror of History which cost Se-ma Kuang nineteen year labor in the Eleventh century. Of this *editio princeps*, blockprinted in 1172, the Wing Foundation possesses a complete copy. It is a rare and fine specimen of Sung printing and perhaps the most extensive work of that period now known. Mo Yu-chi, the Chinese bibliographer, says that the printing-blocks were cut in 1172, that the printing was done on pure paper, that each page has eight lines with seventeen characters for each line. The library also has the Manchu translation of the Se-ma Kuang history in a Palace edition beautifully printed under the patronage of the Emperor K'ang Hi, in ninety-six sumptuous volumes in imperial yellow. In addition to these the Newberry possesses several thousand volumes of Chinese, Manchu, Japanese, Thibetan and Mongol books and manuscripts, many of them unique, and all of inestimable importance to the student of Asiatic history, philosophy and religion. Mr. Utley, Newberry's librarian, is to be congratulated, in connection with Dr. Laufer, for extending the library's activities in this direction.

Strengthening the value of the collection as a typographical library are three notable original primers of the art of printing: an exceptionally fine copy of the *Champ fleury* of Geofroy Tory, Francis First's printer and bookbinder, 1529, the first book in any language to discuss letter design; Albrecht Durer's *Underweysung der Messung*, Nurenberg, 1538, bearing on the title page the great A surmounting the D, a gem from the DeVinne library; and, finally, Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises*, London, 1683,—the former being the first book in German to treat of letter design, and the latter the first book in English on that subject. Examples of work by the modern artist-printers are not wanting. As a corner-stone in this

class the Foundation has already secured a complete set of William Morris' Kelmscott Press.

When we recollect that there are in all the world but three great typographical libraries, properly so called; the Börsenverein Bibliothek at Leipzig, the St. Bride's Foundation in London, and that of the American Type Foundry's Company in Jersey City, we may understand the peculiar value of this library to typographical art in America. It may be observed that the Wing Foundation has the fortunate distinction of having a substantial sustaining fund so that it is able at all times to increase its collections. While it is yet too early to speak of its plans and hopes there is reason for the belief that the Wing Foundation will at no very distant day possess one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of typography anywhere to be found.