

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-17066-6 - Robert Estienne Royal Printer: An Historical Study of the Elder Stephanus

Elizabeth Armstrong

Excerpt

[More information](#)

---

## BOOK I



### *The Merchant-Craftsman*

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding  
it is established.

Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before  
kings; he shall not stand before mean men.      PROVERBS



## CHAPTER I

# THE ORIGINS OF THE ESTIENNE PRESS

IN the sixteenth century, the Rue Jean-de-Beauvais was one of the main channels through which flowed the life of Paris University. The tradesmen from the City, urging their horses and carts up the steep cobbled street with shouts and cracking of whips, to the exasperation of lecturers in the School of Canon Law,<sup>1</sup> passed a succession of student-crowded bookshops behind which worked the printing presses. In the lower part of the street where it is now reduced to a pedestrian passage connecting the Boulevard Saint-Germain with the modern Rue des Écoles, the passer-by would see on his right as he approached the Rue de Latran a house showing the sign of Saint John the Baptist and offering through its open gateway a glimpse of a courtyard and garden running back to the grounds of Saint-Jean-de-Latran, a *commanderie* of the Order of St John of Jerusalem which owned the house jointly with the *Commanderie de Saint-Jean-en-l'Isle près Corbeil*. It was in these premises, in the course of 1504 or 1505, that Henry Estienne as a recently fledged University printer installed his business; his descendants, beginning with his son, Robert Estienne, were destined to occupy them for more than a century.

The antecedents of the business are easier to trace than those of the man. In 1496 a partnership was formed between John Higman and Wolfgang Hopyl, two foreign printers who had been active at Paris some eight years. Higman was a German from the district of Meissen, who had taken his B.A. degree at Paris in 1478<sup>2</sup> and subsequently worked at the press of Ulrich Gering, one of the original staff of the first Paris press set up in the College of Robert de Sorbon by the prior and librarian of the college in 1470; he built up a considerable business in the production and sale of books on theology, philosophy, and mathematics, of Latin texts and church service books, and published a number of the early works of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples.<sup>3</sup> Hopyl was a Dutchman from the district of Utrecht, specializing like Higman in academic printing, but with a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sauval, *Hist. et recherches des antiquités de la ville de Paris*, I, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> E. A. Van-Moë, *Documents*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> A. Claudin, *Hist. de l'imprimerie*, pp. 93–5 and 408–12; A. Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme*, pp. xxxviii–xl.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-17066-6 - Robert Estienne Royal Printer: An Historical Study of the Elder Stephanus

Elizabeth Armstrong

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## THE MERCHANT-CRAFTSMAN

particularly strong line in liturgical books, which he produced for booksellers in England, Scandinavia and the Low Countries.<sup>1</sup> Each partner kept his own establishment, Higman at the sign of the Two Lions in the Clos Bruneau (Rue Saint-Jean-de-Beauvais) and Hopyl at the sign of Saint Barbara (Rue Saint-Jacques); but a considerable proportion of their productions 1496–1500 was undertaken jointly, including a series of service books which ran down to 22 June 1500 when they completed a missal for the use of Sarum.<sup>2</sup> In that year Hopyl published two editions on his own, a work of Lefèvre's and a Flemish Book of Hours; in 1501, having moved to a different address, the sign of Saint George, he seems to have produced only a single edition, for Lefèvre. In 1502, however, in addition to a reprint of Lefèvre's *Paraphrasis* of Aristotle's *Physics* undertaken on his own, he brought out a corresponding work on the *Ethics* with a commentary by Lefèvre's pupil Josse Clichtove and this was signed as follows: 'Completed in the mother University of Paris by Wolfgang Hopyl and Henry Estienne, partners in the art of printing, and is to be found on sale at the Rabbits Press next to the School of Canon Law. The seventh day of May 1502.'<sup>3</sup> The two men also published jointly in 1502 the first portion of a breviary for the Augustinian canons of Windesheim,<sup>4</sup> completed the next year; in 1503 they published two Lefèvre editions jointly, but Henry Estienne also joined another publisher, Simon Vostre, to bring out a Cambrai missal which they paid Hopyl to print,<sup>5</sup> and even ventured upon one enterprise independently, a service book for the clergy of Autun.<sup>6</sup> From this time on, Hopyl worked alone or with other publishers, active until 1523 when he died and was succeeded in the business by his son-in-law, Nicolas Prévost.<sup>7</sup>

Nothing is known of Henry Estienne<sup>8</sup> before his sudden appearance as Hopyl's associate. But it is clear that he had married the widow of Hopyl's

<sup>1</sup> H. Stein, *L'Atelier typographique de Wolfgang Hopyl*, pp. 8 *et seqq.*

<sup>2</sup> 1500, fol. Bodleian, Gough Missals 26. This edition is not mentioned by H. Stein in his bibliography of Hopyl's publications.

<sup>3</sup> H. Stein, *op. cit.* p. 18; A. A. Renouard, *Annales des Estienne*, p. 1. B.M. 8460. i. 3.

<sup>4</sup> B.M. 3395. aa. 18.

<sup>5</sup> H. Stein, *op. cit.* pp. 19–20.

<sup>6</sup> See A. A. Renouard, *Annales des Estienne*, under the relevant year for this and subsequently mentioned Henry Estienne editions, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>7</sup> H. Stein, *op. cit.* p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> MS. fr. 18153 in the B.N. contains records of various Estienne families (mostly submitted in support of claims to nobility in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries); some of these give information about Estiennes of the fifteenth or even fourteenth centuries in which the favourite Christian names of the Paris Estienne family are to be found. Thus a Robert Estienne was *procureur du roi* in the *baillage* of Caux in 1385 (24, 864, no. 4). But it is not until the end of the sixteenth century that one meets in this collection personages who can definitely be identified as members of this family.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-17066-6 - Robert Estienne Royal Printer: An Historical Study of the Elder Stephanus

Elizabeth Armstrong

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## ORIGINS OF THE ESTIENNE PRESS

former partner, John Higman, a Frenchwoman named Guyone Viart. Documents concerning a lawsuit, over two farms which Guyone brought her second husband,<sup>1</sup> speak of the marriage between her and Higman; of their children Damien Higman (later active as a bookseller) and Geneviève (later married to Reginald Chaudière the publisher-printer); and of the status which Higman had been able to claim and which Henry Estienne held in his turn, of *bourgeois de Paris et messenger juré de l'Université*.

Guyone's remarriage is only one example of a very usual custom in the book trade at this time when a master printer died without heirs of age to carry on the business. The lady's affairs benefited, because her late husband's press was always worth more as a going concern than the sum that could be realized by selling out, and not all printers' widows were prepared to turn printers themselves like the intrepid Charlotte Guillard. The man profited, because he might thus step into a position of independence in his trade which even the most skilful and industrious journeyman could hardly hope to attain without capital and influence. Henry Estienne had certainly completed learning his craft; he had perhaps learnt and exercised it as an employee of Hopyl (as conjectured by M. Stein) or of Higman, and in any case must have had some connexion with the firm to recommend him as Higman's successor. The first mention of his name in an extant document suggests that he was already professionally and economically established early in 1502; described as *libraire*, on 9 April 1502 he bought a house under the sign of Sainte Geneviève in the Rue Mouffetard for the sum of 400 *livres tournois*,<sup>2</sup> which was certainly in the nature of an investment since he never resided there.

The house between the School of Canon Law and the College of Beauvais, where he issued his first books, was in the hands of another printer by 1504,<sup>3</sup> and by 1505 he was giving his address as 'near the College of Beauvais opposite the School of Canon Law'. For this new abode, he obtained a twelve year lease at a rent of 20*l.* 16*s.* *parisis*, duly recorded in the accounts of the Commanderie of Saint-Jean-de-Latran, on 24 June 1506; the lease was renewed on expiry (4 October 1518) for a period of twenty-nine years, the rent then going up to 34*l.* It consisted of a house, courtyard and garden, facing the School of Canon Law on the east side across the Rue Jean-de-Beauvais, and going back to Saint-Jean-de-Latran behind on the west; four houses separated it on the south from the Rue de

<sup>1</sup> Printed by H. Stein, 'Nouveaux documents', *M.S.H.P.* xxii (1895), nos. I, IV, V.

<sup>2</sup> Ph. Renouard, *Documents*, p. 88 (quoting Arch. Nat. S1650, f. 31, Série 1).

<sup>3</sup> Ph. Renouard, *Imprimeurs parisiens*, under 'Estienne (Henri 1er)'.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-17066-6 - Robert Estienne Royal Printer: An Historical Study of the Elder Stephanus

Elizabeth Armstrong

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## THE MERCHANT-CRAFTSMAN

Latran, the adjoining one being the Jeu de Paume (where the Wechel family later had their press), also the property of Saint-Jean-de-Latran, and on the north the next house going down the street was that of Raoul Bidet at the sign of King David.<sup>1</sup> Estienne's leased property had been given by its owners the name of 'Les Ecoles du cloz Brunel' or 'Les Escolles de Corbueil', as if the Order had at one time used it as a school, and it officially carried the sign of St John the Baptist. But Henry Estienne did not adopt any allusion to these names as his trade address or trade mark; as a *messenger juré* he used in general the arms of the University on his title-page as did the *libraires jurés*, adding 'habetur venale in officina Henrici Stephani e regione Scholae Decretorum' or a similar formula.

Henry Estienne's business as publisher-printer was a specialized one. He inherited from John Higman a close connexion with Lefèvre d'Étaples, and his publications for the most part reflect the efforts for religious and intellectual revival going on round Lefèvre. Of his total production, some 125 publications, fifty-four are directly due to Lefèvre, associated with his study of Aristotle and the medieval mystics and of the Bible (notably the Quintuplex Psalter and the edition of St Paul's Epistles). A further twenty-eight titles come from Josse Clichtove, at this period Lefèvre's faithful disciple, or from the circle of his patrons and friends—Guillaume Briçonnet, Charles de Bouvelles, Guillaume de la Mare, Alain de Varennes, John Pelletier, Francis Vatablus. Apart from this, Henry Estienne's publications were chiefly medical, mathematical or liturgical. The younger scholars of Lefèvre's circle evidently acted on many occasions as proof-readers, lodging now with Lefèvre at the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, now with Estienne at the house in the Rue Jean-de-Beauvais. The needs of the Lefèvre circle had largely solved the problem of 'copy' for Henry Estienne. He rarely worked with or for other firms after his brief partnership with Hopyl: an edition of Eusebius's *Chronicon* published with Badius (1512), a Cambrai missal<sup>2</sup> published with Simon Vostre (1507), and Bricot's abridgement of the *Physics* published with John Petit and Denis Roce (1504) were the total sum of his collaborations; the *Hours* printed for John de Brie (1518), an edition of Mandogotus printed for the Marnef brothers (1506) and of John Mair on the *Sentences* for Badius, Petit and Le Lièvre (1510) were the only 'jobs' undertaken to the order of other publishers.

<sup>1</sup> Ph. Renouard, *Documents*, p. 88 (quoting Arch. Nat. S 5117/11, 103, and S 5119/4, 30); cf. also p. 89. H. Stein, 'Nouveaux documents', no. II, pp. 260-1, quoting the files of Maître Vassal, Paris notary.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. C. 52. e. 5. Not in A. A. Renouard.

## ORIGINS OF THE ESTIENNE PRESS

Henry Estienne's printing and publishing, over the period 1502 to 1520, reached an average of seven books per year, which was modest even for those days, and easily exceeded by his successor. What he produced none the less gave him a prominent place in the University book trade, for the importance of the works published and for the quality of the printing.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that as a bookseller he dealt in a wider range of publications than the products of his own press. It is certain that he combined the running of his business with the functions of an official University messenger which would take him frequently to the provinces on University business and provide him, as a client of the University, with valuable privileges such as exemption from taxes.<sup>2</sup> Traces of his financial transactions suggest the essentially homely scale of his operations. Thus in 1506 he seems to have had some interest in a house in the cloister of Saint-Benoît-le-bien-tourné as well as owning the property in the Rue Mouffetard, and to have been in some difficulties, for the canons of Saint Benoît as sureties for Nicolas Vaultier and Henry Estienne, printers, paid a *rente* of four *livres* due on this house owned by Vaultier to the Chapel of St Peter and St Paul in their church.<sup>3</sup> But two years later, in 1508, he was able to pay the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris a sum freeing one of his houses from a *rente* payable to that institution, and in 1516 he bought for sixty *livres tournois* from Martin Chubère, merchant Chandler, the right to four *livres* of *rente* on a workshop, yard and garden in the Rue de la Buscherye.<sup>4</sup> Soon after this a judgement of the *Parlement* of Paris condemned him and his wife to pay the costs of a case against the Hôtel-Dieu of Soissons; and it appears from the tenacity with which after his day the descendants of John Higman and Guyone Viart continued to fight the case, echoing on into the 1540's, that considerable family interests were at stake.<sup>5</sup>

Editions in his name were issued up till 4 July 1520, when he completed an edition of Clichtove's *Introductiones*.<sup>6</sup> But an edition of John de Montholon's *Promptuarium* printed that year 'at the house of Henry Estienne' displayed a royal privilege dated 11 October and granted at the request of 'Simon de Colynes Libraire demourant en nostre bonne ville de Paris'.<sup>7</sup> The same Simon de Colines, whose name had not appeared on any

<sup>1</sup> See my article 'Jacques Lefèvre d'Étapes and Henry Estienne the Elder, 1502–20', in *The French Mind: Studies in honour of Gustave Rudler*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. Vaillé, *Hist. des postes*, I, pp. 220–55.

<sup>3</sup> Ph. Renouard, *Documents*, p. 273 (quoting Arch. Nat. S903 f. 121).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 88 (quoting Arch. hospit., Hôtel-Dieu 6578, and Arch. Nat. S1651, f. 92, série 3).

<sup>5</sup> H. Stein, 'Nouveaux documents', *loc. cit.* nos. I, IV, V.

<sup>6</sup> 1520, 4to. There is a copy in the B.M. (519. c. 14).

<sup>7</sup> 1520, fol. (Bodleian, C.9.I. Jur.).

## THE MERCHANT-CRAFTSMAN

book before this year, printed about this time an edition of two orations by Richard Croke for Damien Higman, Madame Estienne's son by her first marriage, who was trading as a bookseller in the Rue Saint-Jacques, and at least one book in his own name before the end of the year at Henry Estienne's address. In the New Year (according to our reckoning) Lefèvre's Commentaries on Aristotle's *Logic* were printed 'at the press of Henry Estienne and his successor Simon de Colines'.<sup>1</sup> Estienne's widow paid the rent at Christmas 1520, and until St Remigius (1 October) 1521.<sup>2</sup> After this she seems to have accepted her fate and gone to the altar with her third printer-husband.

By her marriage with Estienne she had three sons, Francis, Robert and Charles, and a daughter, Nicole. Though there is some doubt about the date of the marriage, it cannot have taken place much earlier than 1501, the year suggested by Ph. Renouard.<sup>3</sup> Even the eldest of the children can barely have been of age when she married Colines. Robert at any rate was not, for we know that in his case at least it was necessary to appoint guardians; the names of two men appear in his marriage contract six years later as having been his 'tuteurs et curateurs', namely his stepfather, Simon de Colines, and Maître Gilles Nepveu, 'procureur au Chastellet et bailliage de Paris'.<sup>4</sup> It has proved possible to discover the link between this Paris attorney and the Estienne family. Robert's sister Nicole is known to have married Guillaume Buron, 'procureur au Châtelet';<sup>5</sup> but Buron was her second husband—she was first married to Gilles Nepveu.<sup>6</sup> And if Buron appears as the family lawyer in the lawsuit with the Hôtel-Dieu of Soissons in 1536,<sup>7</sup> we may conjecture that he had inherited the post of legal adviser to the Estienne family from Nepveu as well as the hand of Nicole Estienne. In any case Nepveu was Henry Estienne's actual or prospective son-in-law, and he was thus an obvious choice to be guardian of Estienne children still under age.

It must be supposed that Colines, like his predecessor, had business connexions with the firm and with the family which made it natural for him

<sup>1</sup> Ph. Renouard, *Simon de Colines, Bibliographie*, pp. 1–10.

<sup>2</sup> Ph. Renouard, *Documents*, p. 89 (quoting Arch. Nat. S 5119/8 ff. 14–15).

<sup>3</sup> Ph. Renouard, *Imprimeurs parisiens*, article, 'Estienne (Henri 1er)'.

<sup>4</sup> H. Stein, 'Nouveaux documents', *loc. cit.* no. III, p. 261.

<sup>5</sup> Ph. Renouard, *Imprimeurs parisiens*, article, 'Estienne (Henri 1er)'.

<sup>6</sup> Campardon and Tuetey (edd.), *Inventaire des registres des insinuations*, no. 2982, 6 février 1549: 'Guillaume Buron, procureur au Châtelet de Paris, et Nicole Estienne, sa femme, veuve de Gilles Nepveu, procureur au Châtelet de Paris: donation à Jean Buron, écolier, étudiant en l'Université de Paris, leur fils.' If Guyone Viart was related to the Jacques Viart, *licencié ès lois*, who appears about 1522 as 'conseiller et référendaire des lettres de chancellerie' (*Catalogues des Actes de François Ier*, VII, p. 414), the Estiennes already had connexions with a legal family.

<sup>7</sup> H. Stein, 'Nouveaux documents', *loc. cit.* no. IV.



## ORIGINS OF THE ESTIENNE PRESS

to succeed in his turn to the position once occupied by John Higman. He proved himself able both as craftsman and business man. He rapidly became one of the official University booksellers,<sup>1</sup> and in the first six years produced ninety-nine editions as compared with the 123 published by Henry Estienne in eighteen years;<sup>2</sup> from 1522 he was associated with the artist-typographer, Geofroy Tory, then at work on his *Champfleury* which was to be the final expression of his taste in type design and ornament.<sup>3</sup> All Colines's book production was distinguished, but he himself particularly stressed the merits of his actual types,<sup>4</sup> and his heir Claude Chaudière in 1546 hastened to assure his clientele that the typographical material which he would be using was indeed Colines's; it is therefore permissible to guess that he was a type-cutter by trade, and his biographer says 'il est infiniment probable que De Colines était un artiste et un élève ou condisciple de Geofroy Tory'.<sup>5</sup> A text not quoted by this authority can be adduced in this connexion; for in 1537 the neo-Latin poet Vulteius (Visagier) addressed an epigram to the Lyons printer, Simon Gryphius, in terms which might be rendered as follows:

Printers are three, who must be held the best,  
Their fame eclipsing all the vulgar rest:  
Stephanus for correctness; Colines for the art  
Of cutting type; and Gryphius, for his part,  
Dexterity alike of hand and mind  
Being his, a master of them both we find.<sup>6</sup>

The compliment would be pointless had not Colines been in fact known as a distinguished type-cutter. If this were so, he would naturally have remained unmentioned upon any book until he himself turned publisher-printer. It may indeed have been he who had been supplying Henry Estienne *père* with his types, and that we have here the clue to the relationship between the two men. The epigram on the other hand plainly implies

<sup>1</sup> He calls himself 'libraire juré en l'Université de Paris' in the colophon of the *Evangelies* published 1523.

<sup>2</sup> Ph. Renouard, *Colines*, pp. 1–92.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 65; cf. A. Bernard, *Tory*, pp. 14, 20 *et seq.*, 147.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. 'pressit suis typis nitidissimis' in 1526, Ph. Renouard, *Colines*, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 462 and pp. 446–7.

<sup>6</sup> 'Inter tot, norunt qui cudere, tres sunt  
Insignes: languet caetera turba fame.  
Castigat Stephanus, sculpit Colinaeus; utrunque  
Gryphius edocta mente, manueque facit.'

Vulteius, *Epigrammata* (Lyons, 1537), p. 56.

Same emphasis a year later in his verses *Ad Car. Stephanum*: the Estiennes are praised for their services to learning, Colines for his types and press-work. *Hendecasyllabi* (Paris, 1538), f. 98b. The printer of the *Hendecasyllabi* was Colines himself.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-17066-6 - Robert Estienne Royal Printer: An Historical Study of the Elder Stephanus

Elizabeth Armstrong

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## THE MERCHANT-CRAFTSMAN

that though Colines's stepson Estienne did not practise the craft of type-cutting, nevertheless by 1537 the intellectual qualities which he brought to the business of learned printing had given him the reputation of a great printer.

Partnership between the two, once Estienne had qualified as a master printer, might appear a strong combination of talent. But by 1526 the house under the sign of St John the Baptist was not large enough to hold them both. Colines moved further down the street to the Golden Sun, where his business continued to prosper.<sup>1</sup> Robert Estienne began to print at his father's address in his own name, using a new trade-mark of his own choice—the text *Noli altum sapere sed time* ('Be not high-minded but fear') from Romans xi. 20, accompanied by an olive tree illustrating the metaphor there developed by St Paul. We might

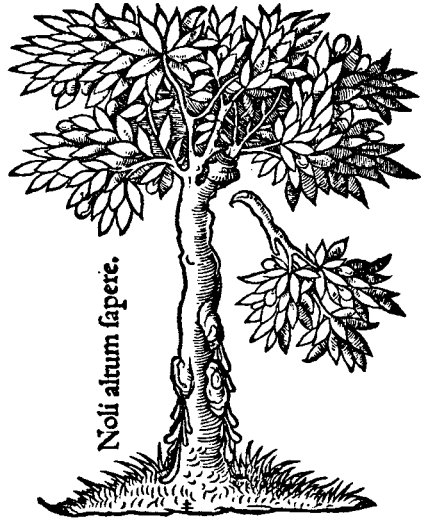


Fig. 3. The Olive Tree: the woodcut used by Estienne, 1526–8, as his printer's mark on small books.

read the motto as a manifesto of intellectual humility in the presence of revealed truth, directed alike at excessive dogmatism on the part of Christians and of excessive presumption on the part of 'humanist' rationalism. We certainly cannot regard the olive tree as a portent of peace.

<sup>1</sup> Colines's first publication at the new address was 18 May 1526. See Ph. Renouard, *Colines*, p. 445.