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WILLIAM CAXTON

PRINTING IN ITS EARLIEST DAYS

It is pleasant as well as profitable to sometimes look back over the time intervening between the small beginnings in any art and the present age of perfection. In the matter of beauty of workmanship, however, the old printers have every reason to boast that while year after year artists and mechanics of the highest skill have endeavored to improve on their efforts, and that while time has almost been annihilated by recent inventions used in book making, still, despite the newness of their art, the imperfections of their appliances, and the prejudices arrayed against them, their works have seldom been excelled, and four hundred years later are looked upon as masterpieces of workmanship to be imitated in many ways, rather than to be laughed at as the evidences of small beginnings. William Caxton, the first English printer, was born in Kent, about the year 1411, and surrounded by his work, died at Westminster in the year 1491. He began his career as apprentice to a London mercer, but his master dying before he had served his time, he visited the continent, and after having travelled in Germany and the

Netherlands, took up his residence in Bruges, where he began the first book ever printed in the English tongue. This work was completed at Westminster four hundred years ago this year, and specimens of it were shown at the recent Caxton celebration held in Montreal to celebrate the fourth centennial anniversary of printing. The concluding paragraph of this work we have reproduced in facsimile, so that the MESS-ENGER'S readers may have an opportunity of comparing the type of the olden times with that used in the present day. Caxton was not only a printer but a scholar, as the fact that he translated several of his books from the Latin clearly proves. In those days the printer made his own types, presses and ink, and we can imagine Caxton interspersing his literary duties with that of ink making, before the printing art had arrived at that stage when the proper division of labor became a necessity. The wood engraving art followed close on that of printing, and the accompanying specimen of an armed knight evidences one of the early attempts at illustrating books. Caxton was assisted in his work by several apprentices, who were also friends, foremost amongst them being Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson. The former, between the years 1492 and 1535, printed no less than four hundred books, and was so proud of his association with Caxton that he included his former master's initials with his own in his printer's work. Pynson was a Norman, but carried on a business in England, and was created the first

GIVING OUT HYMNS.

Distinctness in the enunciation, clearness in the announcement, and precision in the repetition of the place of the sermon text, as also of the number of the hymns, are comparatively rare in the pulpit. It should be borne in mind by every preacher, or leader in the exercises of worship, that there is difficulty in making clear to a hearer the number of a hymn or of a Bible chapter or verse, which is not encountered in conveying the idea of anything said in the sermon or other portions of the service. A numeral, like a proper name, is an arbitrary designation. There is no help to its understanding from the connection in which it is used. It might be changed without affecting the sense of its use. Hence, unless a hearer receives it with unequivocal distinctness as it is first uttered, he has no clue to its meaning. He has utterly failed of its apprehension. If the minister announces the nine hundred and fiftieth hymn, a person who has not imperfectly has nothing to assure him whether it is the nine hundred and fiftieth, or the one hundred and fiftieth, or the one hundred and fifteenth, or the nine hundred and fifteenth hymn. Or he may be further from the mark than either of these guesses. He is entitled to hear the number over again. A like confusion is often in one's mind concerning the chapter and verse of the announced text. A minister ought, in the first place, to be more careful to state with unmistakable distinctness the place of his sermon text, or the number of



1400. EARLY PRINTERS' MARK. WYNKYN DE WORDE

to let boys "kick up a row," as they call it, for four or five minutes during changes of lessons. This freshens them up, and puts a little more life into them. I have at times, on a hot-summer's afternoon, proposed to the boys a short interval in the middle of a lesson for forty winks, to which they have graciously acceded, and after a few minutes we have jumped on our legs again to wake ourselves up, and have continued our lesson with far more vigor than we betrayed before. This may shock those who consider themselves stern disciplinarians, but it is infinitely better than that the master should fall asleep by himself, and, as a friend of mine did once, fall back off the stool, and in his effort to save himself pull the desk over on the top of him. — Paper Read Before College of Preceptors

Erre endeth the book named the dictes or sayengis of the philosophres enprynted by me William Caxton at Westmestre the yere of our lordy + m<sup>c</sup> lxxx + lxxvij + Whiche book is late translat

SPECIMENS OF THE TYPES USED BY CAXTON IN *The Dictes or Sayings of the Philosophers*. PRINTED IN 1477

King's printer, an appointment which yielded him a small pecuniary. The ancient printing press was not so complicated an arrangement of cranks, cogwheels, bands, cylinders, tapes, "flies," "blankets," belts, and wheels, such as we have now, but was generally adapted from some ordinary press. It is said that about the time Caxton commenced operations in England, a printer named Melchior de Stouham, wishing to establish a printing office at Augsburg, engaged a skilful workman and proceeded to make the necessary arrangements and purchases, which occupied him a whole year. He bought five old wine presses and made them into printing presses, but his expenses were so great that he was ruined financially and died broken hearted. With such appliances as these, cheap printing was out of the question, but since the introduction of movable types, and presses which can print sixteen thousand sheets an hour, books are within the reach of every one, and the only hindrance to the spread of knowledge, in this country at least, is the want of interest in those who should learn

the hymn to be sung, than anything else which he utters. Then he ought to take it for granted that many of his hearers failed to understand his statement, and he should repeat the announcement even more carefully and with greater distinctness than the first time. — S.S. Times.

FREEDOM IN THE SCHOOL ROOM.

Hedge your child round about with numberless rules, put him under a constant espionage, and, as I have said, you deprive him of all opportunity of self-restraint, you neglect the whole aim of discipline as regards the individual, you do not even teach him how to submit to the government of others, as the world will count government. Let the rules of a school be few, broad, and traditional. Our boys sent forth into the wide world will find that there is no elaborate code of petty and detailed regulations read out three times a year for their moral guidance.

In the class-room as much freedom is allowed as is consistent with good work. There is no attempt at drill, but, of course, freedom must not be allowed to degenerate into license. M. Joice Simon says that he thinks a quarter of an hour liberty between each lesson would do children much good, and would do no harm to discipline. In English schools, where our hours are comparatively short, we can hardly afford so long an interval; but I quite agree in the principle, and I think it a good thing

How many persons of mature age can write an ordinary letter without making several mistakes? In how many schools is the art of rapid and correct letter-writing taught? Is any branch of practical education more needed, and is any study more generally neglected? These questions are not conundrums, but are serious queries. What is the trouble with many teachers, and why is it they will continue the everlasting "paring," and constantly neglect the good, common sense training of their pupils? We need brains in the school-room, or rather we need the common sense that comes of brain work. — *National Teachers' Monthly*.



ARMED KNIGHT—Specimen of Early Engraving.

—Ye that love the Lord, hate evil. —Psa. 97. 10.



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