

A forgotten library : the Leopold von Ranke Collection of books and manuscripts

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CECIL H. CLOUGH (ENGLAND)

A FORGOTTEN LIBRARY:
THE LEOPOLD VON RANKE COLLECTION OF BOOKS
AND MANUSCRIPTS *

There is an axiom that Trade follows the Flag, and I should propound that antiques and rareties of all kinds follow wealth. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was in England and in France that the treas-

ures of the world accumulated. Increasingly throughout the nineteenth century England and France were faced with the competition of Prussia, then Germany, and of the United States. It is significant of the stages of economic growth that Leopold von Ranke was able to build up his large library in Berlin, but that after his death it passed to the

* I am most grateful to Mr. John S. Mayfield, Curator of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Syracuse University Library, for all his help.

United States, one of the first "European treasures" to do so.

Now, of course, the purchase of vast libraries in Europe for export to the United States is common enough, and the von Ranke collection is largely forgotten in Europe and in America. Biographers of von Ranke generally make no mention of it, nor does the imposing *Census* of Renaissance manuscripts in North America¹.

The collection itself is a notable research tool of European history, and was used as such by von Ranke. It is important also for any estimate of von Ranke and his place in historiography. In the bibliographical field it can be used to throw light on the dispersal of Italian libraries in the early nineteenth century. What exactly is this collection and where is it? The latter is easiest to answer: it is housed in the Library of Syracuse University, New York State. In the Library of the University there is a card-index which lists all the printed books that came with the von Ranke Library, and the books themselves all have a special bookplate which distinguishes them². These von Ranke books are not shelved apart as a collection, but have been ingested into the University Library, according to the subject matter of the individual book. They number some forty thousand items, bound in about seventeen thousand volumes.

The bulk of this printed material is in German, though in all there are twenty two languages represented, for von Ranke tried to collect the historical material of a country in its own language. In such a large collection there is something of everything, but the main theme is the history of Europe. Looked at in another way, the collection illustrates the history of typography from the early German black-letter and the Aldines to some two thousand uncatalogued pamphlets, which are mainly medical theses submitted to German Universities in the nineteenth century.

To a nineteenth century historian, and one thinks of Carlyle and De Tocqueville,

the French Revolution formed a great watershed. Hence it is not surprising to find that von Ranke accumulated a large quantity of material on the Revolution and its background. There are forty six volumes of pamphlets covering France of *L'Ancien Régime*, and fifty for the period of the Revolution, apart from seventeen volumes of German pamphlets on the Congress of Rastatt. Aside from this exceptional collection of French material, there are numerous source books and histories relating to the Italian Wars, to the Papacy and to the history of the English Monarchy.

There is also manuscript material. Some of this is found in the printed books. For instance, one of the volumes of pamphlets dealing with the French Revolution has inserted sixty three pages of manuscript, which consists of letters, notes and the speculations on the authorship of some anonymous pamphlets. There is a considerable amount of material personal to von Ranke, including his notes on books, letters addressed to him, momentos of his personal life, such as his passport. There are, of course, books and manuscripts in the collection that have been annotated by von Ranke, though a few printed books that were heavily annotated were removed from the Library before it was sent to the United States, and were placed with his literary works³. The University of Syracuse has von Ranke's portrait by Schrader, two paintings that hung for years in his study, and his chair, desk and ink-well. Anyone working on von Ranke ought to be aware of this biographical material.

There is a collection of some four hundred and fifty manuscripts, which can be classed as of two kinds. There are a hundred bound and the rest unbound. The unbound material has not been catalogued and seems to consist of documents copied for von Ranke. This material may be more important than has been assumed, for it may include transcripts of documents otherwise unknown. Recently a catalogue of the bound volumes

of manuscripts has been printed, and is prefaced with an interesting account of the collection, which I have drawn on freely for this article⁴. The bound manuscripts are almost all of Italian interest, and some of them can be related to von Ranke's interest which resulted in his *Latin and Teutonic Nations* . . . The bulk of them relate specifically to Venice; they deal with her colonial possessions and relations with other powers from the sixteenth century to the end of the Republic in the Revolutionary Wars. Most of the manuscripts are not old, but are copies made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of contemporary documents. Once again the importance should not be underestimated, since some of the documents copied are otherwise unknown. For the period from the Italian Wars to the end of the Republic in particular, the Venetian State Archives have suffered, because of the habit of Venetian patricians of treating the documents, that they had dealt with while in Government service, as personal property. Documents were taken to the family *palazzo* and used to swell the family library. These documents and manuscripts were used to instruct younger members of the family in public affairs, and frequently transcripts were made. In the eighteenth century, as the number of patricians declined, the size of family libraries increased, as the number of libraries was reduced⁵. In the seventeenth century, however, when the Venetian Republic was extolled by Harrington, every *palazzo* had its library. Probably no other city in the world has ever housed so many individual and well furnished libraries as Venice did at that time. A feature of these Venetian libraries was a Venetian chronicle, compiled to give a history of Venice and at the same time exalt the family for whom it was written⁶. No other Italian city has anything like a comparable number of such kind of chronicles, largely because no other city of comparable wealth flourished as a self governing republic for so long after the Italian Wars. The von Ranke

collection of Venetian manuscripts illustrates excellently both the transcripts and the family chronicles, and of the latter there is one of Pietro Dolfin, another of Daniele Barbaro, and one of the sixteenth century with family blazons painted in the margins⁷. Venetian chronicles await a detailed study, and in any such those of von Ranke should find a place. Von Ranke himself intended to use the material for a detailed study on the political nature of the Republic in its last three hundred years of life, but never did so.

Where did von Ranke get this material? The early nineteenth century was the time of bibliomania, fed by the upheavals of the Napoleonic Wars, and by the flood of books and manuscripts from the suppressed monasteries⁸. It was the time too when the nobility of the Italian cities, and of Venice in particular, were attempting to stave off bankruptcy, by selling their family library. It was essentially the English, with the wealth from the Industrial Revolution, who profited. For instance, in the years between 1815 and 1835, Richard Heber, the Earl of Guildford, and the Reverend Walter Sneyd, toured the Continent and brought back with them to England over a million volumes of printed books and manuscripts⁹. Between 1826 and 1831 von Ranke travelled and it was then that he acquired some of the bound manuscripts. Those of Venetian interest came from the famous Nani and Lorenzo Antonio da Ponte libraries, some from that of Pietro Gradenigo. Probably the purchase was made through the Paduan bookseller Adolfo Cesare, who acquired a large portion of the Nani and Da Ponte libraries¹⁰. Von Ranke probably obtained some Da Ponte manuscripts in the late 1830's, after the death of the abate Daniele Francescini of Padua University, who had another large portion of the library. The provenance of other von Ranke manuscripts is from the Soranzo, Foschi and Gian Roberto Papafava Libraries. Hence the von Ranke collection has a part to play in any

study of the dispersal of the Venetian Libraries—a study that has long been overdue¹¹.

Finally, one wants to know something of the circumstances which resulted in the shipping of this collection of Germany's, if not Europe's, greatest historian, to Syracuse, New York. In 1886 von Ranke died at the age of ninety one, and his eldest son and executor, Pastor Otto von Ranke, thought that the German Government would purchase the collection, and make it into a national monument. He had the collection crated and delivered for storage to the Royal Library, Berlin, until such time as the purchase was negotiated. Yet in the following year the whole collection arrived in Syracuse, having been purchased by the Americans, Dr. and Mrs. John M. Ried, for an unknown sum, and presented to the University of Syracuse. Essentially the sale to the Royal Library had broken down because there was not the money available for purchase¹².

At this present time of European economic resurgence, while it is impossible to return the collection to Europe, its value should be recognized and use made of it by Europeans. What is needed is an adequate catalogue of the rare items, available in a printed form, for students of European culture ought to be aware of this largely untapped source.

¹ Cf. T. H. von Laue, *Leopold von Ranke . . .* (Princeton, 1950). S. De Ricci and W. J. Wilson, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* (New York, 3 vols., 1935-40); C. U. Faye and W. H. Bond, *Supplement to the Census . . .* (New York, 1962).

² See the plate No. 3. Both the manuscripts and books have this bookplate.

³ B. Hoefl, "Das Schicksal der Ranke-Bibliothek", *Historische Studien*, Heft 307 (Berlin, 1937), p. 30.

⁴ H. O. Brogan, A. Pace, A. Weinberger, *The Leopold von Ranke manuscripts of Syracuse University* (Syracuse [1953]).

⁵ Cf. J. C. Davis, *The decline of the Venetian nobility . . .* (Baltimore, 1962).

⁶ The best account of these chronicles is found in M. Foscarini, *Della Letteratura Veneziana* (Venice, 2nd ed., 1854).

⁷ See plate 2, from Ms. 71, f. 417 (see *The Leopold . . . manuscripts*, p. 112).

⁸ Cf. P. Le Couteur, "Le vicende delle Biblioteche Monastiche Veneziane dopo la soppressione Napoleonica", *Rivista di Venezia*, VIII (Venice, 1929).

⁹ Cf. S. De Ricci, *English Collectors of Books and Manuscripts* (Bloomington, 1960).

¹⁰ For a Da Ponte bookplate see plate No. 1, from Ms. 15, flyleaf (see *The Leopold . . . manuscripts*, p. 50).

¹¹ For some of these libraries see C. Frati, *Dizionario Bio-Bibliografico dei Bibliotecari e Bibliofili Italiani . . .* (Florence, 1933); Da Ponte was not the librettist and author of the *Memorie*, but a Venetian nobleman of the same name, see G. Moschini, *Della Letteratura Veneziana . . .* (Venice, 1806), II, p. 69.

¹² *The Leopold . . . manuscripts*, pp. 7-8.

CAPTIONS TO THE PLATES

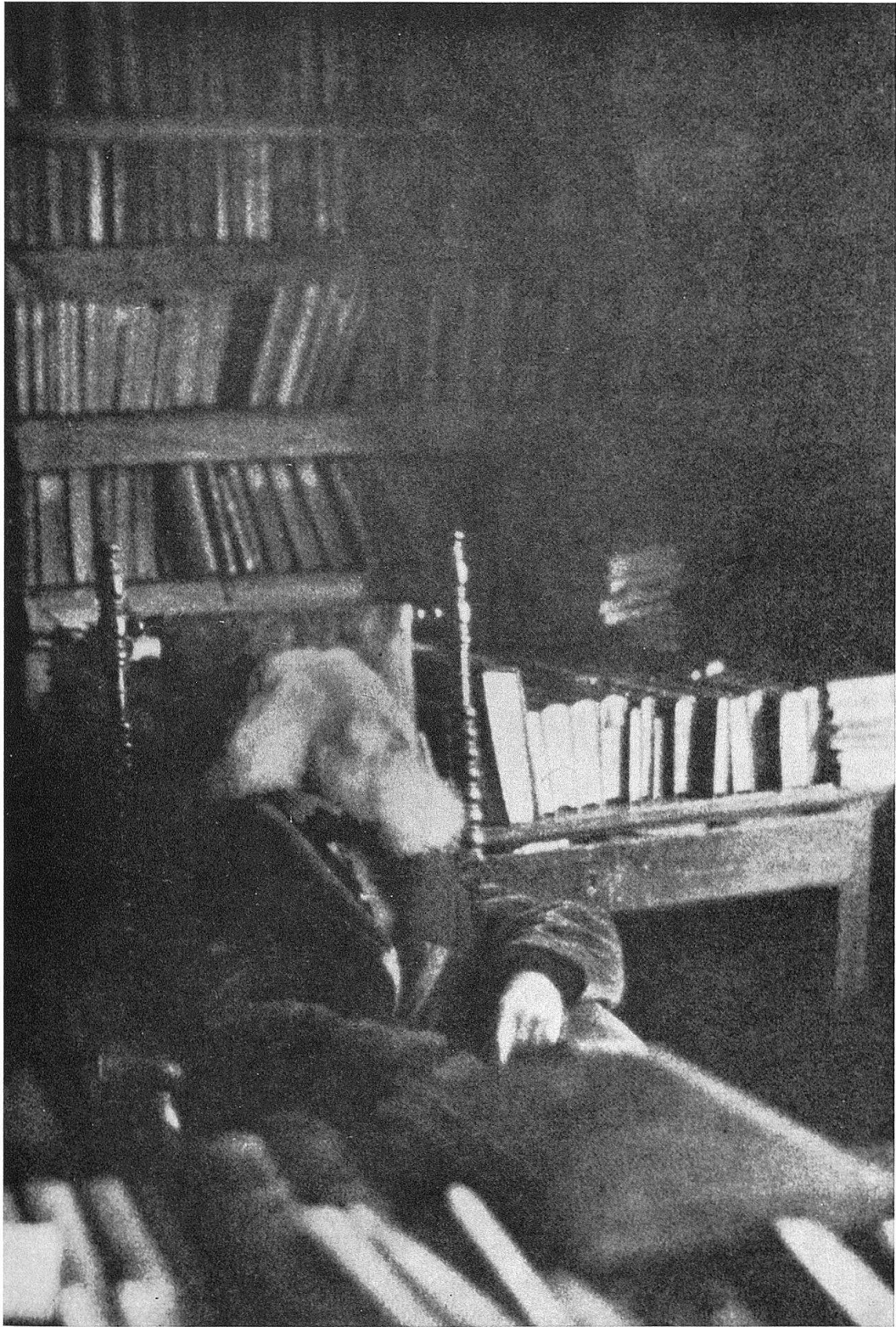
1 A photograph of Ranke in his library.

2 A page of Manuscript No. 71 (f. 417): *Chronicum venetum ab origine ad an. MDLIX*, compiled about 1570.

3 Fly-leaf of von Ranke Manuscript No. 15 showing the bookplate of Lorenzo Antonio Da Ponte and

that of the Ranke collection in Syracuse University. The Ms. is entitled: *Serie di veneti patrizi mandati ambasciatori a principi*.

Courtesy of the Curator of manuscripts and rare books, Syracuse University Library, N.Y., USA.

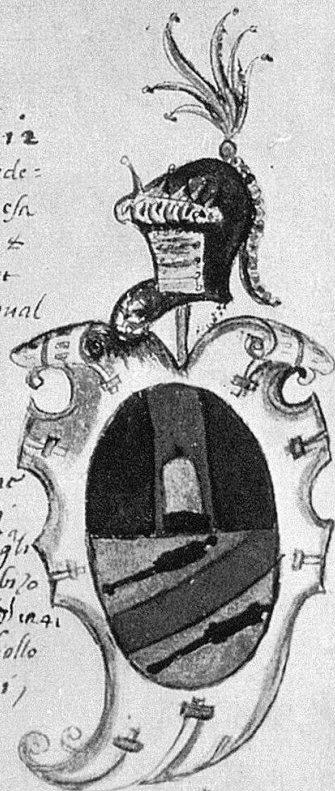


fu fidelissimi al Comu' de Venetia fino al tempo de m Lorenzo Celsi Dose ch fu del 1363 ad 9 agosto, nel qual tempo guesi di Candia mosi da Diabolica Iniquita partendosi da Dio Rebelo al Comun de Venetia desmeste lo Duchca ch era m Linaudo Dandolo el Canabice fio ch fu a m And: Dandolo dese et li primi traditori fo And: pontaleo de Compagnia cor zozzi da Molin Marco fradello Marco grademigo, Tito demex fecari mudaro Quest' eleseno marco grademigo Duca Il qual And: co 700 prone fu morto da uani la porta d Candia ad 9 marzo 1364.



Barquasi Vene da malamoco Vecchio dl 312 et fono homini Sauij et g^m maestri de edeficij questi co li suoi vicini fece far la chiesa di s: greguol manco questa fameglia m s: Panthalon Essendo Sop: il lido dl 1290 et dl 1295 Cecado p^m di Venetia m zozzi il qual mori dl 321,

Polenta Sono S: de Rauena questi Vene ad habitax m Venetia dl 1079 li quali molto si eseritauano m fatti d'Arme li gli p li suoi boni portamenti ch fecer lo s: Obizo ala guerra di padua fo fatto dl Consd: in 1411 manco questa fameglia nel ostasio suo hallo essendo ale Confirie m Candia dl 1441,



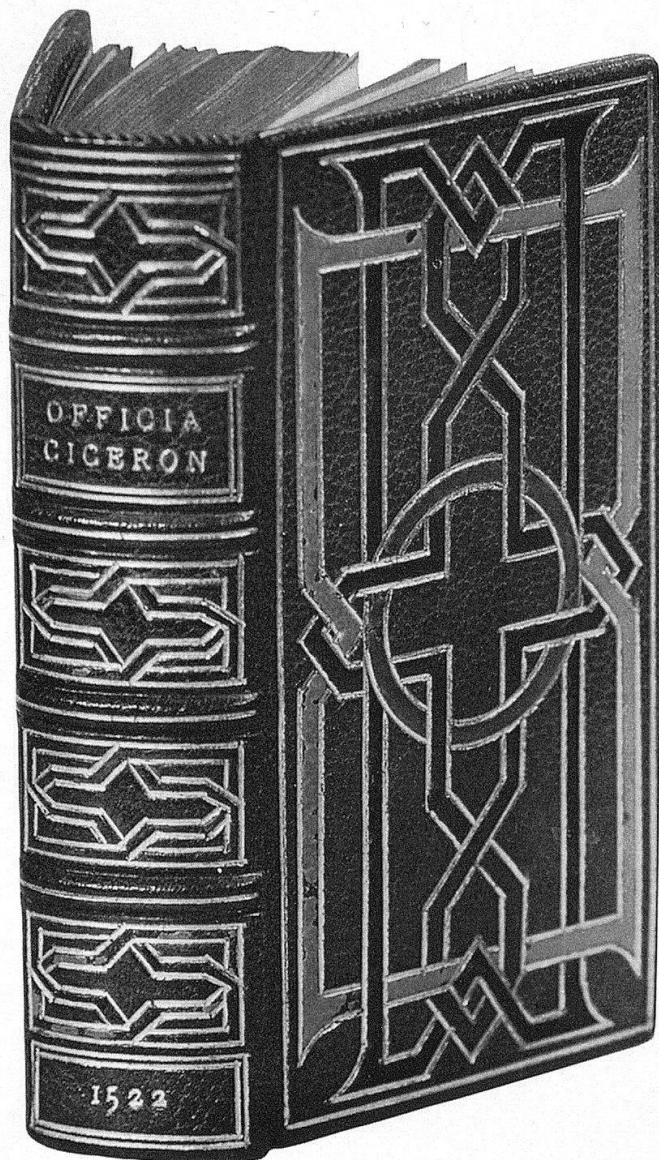
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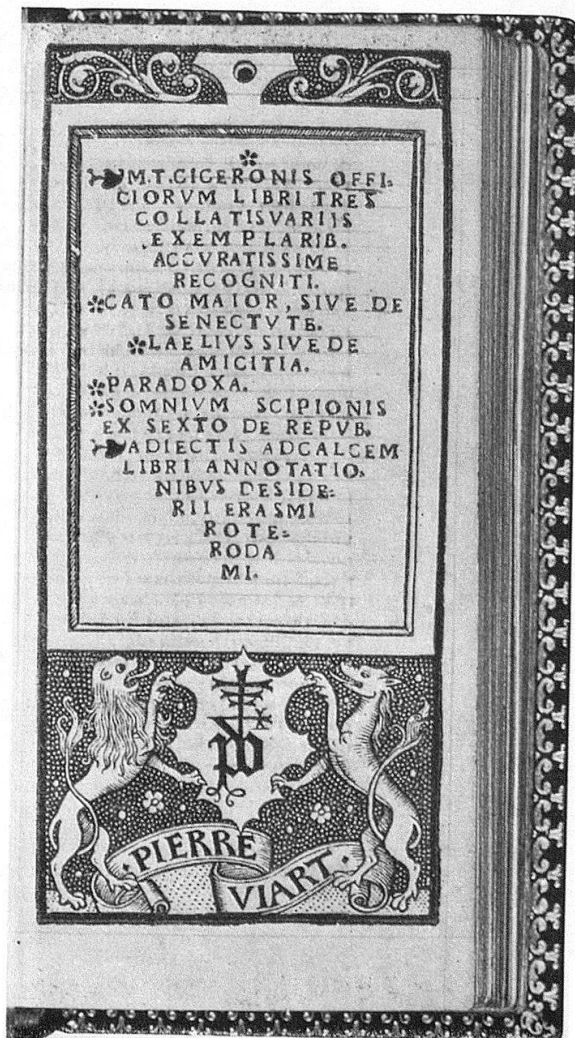
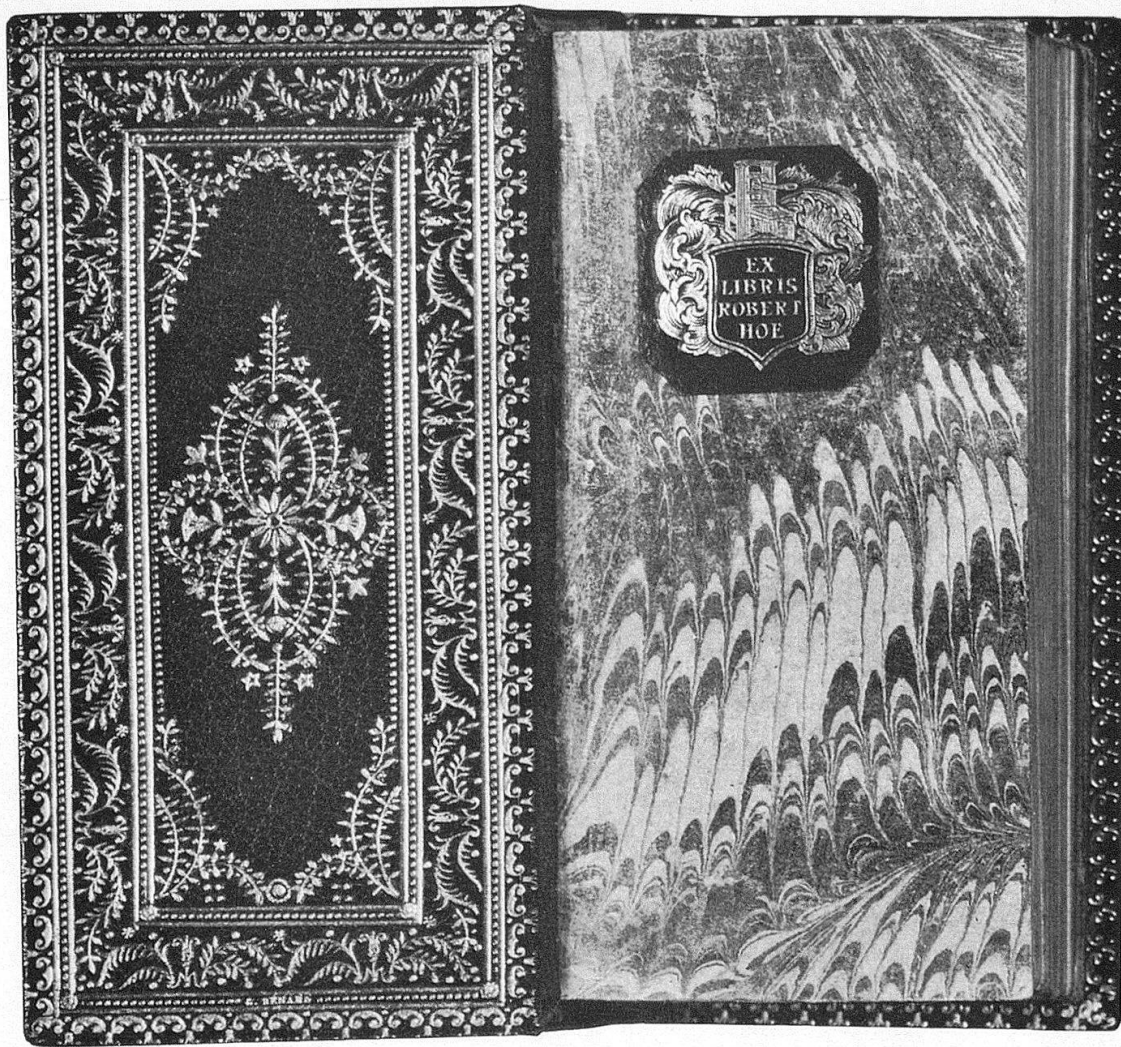
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EX LIBRIS DR. LEOPOLDI DE RANKE.
DR. JOANNES M. REID ET CAROLINA S. REID
DONAVERUNT.







lenter erras, si libris De Officijs. M. Testi-
lij nihil cū Christiana disciplina puenire pu-
tas. Nam ut sint in ijs quēdā, q̄ Christiani
auerfari debeam⁹, ut sunt certe pauca, illa
tū suspicias oportet, q̄ ad Evangelicā ve-
ritatis normam quāuis exacta seuerē, efi-
deat. Alioquin q̄ æquitas sit, cū p̄nicio-
sa execreris, ac despicias: salubria nō ama-
piedi, & amare? Atqui salubria hic plu-
rima esse ne tu quidem inficiari possis, q̄
tam maligne gētilibus faves. Sed huc usq̄
tecum locatū sit. Non iēn optime, Mar-
cialis, ac restis multoq̄ instar esse possum,
quantū hmōi literarumve peritus, ita etiā
studiosus sis. Quo sane factū est, ut puden-
dum mihi non ducerem, id tibi opus, vel
labore potius in eo opere recognoscēdo
meū, dedicare, quod res æpius summa cū
animi voluptate legisse certo scirē & de-
inceptū lecturū considerē. Porro hoc meo
labore, quantū p̄ferim, resti ture inire le-
gendo æstimationem possis, tibi tamen,
ac cæteris item, q̄ hoc legent opus, testa-
tum esse volo, loca me nō pauca restituis-
se ex fide veterum codicum, neq̄ a com-
mētarijs (quantū p̄icere l̄ Jirelecta, neq̄
ab ijs ataduēsa, q̄ idem, qd̄ ego, nego-
siū castigādi paucis ante annis suscepit.
Interim & te in primis, & cæteros, ad q̄
fruct⁹ ide aliq̄ manauerit, admonito ve-
lim, ut q̄q̄ d̄ id ē qd̄ accessit, p̄modum,
nō tā mihi (neq̄ em̄ id ambio) quā vetus-
tiss. codicib⁹ acceptum referāt, quos ad id
ex- p̄signi illa, & Alexandrinæ æmula bi-
bliotheca Coenobij Diui victoris ad urbē
p̄mo dato accepi. Petr⁹ Paruus Rosæfon-
tanus, amicus noster sincerus, & puriorū
literarum amator, te salutat. Vale.
De Lutetia Parisiorum Calendia Aprilis

LIBER. I.
MARCII TVLLII
CICERONIS OF-
FICIORVM LI-
BER PRI-
MVS.

AD MARCVM FILIVM

VANQVAM TE

Marce fili, annum iam
audientem Cratippum,
idq̄ Athenis, abundare
oportet præceptis, in li-
tatisq̄ philosophiæ, p̄-
per lunimam & docto-
ris auctoritatē, & vrbis: quorum aliter te
scientia augere potest, altera exemplis: a-
men ut ipse ad meam utilitatem semper
cum græcis latinis coniunxerit: id i phi-
losophiæ solum, sed etiam in dicendi ex-
ercitatione fecit: idem tibi censeo facien-
dum: ut par sis in vtriusq̄ oratiōis facul-
tate. Quā quidē ad rem, nos (ut videmur)
magnum adimentū attulimus hoibus
nostris, ut nō modo græcarum literarum
rudes, sed etiā docti aliquantū se arbitra-
tur ad p̄os, & ad dicendū, & ad indican-
dum. Quāobrem discēs tu quidē a princis-
pe hui⁹ gratis philosophorū: & discēs quā-
diu volēs: tandiu autē velle debebis, quoad
te, quantum p̄ficiat, non p̄nitebit. Sed
tamen nostra legens non multū a Peripat-
eticis dissidentia, qm̄ vtriq̄: & Socratici,
& Platonici volumus esse: de rebus ipsis
vtere tuo in. licio: nihil em̄ ipedito. oratio
nem autē latinam efficit p̄fecto legendis
nostris pleniorē. Nec vō arrogāter hoc
dictū existimari velim. Nā philosophans
A ij