

A NOTE ON CAMBRIDGE PRINTING

By S. C. Roberts, Cambridge.

What is printing? To the printer it is primarily a business; to the scholar it is the handmaid of learning; to the typographer it is an art.

A University Press is faced, in a special sense, with the problem of reconciling these points of view; and through the four centuries of Cambridge printing there may be observed both the clash and the co-operation of printer, scholar, and typographer. It was, almost certainly, Erasmus and the English humanists who brought John Siberch to Cambridge in 1521¹⁾. Thomas Thomas, the first printer, after Siberch, whose works have survived, was himself a scholar, being made a Fellow of King's College in 1574. Further, one of the best known works printed by him was his own Latin Dictionary, which had, by 1610, reached its eleventh edition. In that edition his successor put on record Thomas's opinion that it was "men of learning, thoroughly imbued with academic studies, who should give themselves to cultivating and rightly applying that illustrious benefit sent down from heaven.... Accordingly what more fit than that when he had wrought what was worthy of type, he should himself, needing aid of none, act as midwife to his own progeny".

Here, then, is an early link between printing and scholarship in Cambridge and Thomas gives a hint of his difficulties when in his *Epistola ad Lectorem* he notes that his work was done *carptim inter operarum susurros*.

The career of Thomas Buck, appointed University Printer in 1625, again illustrates the close connection between academic and business interests. On the one hand, Buck was a Fellow of St Catharine's College and held the office of Esquire Bedell as well as that of University Printer; on the other hand, we find him making a shrewd commercial bargain whereby he should print large editions of school text-books for a syndicate of London stationers, provided that sufficient copies should be left in Cambridge for the needs of the University. The printing of Thomas Buck has also a considerable typographical interest. The first Cambridge edition of the Authorised Version appeared in 1629 and Buck and his partner, Roger Daniel, were so well satisfied with their folio bible of 1638, that they publicly challenged scholars to find a mistake in it.

From the literary point of view, one of the most famous of Buck's productions was *The Temple*, by George Herbert, of which the title-page is here shown. It is a title-page thoroughly characteristic of the seventeenth century. Wherein lies its charm? Partly in its shape, since a duodecimo format is in pleasant harmony with "private ejaculations"; partly in the boldness of the border, which might be oppressive if the whole space within the frame were not so cleverly filled; partly in the nice proportions of the panels.

¹⁾ See article by G. J. Gray, p. 4.