

# A bibliophile's letter from Great Britain

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Librarium : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft = revue de la Société Suisse des Bibliophiles**

Band (Jahr): **6 (1963)**

Heft 3

PDF erstellt am: **14.09.2024**

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JOHN RYDER (LONDON)

A BIBLIOPHILE'S LETTER FROM GREAT BRITAIN

A Fragment of Autobiography

This is my third year of letter-writing despite the language barrier which withholds from me all but the vaguest idea of what else is printed in *Librarium*. My first

two letters were somewhat impersonal. I should like this third one, perhaps my last, to be a simple description of a day's work. I feel obliged to reveal that I am no scholar,



no bibliographer, that my time is filled with too many activities to allow me leisure for research.

The ten miles separating home from office (Richmond from Covent Garden) I usually journey by car. The most direct route would be the least interesting and so I travel through Richmond Park to Roehampton and Barnes and along the river-side to Putney Bridge and through Chelsea and Victoria into St. James' Park and along The Mall to Trafalgar Square and into the car-park beside the National Gallery.

This is not a quiet road between nine and ten in the morning, but I usually find an opportunity to consult my pocketbook, note who is coming to see me at the office, whether or not I have a lunch-time engagement, whom I forgot to telephone the day before, see if I ought to be collecting some drawings on the way into town. If there is a publishing dispute in the civil courts I shall try to open *The Times* at the law page and at least take in the headline, maybe stop to read. Sometimes I even graze the surface of a problem. This can be erratic and difficult in rush-hour traffic. On the morning in question I stopped by the river at Putney to read the final day's hearing of

July 9-17 before Mr. Justice Plowman brought the pronouncement: 'Judgement was reserved.' Not very enlightening.

Setting off again I began to consider an old problem involving my attitude to typographic literacy. Amongst bibliographical scholars the degree of literacy is indeed high. In addition to the works of McKerrow and Frank Isaac, A.W. Pollard and Victor Scholderer, E.P. Goldschmidt and Stanley Morison, Harry Carter and John Dreyfus—to mention only the first that come to mind—we have the current onslaught of researches of John Dreyfus as general editor and co-ordinator on early type specimens, and the researches of Professor Charlton Hinman on the habits of compositors who set up Shakespeare's First Folio. But typographic literacy has wider implications affecting the eyes of every reader.

I was so worried once, a long time ago, by the awful standards of certain provincial printing shops that I wished more than anything to begin work as an itinerant designer, putting in commas at Marlborough, taking them out at Devizes; pleading for a more generous use of space at Exeter and suggesting the closing of awkward gaps at Salisbury; making the

## Coming to

THE WORLD IS A party,"  
WEDDING by Bernard sition  
Kops (MacGibbon & Kee war w  
25s) which

By SHIRLEY TOULSON out of

THIS is how it is to be an adoles  
English Jew—not an anglicised emerg  
emotic

**ancestors and on the barriers India has still to surmount before the revolution—proclaimed, but so far shrugged off—is fulfilled**

*2 Two examples of the compositor's inability to deal with the copy-space problem*

the bible case (referred to in my first letter, volume 4, page 79). Two years of research and contemplation and a court session from

need felt for a new typeface at Richmond, and adding a touch of ornament at King's Lynn. Whereas, in fact, I made just one

attempt by post to a London shop. I sent a short note on redesigned letterpaper proofed by me at my own private press. The proprietor liked my design but he liked his better. After that I only re-designed by request.

A lingering illiteracy is everywhere. Should one get excited about it? Perhaps

First Folio. Peculiarities of spelling have long ago distinguished two compositors (A and B); similarly two more compositors (C and D), whose spelling habits do not exactly correspond to those of either of the first two compositors, have been identified by analysis of their methods of setting; and a fifth compositor (E), whose work appears

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### 3. Characteristics of the Turkish School

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3 *Setting to principle rather than sense and appearance.*

after all it is a matter of taste. These scraps of paper (illustration 2) I recently tore out of National Sunday papers. No comment is really needed. They are just mildly offensive. Another scrap of paper (illustration 3), torn from a well-designed booklet shows what happens when a simple set of instructions is followed slavishly. Apart from remarking on these points I no longer feel involved or compelled to seek reform. I just laugh when I see something really illiterate and groan when I have to read lines of unspaced capital letters or words in the lower-case set with spaced letters.

The positive aspect of typographical literacy lies in current bibliographical researches—especially with Professor Charlton Hinman's two volumes (*Printing and Proof-Reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*) waiting at home to be read with as much excitement as good detective fiction—rather than in trying to smoke out a few strongholds of wilful illiteracy. Leave these areas of poverty as negative signposts. If one's job is to design printed matter then get on with the designing, attack illiteracy by example. That may leave time to read how Professor Hinman reconstructed the scene in Isaac Jaggard's printing office with five compositors, A, B, C, D and E, at work on the

in the *Tragedies*, and who set inexpertly from printed copy only. It is suggested that compositor E was Jaggard's apprentice John Leason. By analogy with printing shops today I would hesitate to say the least expert setting was that of the newest apprentice.

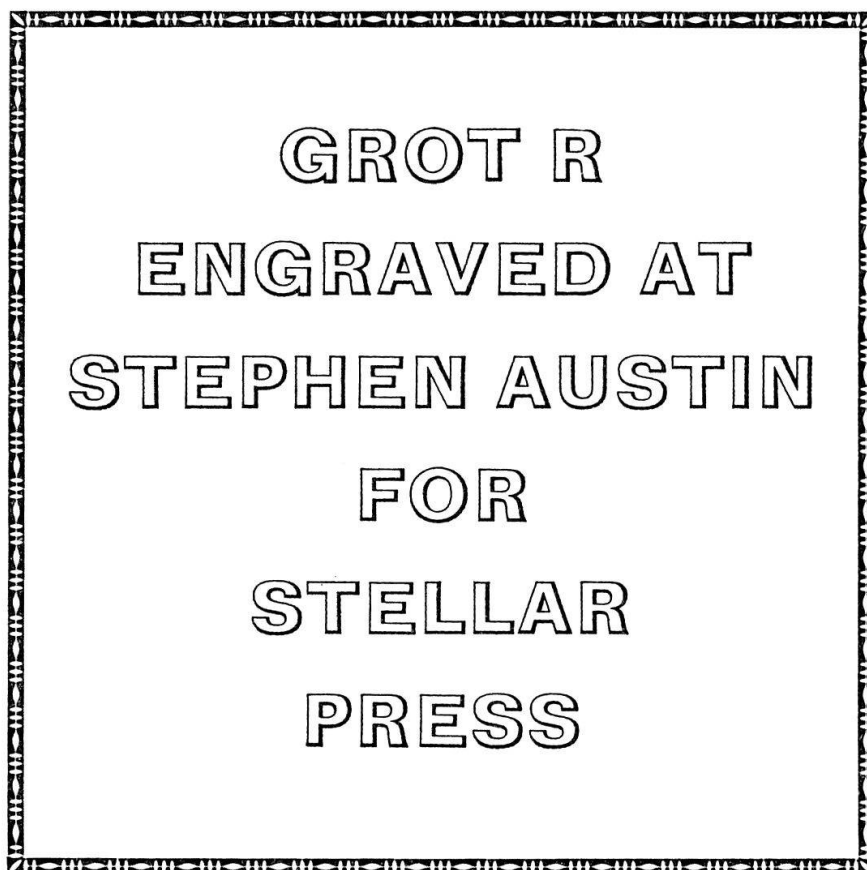
There is a typographical link between the researches of John Dreyfus on early type specimens and of Professor Charlton Hinman on Shakespeare Folios—the First Folio printer, Isaac Jaggard, used the type which Dreyfus reproduces (illustration 4) and attributes to François Guyot, typesetter at Antwerp for about thirty years in the middle of the sixteenth century. A facsimile of this type specimen sheet has been made from the only known copy now in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington.

Here we are at Trafalgar Square. Must concentrate now on steering a clean course through the traffic, north past St. Martin's and around the back of the National Gallery into my car-park. Leave the car until six in the evening. Walk to my office at Cambridge Circus, passing the bookshops in Charing Cross Road, giving more than a casual glance to the latest book jackets, up the dark stone stairway in Earlham Street to the second floor, enter the largest room known as the production office of the



Æ. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H.  
 X. Y. Z. .a. b. c. d. e. f. g. h. ik..l.  
 ũ. ff. ff. ff. fi. fi. fl. fl. ct. e. æ. œ. :-.,  
 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 6. 0 Non fol

4 From the first sheet of Type Specimen Facsimilies, published by Putnams of London, 1963. The unusual practice of inserting stops between the letters shows an interesting printer's error between 'ik' and 'k..l'. The reproduction is from the only known surviving sheet and this error may have been corrected in other copies.



5 A new typeface and Eustachio Celebrino's border

Bodley Head. For six years I have worked here in the capacity of designer, the last year as a director.

I am going to an auction at Sotheby's with Anthony Rota at eleven. Fortunately the sale catalogue has appeared in today's post. It allows me to take only the briefest look at Sir Francis Meynell's books for sale this morning. I also make some arrangements with the Stellar Press to deliver a first printing of William Plomer's *Conversation with My Younger Self*. I shall hand over the entire edition at lunch today to its owner, Mr. Simon Nowell-Smith, president of the Bibliographical Society, London.

Mr. Max Reinhardt, managing director of The Bodley Head, and I are directors of the Stellar Press, a printing shop at Barnet, where Mr. Hummerstone is managing director. Out of this close administrative link we have ample opportunity to experiment. Autolithography on rotary presses has been one such development. We have also begun to make our own typographical material in the shape of borders and type-faces. The first typecutting is a display titling face (illustration 5). This is a design I have had in mind for a long time, based on an extended grot (Monotype series 150) with some altered characters and transcribed into an outline-shadow letter, and which I recently asked Michael Harvey to draw with a deliberate, controlled shake of the brush. The original drawings are about eight inches high. The matrices are engraved. The border unit (illustration 5) is also engraved, and is photographically based on the border of a wood engraving by Eustachio Celebrino for Apollonius Adonatus' *De octo Orator Orationis Partibus* printed at Perugia, 1517. The corner-piece is not Celebrino's, but an invention of mine drawn by Michael Harvey.

Yesterday I went with Charles Mozley to the Zwemmer Gallery. We talked about lithographs with Mr. Zwemmer who told us an interesting auction story about one of his customers suffering from collectors'

mania. This man approached Zwemmer flourishing an auction catalogue, exploding with impatience to possess a certain book, demanding that no limit should be put on the bidding. Zwemmer tried to tell his customer something but could not get past the cannonade of 'At any price, I want it'. So, anxious for peace, he agreed to bid. At the auction the bidding got a little out of hand and soon went up in fives to fifty at which point Mr. Zwemmer became the owner.

Coming to the shop next day the customer received his book, wrote out his cheque, and for a few minutes was so pleased he could not talk. More amused than annoyed with the situation Mr. Zwemmer was able to say: 'Well now that's what you wanted but it's a pity about the price. If you had let me get a word in yesterday I could have offered from these shelves here a choice of five copies of this book at £12 10s. each.'

I set off at a brisk trot from Earlham Street to Vigo Street, along Old Compton Street and Brewer Street, crossing Cambridge Circus, Wardour Street and Regent Street. Think of Professor Hinman and his brilliant researches on the patterns of recurring appearances of six hundred damaged letters—each damaged in a distinct way and traceable throughout the printing of Shakespeare's First Folio. Professor Hinman follows the course of a particular piece of type from a particular compositor's case onto the printed page, back to case, reset and onto another page in another quire of the book—and so on until either the plays are all set up and printed or the piece of type has become sufficiently damaged to be discarded. It did sometimes happen that a piece of type became damaged, looked more like another letter, was distributed into the box of its appearing shape and continued for a time to be used in this new, unintended role. Such are the mechanics of Charlton Hinman's research.

Enter Bodley House in Vigo Street. Anthony Rota appears from the mirror door on the left. I turn on my heels and as we go out together to Sotheby's, a short distance up Bond Street, I recall the figures of Elkin Mathews and John Lane who founded The Bodley Head in this house in 1892, the year Giovanni Mardersteig was born. And now that I often see George Sims, antiquarian bookseller of Peacocks in Berkshire, at Bodley House the figure of Leonard Smithers also comes forward from the nineties. John Lane expressed fears and doubts about Beardsley's drawings, and by 1896 said he wouldn't publish any more. Leonard Smithers immediately made Beardsley an offer, published work in *The Savoy*. But Beardsley, already a sick person, died early in 1898.

George Sims' note on Smithers (published, *London Magazine*, September, 1956) shows Beardsley's own doubts in a letter addressed to Leonard Smithers:

*Jesus is our Lord And Judge  
Dear Friend*

*I implore you to destroy all copies of 'Lysistrata' & bad drawings. Show this to Pollitt & conjure him to do the same. By all that is holy all obscene drawings.*

*Aubrey Beardsley. In my death agony.*

From this vague, half-reconstructed scene of my publishing ancestors I turned to Anthony: 'Think I saw the tall emaciated ghost of Beardsley go through the mirror of your door just as you came out.' And he replied: 'I shouldn't be a bit surprised.'

The Rotas and Laurie Deval (a director of the present firm of antiquarian booksellers under its original publishing title, Elkin Mathews) are the main sources of my Officina Bodoni collection. Despite their invaluable help and the catalogue of an exhibition of Mardersteig's books shown at the British Museum in 1954 it is sometimes impossible to know if a particular copy on offer is in its original state. In the 1954

catalogue page sizes and bindings are not described. Consequently it was only after I had bought two copies of the *Eustachio Celebrino* that I could describe the original state and discover that the first copy purchased had been severely cropped and re-bound.

A few days ago, I told Anthony, I'd been in the King's Library of the British Museum with my printer friend Hummerstone where we knelt on the floor to examine, as closely as possible, the *Gospels* printed by Giovanni Mardersteig. Apart from the mystery surrounding the issue of this book it seems a very grand production of the Officina Bodoni. A quarto volume, handset in 18 point Zeno type (designed by Mardersteig: punch-cut by Charles Malin) in full morocco binding. It is illustrated with woodcuts from *Epistole e Evangelii*, Florence, 1495, which are believed to have been made by Bartolommeo di Giovanni. This has yet to be proved, but of these cuts Hind has written: '(they form) the most considerable achievement of fifteenth-century Florentine book illustration.' Mardersteig's *Gospels* are not illustrated with photo-reproductions of these cuts but with re-cuttings made by hand in wood by Bruno Bramanti.

The text of the copy Hummerstone and I examined at the British Museum is in English. The catalogue states that it was issued in 1962 but I understand that it has not yet been published. Hans Schmoller showed a page of *The Four Gospels* printed with a Latin text in *Penrose Annual* for 1957. He said that it would be issued in 1958. Later, Mr. Schmoller published a checklist of Officina Bodoni books issued since 1954 showing that no books were published in 1958 and that no *Gospels* up to 1960. From all this I conclude that probably two separate editions, one in Latin and one in English will be issued in hand-set Zeno with re-cut illustrations of Florentine excellence, perhaps in 1963.

Into Sotheby's and up a few stairs. The room straight ahead is prepared for a book

auction. Rooms to the right have pictures and furniture on view. I remembered seeing in Mr. Zwemmer's office yesterday an 'old master' drawing by Picasso, figure drawing in red chalk. Asked the price and found no desire to sell. But anyway he said it's to be had for five. Here Mr. Zwemmer described a customer inquiring about the price of the drawing. On being told 'five', Mr. Zwemmer was asked, 'Five what?' Answer: 'Five thousand pounds.' Go straight ahead and have a look at some of the books before the auctioneer opens the sale by calling for the first lot.

Anthony and I stay for an hour. I am impressed by the lack of esoteric airs and mumbo-jumbo. The smoothness and speed with which the first hundred lots are bid for and sold to a few familiar buyers and one or two strangers. Anthony buys for £8 a collection of Double Crown Club dinner invitations and menu cards. Mr. Duschnes, New York bookseller, bids with some determination, as far as I can tell from my roaming interest through the room, for every book printed in America or with American associations.

Leaving the auction room, Anthony asked what I thought of the Antiquarian Book Fair this year. Although I went searching for Officina Bodoni books and with an open interest in several subjects I managed to resist everything that came before my eyes. My wife was there with me at the opening and she fell for a first edition of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. I bought one first edition of a Graham Greene novel for Mr. Reinhardt and perhaps enjoyed most of all meeting Muir Dawson, bookseller of Los Angeles, who has a fine collection of books on type and printing to offer.

On my way back through Soho to the office I went into Bodley House with Anthony and we discussed for a moment a *Times Literary Supplement* review of the new bibliography of D.H. Lawrence by Professor Warren Roberts. Broken letters came on

the scene again. Bertram Rota is quoted as suggesting that the missing 'i' in *Love Poems* (line 16, page xiv) may be used to identify first issue. The theory is that the printing began correctly and then the 'i' was either broken or pulled out of the form by the inking rollers. The reviewer accuses Warren Roberts of pedantry and Bertram Rota of not developing his hypothesis logically. (In fact Bertram Rota's argument is mis-quoted in Roberts' text.) I see the problem from printing and publishing aspects rather than from a bibliographic viewpoint, having passed the greater part of my life in publishing offices amongst manuscripts and proofs, and in printing houses amongst the compositors and presses. The possibilities of unofficial variations in a text are perhaps greater than usually supposed. All the facts are rarely known. One discovery can be as misleading as another can be illuminating. What appears to be fact may not really be so. For instance I have just seen in a Duschnes catalogue Geoffrey Grigson's *Englishman's Flora*, first edition, special binding, one of fifty copies, signed. This 'fifty copies' fact was so printed in the copy Duschnes was offering, and, in fact, a special edition of fifty copies was intended. But, in fact, only twenty-five copies were produced in this state.

Anthony Rota produced from the table in his private office a catalogue I'd asked his help in getting from Italy. It is something unusual in the line of booksellers' catalogues and deserves mention. Two thousand copies were printed and paper-bound in a small quarto format of 176 pages describing 72 writing books and specimens from Italian, French, Low Countries and Spanish sources between 1535 and 1885. There are more than 200 illustrations and an introduction by Stanley Morison. The catalogue, issued in 1962 by La Bibliofila, was compiled by Carla Marzoli who owns the collection. Prices do not appear. All 72 items are for sale as a complete collection. The catalogue is printed in English and is



produced with care comparable to that taken over the assembly of bibliographical details.

When Mr. A. F. Johnson of the British Museum was consulted by Carla Marzoli he wrote: 'I myself have never seen the greater part of your books!' Signora Marzoli consulted forty-five relevant libraries throughout Europe and America. Nevertheless several of the 72 items were not located in any of these libraries. Francesco Bessier's *Libro di Carattere*, Rome, 1811 is one of these



6 *The correct posture for writing from Francesco Bessier's Libro di Carattere, Rome, 1811. Engraved by Pinelli after Bessier.*

(illustration 6, part of plate 3, designed by Bessier and engraved by Pinelli).

On my way back to Earlham Street I made a note to send back the colour plates borrowed from the British Museum to reproduce the Turkish miniature (illustration 1). This comes from a Museum publication by G.M. Meredith-Owens. It is a paper-covered monograph on Turkish Miniatures with twenty-five plates, eight of which are in colour. The author explains that Turkish painting has been largely

neglected partly because of inaccessibility and partly because most historians of Islamic art devote their attention to Persian painting. The colour plate shown in this letter is from a Turkish translation from a Persian Book of Marvels made about 1600. The miniature shows angels at prayer and the text supports this claim that angels pray like human beings with a statement from the Koran: 'And those who dwell in His presence are not too proud to worship Him, nor do they weary.'

Other titles in this series of British Museum monographs are *The Babylonian Legend of the Flood* by Edmond Sollberger, *Portrait Painting from Roman Egypt* by A.F. Shore, *Johann Gutenberg* by Victor Scholderer.

The entire edition of William Plomer's *Conversations with my Younger Self* is no more than a handful—twenty-five copies of a paper-bound booklet of thirty-two pages in a very narrow crown octavo format. It was written as a radio talk for the BBC the script of which William Plomer gave to Mr. Nowell-Smith. The issue is completely private and must surely be one of the smallest editions of well-known authors.

On the day of this lunch at which the signing and numbering of copies took place, William Plomer was awarded by the Queen a gold medal for poetry. And so Mr. Plomer was in good form, discussing poetry and poet laureates; South Africa and writing; novels and the contents of novels. The subject of money came up—especially the novelist's reticence towards the facts of income. We live in an age in which writers are frank on matters of sex but far less frank on matters of finance than were, for instance, Jane Austen and Thackeray.

Only yesterday I was reading for press the manuscript of J. P. Donleavy's *A Singular Man*, successor to *The Ginger Man*, in which all money matters are exceedingly obscure. This had not occurred to me as a drawback—perhaps because the love life of Mr. Smith, that singular man, is told in a brilliantly witty comic song of sex. This

difference in outlook could be due to a difference in age. At the moment, let us say, I am equally interested in the broken letters of Hinman's reconstructed *Shakespeare* and the novels of Donleavy, in the two aspects of life Donleavy and Hinman reflect.

In the afternoon Philip Evans, managing director of Tinlings, the printing house in Liverpool, came to see a particularly fine collection of brass rubbings made in churches around Lowestoft by Mrs. Steward. Philip and I have worked on small books for distribution by Tinlings for the last seven years. They are usually engagement books with a set of drawings added. As themes for these drawings we have used Greek painting, children playing games, early bronze sculpture from Sardinia, the topography of Liverpool. And now under discussion are these brass rubbings. The problem of scale—some of the figures are eight feet tall—we shall meet by showing details only.

The first book I made for Tinlings was in 1956, a study of early printers' flowers, which I called *A Suite of Fleurons* (see *Graphis* 83, page 226). Although this small volume had a limited publication in London it was really made for private issue from Tinlings.

As a collector, for many years, I've been interested in a series of booklets from Oxford University Press, New York. At Christmas each year a paper-covered monograph on a subject often connected with the Christmas festival is sent out to friends of this American publishing house. The first issue I have is dated 1946. It is written by Elizabeth Bowen in the form of a filmscript, a judgement on Trollope. All issues in my possession are designed by John Begg, art director of OUP/NY, and although I have an uninterrupted run of issues from 1952 to the present year many have been difficult to get. For some I have stooped to searching the waste paper baskets in certain publishing director's offices—successfully! But that is always the

fate of some copies of such private issues; the collector cannot find it for love or money, the recipient throws it away after less than a casual glance.

The present 1962 issue is written by Philip Hofer and originates from an address to the Grolier Club, New York, on Edward Lear. It is illustrated with Lear's cartoons, verses, drawings, and paintings.

In 1961 we decided at The Bodley Head not to send any more Christmas cards but to produce small editions of texts or pictures relating to our books. The first of these contained six auto-lithographs by Charles Mozley illustrating James Joyce's *Ulysses*. This was about the time we first re-designed *Ulysses* since the 1936 edition. It also marked the beginning of our experimental rotary auto-lithographic period at the Stellar Press. The second issue remarked on the first publication in English of Eça de Queiroz' *The Sin of Father Amaro* by illustrating a short extract from that novel. The third issue will be a fragment of autobiography by Graham Greene.

The University Press at Cambridge issued for Christmas 1962 *The University Printing Houses at Cambridge* in anticipation of their moving to new quarters just south of the City. The account begins with John Siberch who printed ten books for Cambridge between 1520 and 1523. As usual the Cambridge gift book is a model of production and design.

After making some preliminary wrapper designs for Donleavy's *A Singular Man* using rough tracings from type specimen sheets and coloured sheets of transparent material, to give quickly the effect of a printed wrapper, I discuss another forthcoming novel, *The Old Boys* by William Trevor, with Charles Raymond and commission him to make drawings of the old boys. By which time it is nearly six and before going down to the National Gallery to collect my car I must go over to see Mr. Reinhardt and discuss an American book on lettering by Ben Shahn now being produced in

Switzerland for Grossman of New York. What I have seen in the way of colour proofs and some photostats is impressive. I give Mr. Reinhardt my views and the opinions of some booksellers to whom I showed the proofs.

And so it only remains for me to add a postscript on bibles and the bible in court, to collect my car and to take an armful of books and papers as information for drawings to my friend and illustrator Margery Gill.

Sir Francis Meynell's second bible for the Nonesuch Press, mentioned in my letter of December, 1961, is now published from London and New York. This three-volume edition of the authorized version of 1611 includes the long introduction by the translator and is embellished with over one

hundred reproductions of cuts by Bernard Salomon originally made for Jean de Tournes. Every point and page is in the Nonesuch tradition first established in 1923 with the publication of John Donne's *Love Poems*.

As to the bible case also referred to in my letter of December, 1961, and again at the beginning of this letter, I've already mentioned that on July 17 judgement was reserved. But it was published in *The Times* on August 1 that Mr. Justice Plowman held that there was copyright in the New English Bible and that the royal prerogative in respect of the printing of bibles did not override the copyright laws. Therefore Eyre & Spottiswoode, the Queen's printers, had no rights in the new bible produced by Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

VERENA BODMER-GESSNER (ZÜRICH)

## ANLÄSSLICH DER 99. PUBLIKATION DER VEREINIGUNG OLTNER BÜCHERFREUNDE<sup>1</sup>

Die Schweiz ist nicht nur das zeitungreichste Land Europas, sondern auch mit Verlagen reich gesegnet. So zählt der Schweizerische Buchhändler- und Verlegerverband rund 100 sogenannte große Verlage zu seinen Mitgliedern, wozu noch etwa 150 «kleine» Verleger gerechnet werden müssen, darunter solche, welche jedes Jahr nur eine oder einige wenige Neuerscheinungen auf den Markt bringen. Dann gibt es noch ein knappes Dutzend Büchergilden und ähnliche Organisationen, unter denen die Büchergilde Gutenberg zu den größten zählt. Dazu kommen noch die umfangreichen Buchimporte aus den Nachbarlän-

dern und von andern, weiter entfernten Lieferanten, so daß sich der Schweizer Konsument wahrlich nicht über mangelnde Auswahl beklagen kann. Um so beachtlicher ist es deshalb, wenn ein einzelner Mann, der zudem nur nebenamtlich mit Literatur zu tun hat, es zustande brachte, eine Serie aufzubauen, die sowohl inhaltlich wie buchtechnisch heute allgemeine Anerkennung genießt. Wir meinen die VOB (Vereinigung Oltner Bücherfreunde), gegründet im Frühling 1936 und zu Ende geführt an Pfingsten 1963, das Werk *William Mathesons* in Olten, der nach Erscheinen der 99. Publikation eine neue, etwas anders organisierte Form der Verbreitung seiner schönen Drucke gefunden hat. Auf Grund des Beschlusses der Jahresversammlung vom 11. Juni 1960 wurde die VOB aufgelöst,

<sup>1</sup> Vgl. Rudolph Adolph: Zwanzig Jahre Vereinigung Oltner Bücherfreunde in *Stultifera navis*, 13. Jahrgang, Nr. 3/4, Oktober 1956. Mit 6 Abbildungen.