

in detecting the traitorous miscreant who was ruining his fair fame by means of black art.

"It seemed that the combined wisdom of his friends was unable to solve the puzzle until Duke Richard enquired: 'Prithee, good Master Caxton, from whence came this cunning henchman of thine, this apple of thine eye, this halting ganger, Eli? Art thou assured of his fidelity? What company keeps he? Where doth the varlet lodge? I like not the crow's feet in the corner of his eyes in one so seeming young.'

"Caxton replied: 'So please Your Grace. I would answer for the godly youth with my poor life. As to company, he is of such piety that he mingleth not with the lewd ones of our sinful city. He lodgeth solitary in the cell wherein we store the waste of our paper, nigh to the room of the press.' The 'old man' also gave a glowing account of his qualities and the excellence of his testimonials.

"The Duke resumed: 'My Lord Abbot, noble Earls, gentlemen, and good COUSIN Caxton, I would fain test this Pye. I suspect this clever ink-brayer of our King's Printer. Indeed, if my thought be well grounded, he is an emissary of Pluto; mayhap, his very self. But I am that one who will match him. Now for my test. Between the leaves of this Latin breviary of mine is a splinter from the crosier of St. Dunstan, and I will probe Eli's piety with it.'

"They found the two workmen busily 'working off' a form of the first edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tayles. 'Come hither, brisk, Eli,' said Richard; 'thou are noted as a wondrous Latin scholar; read me a page or twain of this volume, with the accent thou hast learned abroad, for the edification of my lord Abbot and this good company.' Eli winked at Bullock and leered at the Abbot, then grasped the book.

"But no sooner had he touched the volume containing the sacred relic than he yelled as if in torture. He underwent a horrible change, and he stood revealed before them—Old Nick! At the same moment a chasm was cleft in the floor beside him, from which issued pungent fumes like melted sulphur, antimony and lead, and a distant chorus of fiends seemed to yell a brassy 'Ha! Ha!'"