

crude state of our language could stagger him. No difficulty in the mechanical part of the art could balk his ingenuity. But where he shone brightest was in his familiarity with languages. As I said before, Caxton was a translator; but alas! Caxton was a novice beside Eli as a linguist.

"As time went on a strange series of misfortunes fell on poor, weary, puzzled Caxton. The most unaccountable errors, additions, and subtractions crept into his publications, to his great loss of reputation. No matter how often he read his proofs and revised them, yet the accursed blemishes would appear, even in the body of the most sacred works. Not only was the meaning of the text often vitiated, but profanity and obscene sentences made Caxton's hair stand on end with horror. His idol, the father of English poetry, Geoffrey Chaucer, began to look on Caxton with suspicion. His friend, the Archdeacon of Colchester, was shocked on receiving a treatise on the 'Divers Duteys of a Christian Layeman and His Parte in the Church of Englande, as founded by Sainte Augustine, etc., etc.' This treatise was written by and edited under the eye of the Reverend Abbot of Westminster—Caxton's neighbor and landlord. The type had been tampered with so much that it was simply erotic, it was ingeniously decadent, in fact shady, and Caxton was in despair. Certainly he must yet endure the stake and the fire.

"Caxton having received his customary fee of a fat buck from the Earl of Arundel, one autumn eve made a supper for his learned and noble friends. The Duke of Gloster had presented him with a willow-hooped firkin of Cyprian wine, which the Dey of Algiers had sent the Duke by his ambassador, the Bey of Biscay. A maund of oysters in the shell from Dover, a wild boar's ham from Wurtemberg, a cheese from Limburg, and a few other savory knick-knacks made up a neat little supper, which Caxton served in his refectory. Eli broiled the venison cutlets to a nicety, and Jan Bullock, the pressman, opened the oysters, etc. When the guests were seated the two serving men retired, as Old Man Caxton desired privacy. After the lunch was disposed of and Caxton had tapped the keg, he laid bare his troubles to his friends, and besought their aid