
WILLIAM CAREW HAZLITT
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When one makes in later life some sort of figure as a collector, it may become natural to consider to what favouring circumstances the entrance on the pursuit or pursuits was due. In the present case those circumstances were slight and trivial enough. Although I belonged to a literary family, none of my ancestors had been smitten by the bibliomania or other cognate passion, simply because at first our resources were of the most limited character, and my grandfather was a man of letters and nothing more. He

was without that strange, inexplicable cacoethes, which leads so many to gather together objects of art and curiosities on no definite principle or plea throughout their lives, to be scattered again when they depart, and taken up into their bookcases or cabinets by a new generation. This process, broadly speaking, has been in operation thousands of years. It is an inborn and indestructible human trait.

The earliest vestige of a feeling for books among us is unconnected with Collecting as a passion. My great-grandfather, the Presbyterian or Congregational minister, had his shelf or two of volumes, mostly of a professional cast. We hear of the *Fratres Poloni*, five stupendous folios, brimful of erudition—books which seem, to our more frivolous and superficial and hurrying age, better suited to occupy a niche in a museum as a monumental testimony to departed scholarship—books, alas! which those blind instruments of the revolutionary spirit of change, the paper mill and the fire, draw day by day nearer to canonisation in a few inviolable resting-places, as in sanctuaries dedicated to the holy dead. They will enter on a new and more odorous life: we shall look awfully upon them as upon literary petrifactions, which to bygone ages were living and speaking things.

The Rev. W. Hazlitt was, nevertheless, a man of unusually generous sympathies for his time and his cloth; he could relish secular as well as sacred literature, and his distinguished son thought better of him as a letter-writer than as a preacher. But neither engaged in the pursuit of books otherwise than as practical objects of study or entertainment. There was nothing ‘hobby-horsical,’ to

borrow Coleridge’s expression, about the matter. Hazlitt himself secured, as he tells us, stall copies of favourite books or pamphlets, devoured the contents, and then probably cast them aside. This I take to have been Shakespear’s plan. I cannot believe the great poet to have been a bibliophile like Jonson. He merely recognised in other men’s work material or suggestion for his own.

I conclude that with my father and the Scotish blood of his maternal progenitors, the Stoddarts and Moncrieffs, a certain share of taste for antiquities, or, at any rate, for memorials of the past in a literary shape, was inherited by the Hazlitts. My immediate paternal ancestor, the late Mr Registrar Hazlitt, undoubtedly possessed a strong instinctive disposition to form around him a collection of books. He was emphatically acquisitive almost to the last; and had he been a richer man, he would probably have left behind him a fairly good and extensive library. My father was deficient in knowledge and insight—I might add, in judgment. He bought the wrong copies, or he allowed the right ones to be massacred by a pagan binder; but he was a book-lover. The nucleus of his collection had been a set of Hazlitt’s works, a few volumes given to him by Miss Lamb and others, and, of course, his own publications.

His alliance by marriage to the Reynells introduced another stage in our bibliographical evolution. My mother’s brother, Mr Charles Weatherby Reynell, of whom I have so much to say elsewhere, was not only a book-buyer on a modest scale, but a gentleman with a vague, undefined liking for anything which struck him as quaint and curious—a coin, a piece of china, a picture, a bit of old painted glass,

a Chippendale chair—it hardly signified what it was; but books had the first place, I think, in his heart, and he knew a good deal about such as he had purchased, and thought a good deal about them too, albeit they were, as copies, hardly calculated for the meridian of the fastidious connoisseur. In short, my relative was a disciple of the Lamb school; he selected for merit rather than condition, and his *petite bibliothéque* was part of his very being.

My father and Mr Reynell may be regarded as my bibliographical and archæological sponsors, and they have to answer for a good deal. Instead of becoming a distinguished civil servant, a prosperous trader, or a successful professional man, they contributed, I maintain, to mould me into what I was and am—a bibliographer, a collector, an antiquary.

Books, as they were my father's only, and my uncle's chief, paramours, were my first love. My father often laid out money on them, when I am now sure that he could ill afford it, and when the hour of pressure arrived, it was the books to which we had to bid farewell. How many I have seen come and go, while I was a boy under my father's roof—successive copies of the same favourite work, or little lots of different volumes. Stibbs's, opposite Somerset House, and next door to the *Morning Chronicle* office, is almost the earliest shop of the kind which I remember; a second was William Brown's, originally on the same premises. These two establishments witnessed the flux and reflux of many a brown paper parcel sent home in a moment of impulse, and launched on its backward voyage at a lower quotation in

some financial dilemma—a contingency too frequent in the days before relief arrived in the shape of an official post.

I am haunted in all my maturer life by a feeling of remorse, that on two or three occasions I was betrayed into making foolish investments on my own authority, when neither my father nor myself could properly defray the expense. But the *lues* which was, in due course, to assume such enlarged dominion over me, and to branch into so many channels, was already an active agency; and my visits to the shop in the Strand, kept by Mr Brown, bore mischievous fruit in one instance at all events, when I secured for 24s. a set of Singer's *Select Early English Poets*, in boards, uncut. My father was terribly concerned, not knowing where this sort of fancy was likely to end; but he recognised, perhaps, his own teaching, and eventually the Singer was bound by Leighton in half-blue morocco. It was a beautiful little set, I thought, and brand-new in its fresh livery. The day came when we had to say good-bye to it—not to it alone; and I should have wished never to behold it again. I did, however; I met with it at an auction; it was faded, thumbed, disreputable. I had not the courage to touch it; it was no longer mine. I mused as I left the place upon its career and its destiny, and it made me really sad.

I have spoken of Mr Reynell as one of my teachers or masters. He was a person who had a genuine love for our older literature, and enjoyed even better opportunities than my father of indulging it. But his purchases were sparing and desultory, and he never attained any distinction as a collector. He had not studied the subject, and he never became wealthy enough to secure the services of

competent advisers. In fact, his want of knowledge rendered him distrustful of counsel. The result was that he accumulated, during a very prolonged life, a singular assemblage of nondescript property, of which the really valuable proportion was infinitesimal. It was perfectly fortuitous, that he had picked up an exceedingly rare *Psalter*, in rather ragged state, for 25s., which at his sale, a year or two back, Mr Quaritch deemed worth £24, and a folio *Roman de la Rose*, which fetched a good price, and cost him the same moderate sum. As a rule, he invariably, from want of training and fine instinct, bought the wrong article, or, if the right one, in the wrong condition. He had not the eye of George Daniel, R. S. Turner, or Henry Huth, for form and fitness. Yet he was my instructor in a degree and a sense, and many delightful talks we have had about old books, which one or the other of us had seen or admired. He always listened with interest to my stories of adventures up and down the book-world, of which some are reserved for a future chapter; but he felt his inability, I concluded, to enter into the field with stronger competitors, and he usually returned to the contemplation of his own humble appurtenances with a sense of contentment, if not of superiority.

He was totally different from my father in his ideas about books. He did not, in general, care for the modern side, unless it was a first edition of his life-long friend Leigh Hunt, of Hazlitt, or of some other author to whom he was personally attached. On the contrary, my father never cultivated the older editions or original copies. The best standard text was his line. I had from him a little anecdote

which shews him in the light of a book-hunter; but then it was for an immediate and isolated literary purpose. While he was engaged about 1840 in editing the works of Defoe, he tried to procure a copy of the *Account of the Apparition of Mrs Veal*, and went, among other likely resorts, to Baker of Old Street, St Luke's. That individual derided the notion of finding such a rarity; and my father, turning away, cast an eye on Baker's twopenny box outside. There what should he disinter but the identical pamphlet, and he takes twopence out of his pocket, which he hands to the boy, and puts the prize into it, which he carries home in triumph. It was the only bargain of which I ever heard him speak. He was not that way built. I sometimes wish that my experiences had not been infinitely more numerous.

The seeking and winning of bargains constitute an attractive pursuit and an equally attractive topic. You have the power of regaling your less fortunate or unpractical acquaintances with the strange chances, which enabled you to become the master for a trifle of such and such treasures and you gain confidence in your continued good fortune,—

> 'When a fool finds a horse-shoe,
> He thinks aye the like to do.'

It has sometimes appeared to me, however, that the general public looks with modified respect on this class of venture, more especially as it does not share the profits; and what is absolutely certain is, that the whole system of treating literature from a commercial point of view is narrowing and lowering, and tends to harden, if not to extinguish, that fine sensibility which is proper to the

bibliophile. Since I was led by a union of circumstances to look upon rare books as a source of advantage, I have grown sensible of a change for the worse in my nature; yet, I think, only so far as the bare ownership is concerned. The volumes which I loved as a younger man are still dear to me; I keep them in my mind’s eye; they stand in no peril at my hands of being degraded into *goods* or *stuff*; I do not hold them, because the outlay or capital which they represent is far more than I can afford to lock up; and in the nature of things I have to content myself with being the recipient of the difference, if not of feeling, that I appreciate the book and know its history better than the man to whom it passes from me.

I should be truly ashamed if I had to confess that with the actual proprietary interest in the literary or bibliographical rarities which I have had through my hands during the last forty years my substantial affection for the subject-matter and the authors began and ended. Thousands of precious volumes, which might be mine, if I had been otherwise situated, are merely as a question of form and pecuniary arrangement in the British Museum, in the Bodleian, or in some private library; they are one and all before me at any moment, when I choose to summon them. I remember how they are bound, and the story which each tells; but they are in the keeping of others. Should I be happier, were they in mine?

My father was one of the oldest members of the London Library in St James’s Square, and I long availed myself of his ticket to frequent and use that highly valuable institution. I consider that this circumstance tended importantly to

stimulate and confirm my natural bookish propensity. For whatever besides I have been and am, my central interest, as well as claim to public consideration, is associable with the cause of our earlier vernacular literature. I shall be able to demonstrate with tolerable clearness by-and-by that I have through my quiet, and in a manner uneventful, career busied myself with several other topics, not to mention those which lie outside such an undertaking as the present; but my friends seem to have agreed that it is as a bibliographer that I most distinctly and emphatically pose. I shall argue that point no further.

What is more relevant is that at the London Library I met with Smedley's *Sketches from Venetian History*, which I perused with enjoyment as a novice, and that this acquaintance led to others and to an exchange of ideas with people about the subject and its position in English literature. With no resources of my own, and with very slight aid from my father, I set to work and collected material. My imperfect knowledge of languages was a stumbling block. When I waited on Mr Quaritch in Castle Street and laid bare my ignorance of Italian by asking for Cicognara's work on *Fabrics* instead of *Buildings*, that distinguished personage tellingly reproved me by suggesting that the first thing for me to do was to learn Italian.

My perseverance, however, was indomitable. I had set my heart on writing about Venice. It was enough. I did not, as Mr Quaritch observed, know much about Italian. I had never seen the place. When I wrote to Mr Ruskin respectfully soliciting helpful suggestions, he left my letter unanswered. What could be done? Why, I borrowed the few works which

were to be found at our library, bought some which were not, and for others I sent to Italy through Molini. I taught myself French and Italian, and the Venetian dialect. I studied all the views of the city which I could find, and I brought out my first rough draft in 1857, when I was three-and-twenty.

An amusing illustration of my early faculty of inspiring confidence in the minds of those with whom I dealt was afforded by the perfect trust of Molini in my solvency and his unwillingness to allow my father any credit, while the latter actually discharged both my obligations and his own. The elder Molini was himself of Venetian origin, and of a family which gave more than one Doge to the Republic; he always impressed my fancy as the ideal of a decayed Italian grandee. Not only his appearance, but his deportment, was that of a gentleman. He served me excellently well; but true it is that, in spite of his ducal ancestry and exalted traditions, there was the Lombard beneath and not far from the surface. The representative of Doges, this sovereign prince by inheritance and blood, was the only man who ever charged me interest on an overdue account.

As to my book, it is familiar enough that it was reprinted in 1860 by Messrs Smith, Elder & Co., and is viewed as the standard English work on the subject, so far as it goes. But I contemplate a third and greatly improved edition, which will carry the narrative to the end. My collections for the task are now in the library, to which I partly gave, and partly sold, them a generation since. They included a copy of the much overestimated *Squittinio della Liberta Veneta*, published at Mirandola in 1612.

There are very few now living who recollect, as I do, the library as it originally appeared, when Mr Cochrane was curator, and the institution occupied only the upper part of the house in the Square. I was not a personal subscriber till 1869; but I had the complete range of the shelves *jure patris*, and my loan of an unlimited number of books for an unlimited term was never called in question. I have kept volumes at our house for three years uninterruptedly. In those days there were fewer members, and the demand for the class of publications which I required was extremely limited.

One of the staff at the library, a subordinate dignitary, used to dabble a little in books on his own account, and occasionally offered me his purchases. I think that his more distinguished colleagues gradually learned to do the same. But the first-indicated individual, I remember very well, once had on sale a set of fourteen volumes of some neglected publication, for which he submitted a proposal of eighteenpence. He resided at Hammersmith, while I was at Kensington, and I am sure that I do not exaggerate when I say that he carried this merchandise half a dozen times between his abode and St James’s Square before I agreed to take the lot off his hands. I thought of Corporal Nym and the lute-case.

I was even now beginning to be multifarious and polygonal. I have sketched out in my *Four Generations of a Literary Family* my apprenticeship to bibliography. The starting-point was about 1857, when Mr Bohn produced his revision of the *Manual* of Lowndes, 1834, of which Mr F. S. Ellis used to speak as a very creditable performance for a

drunken bookseller. My haunt in St James's Square again befriended me. I met with the Heber Catalogue, Herbert's *Typographical Antiquities*, and such like. I was unconsciously shifting my ground; yet it was to be long enough before the new departure took form. I allowed myself ample time to ruminate over the matter, to reconnoitre, and to make notes. A copy of the augmented and revised Lowndes became my memorandum book.

The original meagre sketch of the Venetian work had introduced me to Mr Russell Smith the publisher, who undertook it on my father agreeing to contribute to the cost. I acquired the habit of frequenting Smith's shop in Soho Square; I bought a few trifles from him, and in 1858 he took my commission for a book at the Bliss sale—Lord Westmoreland's *Otia Sacra*, 1648—for which my father, to his consternation, learned that I had to give nearly £9. The copy was in the original calf binding, and was one of the very few which were entirely perfect. It was my earliest purchase at an auction. 1858-9-60 passed away—the second edition of the *Venetian History* appeared—and I, after sundry experiments, finally resolved to cast my lot in with antiquarian literature as an editor and a bibliographer.

It is not my present mission to enter into detail respecting my innumerable experiences of a normal character in connection with publishers and booksellers. These are matters of no permanent value or interest to anyone. I have had, in common with the majority of folks similarly situated, my sorrows, my disappointments, my wrongs and my triumphs. *Luctor et Emergo.* I have known what it has been to be unfairly abused and perhaps unfairly

commended. I have kept myself proudly and wilfully apart, and under circumstances, of which no other person has ever comprehended or measured the difficulties, I have held my ground, although once or twice the keel of my dingy has grazed the rocks.

CHAPTER II

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I survey the Ground before I start—I contemplate a New British Bibliography—Richard Heber—His Extraordinary Acquirements—His Vast Library—His Manuscript Notes in the Books—A High Estimate of Heber as a Scholar and a Reader—He eclipses all Other Collectors at Home and Abroad—A Sample or so of His Flyleaf Memoranda—A Few very Interesting Books noticed—A *Historiette*—Anecdotes of Some Bargains and Discoveries by Him and His Contemporaries—The *Phoenix Nest* at Sion College—Marlowe's *Dido*—Mystery connected with the Library at Lee Priory—The Oldest Collections of English Plays—A Little Note about Lovelace—Heber's Generosity as a Lender—His Kindness to Dyce—Fate of His Rarest Books—How He obtained some of Them—The Daniel Ballads and Their True History—Result of a Study of *Heber's Catalogue* and other Sources of Knowledge—The *Handbook* appears—Mr Frederick Harrison and Sir Walter Besant pay Me Compliments.

I soon learned to divide into two camps, as it were, the authorities available to a student of our earlier literature. There were books like those of Dibdin, Brydges, Park, Beloe, Hartshorne and Lowndes, and the auction catalogues, on the one hand, and on the other there were Herbert's *Ames*, Ritson's *Bibliographia Poetica*, and Collier's *Bibliographical Catalogue*, to be reinforced presently by Corser's *Collectanea Anglo-poetica*. These two classes were widely different and immensely unequal. I began by drawing a line of distinction, and by depending for my statements on the second group and type rather than the first. But as I discerned by degrees the difference in too many instances

between the books themselves and the account of them in works of reference, and as I studied more and more, at my leisure from other employments, the Heber and a few more capital catalogues, revealing to me the imperfections in the treatment of the whole subject, I commenced, just in the same way as I had done in the case of Venice, revolving in my thought the practicability of improving our bibliographical system, and placing it on a broader and sounder basis.

The London Library copy of the *Heber Catalogue* bears unmistakeable traces of my industrious manipulation in years gone by. I conceived a strong regard for that extraordinary, that unique collection and its accomplished owner. Of his private history I have heard certain anecdotes, which indicate that his life was not a very happy one, nor the end of it very comfortable; but as a scholar, as a bibliographer, and as a benefactor to the cause which he so zealously espoused and on which he lavished a noble fortune, he was a man to whose equal I am unable to refer.

I turn again and again to his sale catalogue, and amid much that is dry and monotonous enough I am never weary of perusing the notes, chiefly from his own pen, where he places on permanent record the circumstances, often romantic and fascinating, under which he gained possession of this or that volume. Remarks or memoranda by Mr Payne Collier and others are interspersed; but the interest seems to centre in those of the possessor, which make his personality agreeably conspicuous, and have always struck me as elevating him above the ordinary standard as a collector, if not as entitling him to the highest rank among

those of this or any other country. For when we compare his stupendous accumulations of literary memorials of all ages and regions, in print and in manuscript, with those of Harley, Grenville, Miller, Beckford, Spencer, Huth and others, and then set side by side his conversance with the subject-matter in so many cases, and the purely amateurish feeling and grasp of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors in a vast preponderance of instances, how can we fail to perceive, and forbear to acknowledge, his claim to the first place? I have mentioned elsewhere that Heber was partly instrumental in saving the library of George III. from being sold by the Prince Regent to the Czar.

The *Bibliotheca Heberiana*, in thirteen parts, is a work which it is impossible to open at any page without encountering some point of interest or instruction; but undoubtedly the second, fourth and eighth portions contain the notices and information likely to be most attractive to English and English-speaking persons, and it entered not immaterially into my earlier life to study and utilise what I found here. No class of anecdote can be more enduringly valuable in the eyes of the bibliophile than those with which the work under consideration is so unstintingly enriched, and I may not be blamed for exemplifying and justifying by some typical specimens my estimate of Heber’s scholarship and energy. If there is a less agreeable side to the question, it is the feeling of regret, in examining the catalogue, that he should not have restricted himself to some range, instead of embracing the entire world of letters, instead of aiming at centralising universality. In Heber book-collecting was not a taste, but a voracious passion. His incomparable

library, to a private individual deficient, as he was, in method and arrangement, was of indifferent value; as a public one, if he had chosen to dedicate it to that object, it would have proved a splendid monument to his name for all time, especially if the very numerous duplicates had been exchanged for remaining *desiderata*.

My jottings in corroboration of my view are, however, almost exclusively derived from those sections of the catalogue devoted to an account of the early English literature, in which the collection was so marvellously rich. Since this is merely a sort of introductory feature in my little undertaking, and I was desirous of affording some samples of one of my bibliographical primers, I do not deal with technical detail, but limit myself to literary *adversaria*, and to Heber's own personal remarks about his possessions, as distinguished from those of the compilers of the catalogue.

Under 'Bevis of Hampton,' Heber notes, 'For an account of the Romance of Bevis see Ritson's *Dissertation*, prefixed to his *Metrical Romances*,' and he copies out what is found there. To his copy of the edition of *Boethius* in English, printed at the exempt Monastery of Tavistock in 1525, he appends a long memorandum, stating that he had bought it at Forster's sale in 1806 for £7, 17s. 6d., imperfect and ill-bound, and had afterward completed it from a second, which had belonged to Ratcliff and Gough. He refers us to Robert of Gloucester, the *Harleian Catalogue*, and other authorities, states that Lord Bute gave £17, in 1798, for Mason's copy, and estimates his own at about £50. It fetched £63. It might now be worth £250.

On Churchyard's *Discourse of the Queenes Maiesties Entertainment in Suffolk and Norfolk*, there is this commentary: 'This must have been printed in 1577-8, because Frobisher returned from his last journey while this book was printing. I have another copy of this tract, corresponding minutely throughout with the present, except in the dedication.... The Address to the Reader differs also, but merely in the Typography.' Of Dekker's *Bellman of London*, 1608, he says, 'I have compared this edition with that of 1612, which corresponds exactly, except that six pages of introductory matter are prefixed, and four pages of canting terms are subjoined, entitled "Operis Peroratio."' To the 'O Per Se O' of the same writer he has attached a still more elaborate account of the readings of various impressions. He appears to have compared all the editions in his hands with remarkable attention and interest.

When we come to Gascoigne's *Posies*, 1575, there is a historiette which seems well deserving of reproduction: 'This interesting copy of G. Gascoigne's Poems, diligently read and copiously be-noted by his contemporary, Gabriel Harvey, came from the ancient and curious Library of the Parkers of Browsholme, hereditary bow-bearers of Bolland forest under the Dukes of Buccleuch. In the first instance, my friend, Thomas Lyster Parker, merely proposed to arrange, beautify and enlarge the family collection, for which purpose he called in Ford the bookseller to his assistance, who gave the greater part of the volumes new Manchester liveries instead of their old, time-worn coats, in which they had weathered centuries under the domicile of their protectors. Subsequent events induced Mr P. to dispose

of the whole; a few of the Caxtons were distributed in London to Lord Spencer and others at considerable prices; but the bulk was sold to Ford, from whom I purchased the present and several more. The Manchester shears have, I fear, somewhat abridged the margins. I prize the volume as no ordinary rarity—it affords a curious average sample of the manner in which G. H. recorded his studies in the margins of his books, his neat handwriting, his various learning, his quaintness, his pedantry, and above all his self-satisfied perseverance.'

Gascoigne's Works, 1587, Heber made a receptacle for collations with other texts, and I may be pardoned for breaking through my own rule by appending a remark by a former owner, George Steevens, 'This volume of Gascoigne's Works was bought for £1, 1s. at Mr Mallet's, *alias* Mallock's, *alias* M'Gregor's sale, March 14, 1766. He was the only Scotchman who died in my memory unlamented by an individual of his own nation.

On the flyleaf of Googe's *Eglogs*, 1563, is a composite note by Steevens, Heber and the cataloguer. Heber, alluding to Steevens's remarks, says, 'Mr Steevens had never looked into Thomas Rawlinson's cat., part vii., sold at London House, March 1726, where a copy occurs (perhaps indeed the present one) among the Poetæ in 8vo. See also Ballard's cat. of Mr T. Britton, Small-coal man, 1714-15, No. 353.' The *Temple of Glass*, by Lydgate, evoked the following: 'I believe there are three editions of this tract—I. The present in Caxton's types; II. An edition by Wynkyn de Worde; III. An edition by Berthelet, of which there was a copy in Pearson's collection, bought by Malone, and left by him to Bindley, at

whose sale it was bought by James Boswell.’ Just below occurs the entry of Berthelet’s impression, with a memorandum by Boswell, ‘The price, £4, 18s. 0d., which this volume had been previously sold for, is marked above. On the 21st of Jan., 1819, I purchased it for £40, 10s.!!!’ But as it had been left as a legacy by Mr Malone to Mr Bindley, at whose sale I bought it, I scarcely know how to estimate the *pretium affectionis* of a book which was at once a memorial of two such dear and respected friends. At Heber’s sale the copy fetched £14.

A singular assemblage of *Penny Merriments*, published between 1621 and 1675 (Heber Cat. iv., 1743) bears this interesting note of *provenance*, ‘This curious collection belonged originally to Narcissus Luttrell, and passed with the rest of his valuable Library to Mr Edward Wynne of Chelsea, on whose decease it was sold by auction at Leigh & Sotheby’s, March, 1786 (see cat., lot 23). Mr Baynes was the purchaser for £3, 8s. 0d., and bequeathed the poetical and romantic portion of his Library to Mr Ritson, at whose sale I bought it.’

We enter on a different atmosphere and line of culture, when we scan Heber’s note on a small metrical tract by ‘Playne Piers’ on the clergy, printed secretly in the time of Henry VIII., and mis-described by some authorities as in prose: ‘If Maunsell had examined it with due attention, he must have perceived that a large portion of the text (though not the whole) is written in verse, and runs into loosely-accentuated rhyming stanzas and couplets. To say the truth, I am more than half-disposed to ascribe the authorship to the famous W. Roy, of whose poem, *Rede me and be not*

wroth, the present composition reminds me both in sentiment and measure. It is worthy of remark that G. Steevens's copy of the first edition of that poem (now in my possession) is bound exactly uniform, and being of precisely the same dimensions, they probably were united in one cover till he separated them. It is plain that he attached equal and considerable importance to both, having bestowed on each his best russia binding, with his initials on the sides, and inscribed his autograph on the back of title and at the foot of the last leaf—infallible signs of his especial favour.'

In the case of a Caxton of extraordinary beauty, the *Hoole Lyf of Jason*, Heber gives an account of the copies known to him, and concludes that his own, in the original binding of oak covered with calf, and with many rough leaves, is the finest. It had been Watson Taylor's. Another very beautiful one occurred at the Selsey sale in 1871, and fetched £670, Mr Walford desiring to see how far Mr Quaritch would go and seeing accordingly. He was fortunate enough, however, to have it taken off his hands by Mr Ellis, who sold it to an American, I believe, for £800.

Heber, as we all know, was a general scholar, and was at home in foreign no less than in English books. He observes of a very early *Roman de la Rose*: 'This Edition is executed in the Characters of Ulric Gering, the earliest Parisian Printer, and is very scarce. There is said to be a copy in the Public Library at Lyons. See Delandine's catalogue. Gering exercised his art from 1470 to 1520, in which year he died. The present is neither one of the earliest nor latest efforts of his press—perhaps about 1480. It has signatures, but

neither catchwords nor numerals. It has also many grotesque woodcuts. The execution and presswork very clear and beautiful.’

Of the romantic accident which threw Robinson’s *Golden Mirrour*, 1589, into Heber’s hands, I give an account in the Handbook, where I also shew that the author belonged to Alton in Cheshire. Briefly, Rodd the bookseller found the volume of Elizabethan tracts, this included, at a marine store dealer’s on Saffron Hill about 1830, and being put into the scales it was found to be worth *fourpence threefarthings*. Rodd sold it to Heber for £50. It was a glorious haul, yet not so good as that of Warton the historian, who picked off a broker’s board at Salisbury for sixpence the 1596 edition of *Venus and Adonis*, bound up with several other pieces of equal or even greater rarity. Those were halcyon days, were they not? But how much the cost governs the appreciation! What comes to us cheap, because no one else wants it, we hold cheap, and that is the history of many of the early bargains.

The *Phœnix Nest*, 1593, contains the ensuing flyleaf matter: ‘I gave Mr Isaac Reed five Guineas for this very scarce book in the summer of 1802.—R. H....’ Heber enters into very careful detail as to the authors of the several poems, and where some of them appear in other books. The copy was uncut, and sold at his sale for £31, 10s. I accidentally discovered another very fine one at Sion College, bound up at the end of a common volume, and pointed it out to the librarian, the Reverend Mr Milman, who did not seem to be very strongly impressed by the

communication. Had it been a sermon worth twopence, he might have felt otherwise.

Of *Pierceforest*, of which he possessed the edition by Giles Gourmont, 1531-2, in folio, Heber speaks as follows: ‘This is a Romance of great Character, value and merit. Mr Warton, upon whatever authority, asserts it to have been originally written in verse about 1220, and not till many years afterwards translated into prose, an assertion which cannot be confirmed; no MS. of any Metrical Romance under that title appearing to be anywhere extant, and indeed it is probable that he confounded *Pierceforest* with *Perceval*. It is, however, believed to be one of the oldest prose Romances extant, and is mentioned by Caxton in his *Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*.’

A volume by Spenser receives this perhaps somewhat out-of-date notice; but it demonstrates the habit of Heber in regard to all classes of works of importance in his possession: ‘This is the first edition of Spenser’s *Shepheard’s Calendar*, and *of extraordinary rarity, not to be found in the most distinguished libraries*. Mr Todd was obliged to take a journey to Cambridge to obtain a sight of a copy. The subsequent editions in 4to are rare and valuable, but far less so than the present....’

We have to go back a long way, and cross the sea, before we reach the *patria* of the next sample, the *Historia Naturalis* of Pliny, printed by Jenson in 1469, in rich old blue morocco, from the library of Camus de Limari, at whose sale in 1783 it fetched 3000 livres. Heber has inscribed a MS. note on the flyleaf to this effect. The book sold at his sale for £31, 10s.

We return home at the next specimen, which is Gosson's *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* in the same volume with Lodge's *Reply to Gosson*, and a third tract relating to the theatre. Mr Heber notes: 'The present vol. contains only 3 out of a remarkably curious collection of 8 pieces, bound together soon after the publication of the latest, somewhere about 1580. This may be ascertained by the antiquity of the handwriting, which exactly records them all, on the reverse of the title-page of *Playes Confuted*. So late as 1781 they all remained together in Mr Beauclerc's collection (see cat., 4137), with the exception of Gascoigne's *Delicate Diet for Drunkards*. They seem afterwards to have passed into Mr Nassau's library, who divided them into 5 different vols., which are now all in my possession.

'As to Gascoigne's *Delicate Diet*, it is, I apprehend, the same copy contained in G. Steevens's collection of Gascoigne's Works, now in my possession—in fact, no other is known.' It was on that account, presumably, that the copy sold at Heber's sale for £27, 16s. 6d.

The history of Marlowe's *Dido*, 1594, must not be repeated here, as it is already printed in the *Handbook*. Nobody has ever seen the elegy by Nash on Marlowe, mentioned by Warton. The copy of *Dido* given by Isaac Reed to George Steevens, and bought at Steevens's sale in 1800 by Sir Egerton Brydges, was transferred by the latter to Heber, at whose sale it produced £39. The Duke of Devonshire's, which had previously been Kemble's, cost Henderson the actor *fourpence*.

A good deal of mystery surrounds the Lee Priory collection, which seems to have at one time contained many

dramatic rarities of the first order, most, if not all, of which eventually found their way to Heber. Henry Oxenden of Barham, near Canterbury, is known to have owned in 1647 an extraordinary assemblage of old English plays, bound together in six volumes, and comprising the *Taming of a Shrew* (not Shakespear's), 1594, *Ralph Roister Doister*, *Hamlet* (1603), and other precious remains. What became of them, there is no record; but it has sometimes occurred to me that they might have gone to Lee Priory. At Lord Mostyn's, at Gloddaeth in Carnarvonshire, there is a second series of volumes; but of the contents I have no personal knowledge. To return to the Heber *Dido* for a moment, it may be permissible to transcribe Steevens's note: 'This copy was given me by Mr Reed. Such liberality in a collector of Old Plays is at least as rare as the rarest of our dramatic pieces.—G. S.'

Now and again, of course, Heber is misinformed, or his information has been superseded, as where he alludes to Shakespear's Henry the Fourth, 1608, as a first-rate rarity. His copy sold for £12, 12s. In the note about it he takes occasion to mention that Steevens bought many of the books of the Rev. J. Bowle, whom Gifford called 'the stupidest of two-legged creatures,' but who had a very curious library, of White.

But Heber's insight into the contents and merits of his books is admirable. In his copy of Tatham's *Ostella*, 1650, he draws our attention to the author's Ode to Lovelace on his journey into Holland, and adds, 'It must have been written before his marriage. The Prologue on the removal of the Cockpit has not been hitherto noticed, and on the next page