

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Books of enduring scholarly value

History of Printing, Publishing and Libraries

The interface between authors and their readers is a fascinating subject in its own right, revealing a great deal about social attitudes, technological progress, aesthetic values, fashionable interests, political positions, economic constraints, and individual personalities. This part of the Cambridge Library Collection reissues classic studies in the area of printing and publishing history that shed light on developments in typography and book design, printing and binding, the rise and fall of publishing houses and periodicals, and the roles of authors and illustrators. It documents the ebb and flow of the book trade supplying a wide range of customers with products from almanacs to novels, bibles to erotica, and poetry to statistics.

The Bibliographical Decameron

Bibliomania, the almost obsessive collecting of rare books and early editions by the aristocracy, which peaked in 1812 with the sale of the Valdarfer Boccaccio, was fuelled in no small part by the work of the bibliographer Thomas Frognall Dibdin (1776–1847). His most famous book, *Bibliomania*, popularised the word's use in England. The present work was first published in three volumes in 1817 and may be considered a continuation of *Bibliomania* in both style and content. Using a dialogue format with extensive footnotes, it covers all aspects of bibliography from early illuminated manuscripts and printed books through to contemporary book collectors and auctions. The work is notable for the number and quality of its illustrations. Volume 1 presents a detailed survey of illuminated manuscripts and early printed books, focusing on the continuity of illustration and decoration. Dibdin's *Bibliomania* (revised edition, 1811) and his *Reminiscences of a Literary Life* (1836) are also reissued in this series.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library and other partner libraries, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection brings back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Bibliographical Decameron

*Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts,
and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving,
Typography, and Bibliography*

VOLUME 1

THOMAS FROGNALL DIBDIN



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1
Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108076517

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2015

This edition first published 1817
This digitally printed version 2015

ISBN 978-1-108-07651-7 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect
the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published
by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with,
or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL
DECAMERON.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

‘ Now pray I to hem alle that herkene this trefyfe or rede, that yf ther be ony thing that liketh hem, that therof they thanke **HIM** of whom procedeth al wit and goodnes. And yf ther be ony thing that displese hem, I praye hem also that they arrette it to the defaute of myn unkonnyng and not to my will, that wold fayn have seyde better if I hadde knowing.’

CHAUCER.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

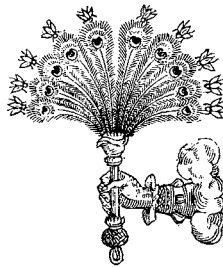
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL
DECAMERON;
OR,
Ten Days Pleasant Discourse
UPON
ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS,
AND
SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH
EARLY ENGRAVING, TYPOGRAPHY,
AND BIBLIOGRAPHY.

BY THE
REV. T. F. DIBDIN.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY W. BULMER AND CO.

Shakspeare Press:

AND SOLD BY G. AND W. NICOL, PAYNE AND FOSS, EVANS, JOHN AND
ARTHUR ARCH, TRIPHOOK, AND J. MAJOR.

1817.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

TO HIS GRACE

WILLIAM SPENCER CAVENDISH,

DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE,

&c. &c. &c.

THIS WORK

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY HIS OBEDIENT AND

FAITHFUL HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



P R E F A C E.*



HAT the Reader may know in as few words as possible the nature of the *Work* here submitted to him, he is informed that the **FIRST DAY** of this **BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DECAMERON** comprises an account of the Progress of Art as seen in some of the more celebrated *Manuscripts* abroad, and more particularly in those of our own country. This portion of the work is illustrated by a great number of embellishments (chiefly upon copper) which are new to the public, and which are presumed to be executed in a manner equally creditable to the skill and fidelity of the several artists employed. The author must ingenuously confess,

* The above cut is from the *Poliphilo*, Edit. Ald. 1499.

VOL. I.

a

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1
Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ii

P R E F A C E.

that however replete with information of a novel and interesting nature these pages of his Decameron may appear, he has, in reality, done little more than presented a sketch—capable however of the most costly and elaborate finishing. The public taste in this department of the BIBLIOMANIA is yet partial, and not sufficiently cultivated; but a more intimate acquaintance with its characteristics will only convince the zealous student of its various and inexhaustible attractions.

The SECOND and THIRD DAYS may be considered a necessary sequel to the First. The love of beautifully-printed Books, and more especially of such as are adorned with the productions of the early Engravers, seems to be a natural consequence of the admiration bestowed upon the efforts of the Illuminator; and if the author have, in any material degree, realised his own ideas upon this fruitful subject, there will be found, both in the text, and decorations of these two succeeding days, a source of amusement not quickly capable of satiety.

The FOURTH, FIFTH, SIXTH, and SEVENTH DAYS are devoted to what the author has presumed to hope may be considered a popular History of the Rise and Progress of Printing upon the Continent; including observations upon Decorative

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1
Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

P R E F A C E.

iii

Printing, and brief notices of a few of the Eminent living Printers of our own Country. *He is aware that such a Subject is worthy of a more ample and satisfactory disquisition ; but he has attempted to compensate the omission of much dry detail and lengthened description, by appropriate decoration and amusing anecdote. The fac-similes of the Devices of the more celebrated Foreign Printers—and particularly of those of France and Germany—are at once numerous, faithful, and brilliant ;* while the biographical notices of the Printers, to whom they relate, will be found, it is hoped, as interesting as the Subjects were capable of rendering them. Nor should it be forgotten that some of the most illustrious Scholars of Europe did not disdain to superintend the operations of THE PRESS. They were literary Cincinnati at the tympan and frisket.*

The EIGHTH DAY embraces a portion of information rather calculated, it must be admitted, to

** It is due to departed genius to state, that a very great portion of the wood-engravings in this work are the production of the late EBENEZER BYFIELD ; who was cut off, in his 26th year, not leaving his superior behind. He just lived to complete the last specimen which was put into his hands. His sister MARY, and his brother JOHN, have executed the greater part of the remainder ; but the beautiful specimens at pages 170-2, 177-178 of this first volume, by Mr. WILLIAM HUGHES, will not fail also to receive the approbation of the skilful.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1
Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*iv**PREFACE.*

gratify the professed Bibliomaniac than the general Reader. Yet the subject of Book-Binding, to which it relates, is probably, as a question of Art, not wholly divested of interest. The specimens of ancient book-covertures, which adorn the pages of this day, may possibly create or correct an indulgence of a similar taste in the present times. To the Book-Antiquary, no apology is due for occasional minuteness and technicality of description; while the biographical sketches connected with the illustrious Characters to whom the volumes, from which such 'specimens' have been taken, belonged, may serve even to inflame the ardour, and quicken the competition, of some of our most distinguished living Collectors.

The NINTH DAY, relating to Sales of Books by Public Auction, is a continuation of a Subject which seemed to be productive of some gratification in the second edition of the BIBLIOMANIA. It only professes, therefore, to carry on the Record of the disposal of Literary Property in the vendition of Books by public auction. Such a series of Sales of Libraries, within the metropolis of Great Britain, shews, in a very forcible manner, the eagerness and gallantry of our countrymen to avail themselves of treasures which they were not likely to possess through any other channel.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1
Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

v

The TENTH DAY is exclusively devoted to Literary Bibliography: in other words, to an account of the more celebrated bibliographical Writers of other countries as well as of our own. But it will be also found to contain some brief and not uninteresting memoirs of Book Collectors among ourselves: thus supplying some deficiencies in the Work just mentioned, and carrying on the Personal History of Bibliomania from the period at which it there concludes. These pages are also embellished with some beautifully-engraved portraits of several of the Collectors noticed; of which the greater number are, for the first time, here given to the public. The INDEXES are presumed to be full and complete.

Such is the brief outline of the BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DECAMERON which the author submits to the attention of the Public: and he trusts that brevity has not been studied to the exclusion of perspicuity. He only begs leave to add, that the great body of information is thrown into the Notes; which, from their number, extent, and the minute and various information which they contain, might, if the present fashionable method of Book-Making had been resorted to, have served to extend this publication to seven or eight comely octavo tomes. Upon the success with which this most essential department

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

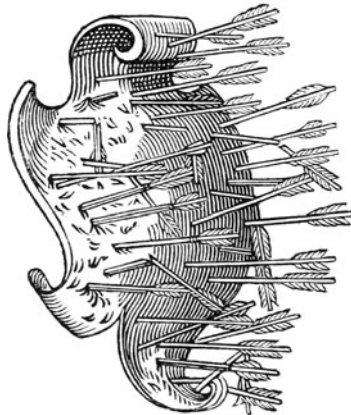
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

PREFACE.

of his Work has been executed, it becomes not the author to say a syllable: but he may be permitted to state that no pains have been spared, and no toil has been shunned, which could contribute to the gratification of the curious. In such a vast and varied mass of information, it is very probable that many errors have been committed; but the Author trusts that his attachment to the Winchester Measure will even here operate by way of excuse and apology. For one feature which the Work possesses, he may boldly challenge the criticism, and bespeak the approbation, of the skilful: the typographical execution of it has been rarely equalled, and perhaps never surpassed.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS

TO VOL. I.

PAGE	LINE	FOR	READ
xxiv	5 <i>n.</i>	Insert 'not' between 'are' and 'only.'	
cliii		The <i>following</i> page is incorrectly numbered clxiv for cliv.	
18	32 <i>n.</i>	in	inter
	37 <i>n.</i>	dicebit	habebit
93	<i>last n.</i>	SIXTH	EIGHTH
268	5 <i>n.</i>	absurdus	absurdas
173	10 <i>n.</i>	SEVENTH	TENTH
319	16 <i>n.</i>	mention	mentions
339	32 <i>n.</i>	The Royal Library of Paris now possesses Count Macarthy's copy of the first Psalter.	
360	<i>note</i>	A subsequent experiment was made — perfectly successful: and I presume a piece of string, or some such casual intervening obstacle, occurred in the printing of the original.	

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

VOL. I.

a

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Introduction.



IVE summer-suns have shed their kindly influence upon the vine which mantles **LYSANDER**'s cabinet-window, since the first visit of his bibliomaniacal friends. During this period the conversion of **LISARDO** to bibliography has been rapid and complete. The studies of **PHILEMON** have taken a somewhat different turn; connected, however, with the same object, and equally productive of benefit to the student: while the well-stored library of **LYSANDER** has served as a rallying point to satisfy the doubts, or to promote the researches, of either who chose to consult it.

Such, gentle Reader, is a very hasty sketch of the intellectual pursuits of those, who, in the **BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ROMANCE**, have been fortunate enough to meet with thy approval. There are yet other characters to notice: for let me hope that the fair names of **BELINDA** and **ALMANSA** are not forgotten—and that the hospitality of **LORENZO**,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

their brother, is still fresh in remembrance? Turn therefore, to the *seven hundredth and forty-fifth page* of the said Romance, and read as follows:—‘upon LORENZO’S frankly ‘confessing, though in a playful mood, that such brothers-‘in-law [as LYSANDER and LISARDO] would make him as ‘happy as the day was long—the Sisters both turned their ‘faces towards the garden, and appeared as awkward as it ‘was possible for well-bred ladies to appear’—and, a little onward,—that ‘some *other* symptom, wholly different from ‘any thing connected with the Bibliomania, had taken possession of their gentle minds.’

The symptom here alluded to will dart as quick as lightning upon the understandings of the intelligent: a symptom, in the description of which the muse of Lucretius has carried him into the most wild and not unlovely regions of poetry, and which has softened and sublimed the heart of man from the hour of his first ‘great trespass’ to the present. As there is no necessity to borrow the noble strains of Milton,*—so I will studiously shun the common place imagery of minor bards—in the description of this symptom: but will gravely, simply, and soberly observe that it was *Love*: love, leading to, and consolidated by, *Marriage*: a union of principles and of interests, so complete, and so commendable, that I can only wish, in my heart, that all matches may be like unto those of LYSANDER with BELINDA, and LISARDO with ALMANSÄ.

There seems however something mysterious, and a little spiteful, in such a summary account of two marriages, which were probably the result of long-continued and assiduous courtship. Let me hasten, therefore, to clear up all doubts, and not quarrel with my reader on the very threshold of

* *Paradise Lost*, Book iv.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

v

this new Decameron. The facts are few and soon told. The more reserved character of Lysander had induced him to contemplate the bridal day with a becoming portion of patience; the impetuosity of Lisardo stimulated him to press the siege of courtship with unremitting alacrity, so as, almost with difficulty, to allow the Lady to make her own terms of capitulation: yet, in the end, the due formalities were observed by all parties. Seven months only sufficed for Lisardo; the last two weeks of which were, however, unnecessarily protracted, by a determination, on his part, to have a copy of the *First English Prayer Book*, PRINTED UPON VELLUM,* lying upon the cushion of the altar before which

* *the first English Prayer-Book* PRINTED UPON VELLUM.] The first impression of the Liturgy, 'after the use of the Church of England,' was published in the year 1549, in folio, by Grafton and Whitchurch, under royal authority. There are copies bearing the dates of May, June, December, and other months in the same year; and there are occasional variations in such copies, which cannot at present be accounted for. The names of the above printers are inserted separately, it being presumed that each shared the expense and profit of the work. The reader may not object to consult the third volume of our *Typographical Antiquities*, p. 463-6, 493, for a particular description of this impression.

It is not very difficult to justify the whim of Lisardo in fancying that there should be a copy of this book struck off UPON VELLUM. As Grafton printed more than one copy of his BIBLE of 1540 upon the same material, (*Id.* vol. iii. p. 441-2.), he might possibly have executed at least *one* copy of this PRAYER Book in like manner: let us say for the presentation, or Royal Copy. I am, however, quite unable to set this matter at rest: rather believing that Lisardo will one day find the darling object of his search.

While upon the subject of ancient forms of our Liturgy, let me coax the reader's patience to endure a trifling enlargement of this Note. Is he aware of the antiquity of the 'ORDER of MATRIMONY,' as at present used? Will he believe, that upwards of three centuries ago, the husband thus addressed his wife, on taking her, as now, by the right hand?—I, N. *underfynge* the N. for my wedded wyfe, for beter, for worse, for richer, for porer, yn sekness, and in helthe, tyl deth us departe (not 'do part,' as we have erroneously rendered it—the ancient meaning of 'departe,' even in WICLIFFE'S time, being 'separate') as holy churche hath ordeyned, and therto I plygth the my trowthe.' The wife replies in the same form with an additional clause: 'to be buxom to the tyl deth us

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

he was to be united. To attain this glorious object he spared neither pains nor expense. He parted from his Beloved, by moonlight, upon the terrace of her brother's garden (at the very moment when the bell of the outer-gate announced the arrival of a cargo of books from his binder), and mounting his 'coal black steed,' promised to return within three days, with the treasure beneath his arm. No Knight of the Round Table ever promised more faithfully—no heroine of romance ever sympathized more sincerely in the object of her lover's wishes. If he could not purchase, Lisardo might borrow, this *vellum curiosity*. He travelled therefore, early and late, far and near; searching, amidst heaps of rubbish, and beneath clouds of dust, the libraries of Cathedrals, and the shops of Booksellers: but no such treasure was to be found. More than seven days had elapsed when his hopes were elated by a suggestion that the volume might be discovered upon the shelves of the *Althorp* or *Wilton Collections*; * when, forgetting his promise of only three days

'departe.' So it appears in the first edition of the 'MISSAL FOR THE USE OF THE FAMOUS AND CELEBRATED CHURCH OF HEREFORD, 1502, fol. In what is called the SALISBURY MASSAL, the Lady promised a more general obedience: 'to be bonere and buxom in bedde and at the borde.' *Edit. Wayland, 1554, 4to*: See the *Typog. Antiq.* vol. iii. p. 6, 523-4, and also Mr. Todd's enlarged definition of the word 'Buxom' in his edition of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary. The editors of the later impressions of the Salisbury Missal (if any there were) might have taken a hint from the more courteous strain of the Marriage Service in the first Protestant Prayer Book of 1549.

* *the Althorp or Wilton Collections.*] Althorp, in Northamptonshire, is the ancestral residence of the noble family of the SPENCERS; and the Collection here alluded to, containing about 36,000 volumes, is probably unrivalled for the beauty, rarity, and intrinsic worth of its contents. Here repose all the Polyglots upon Large Paper—but the reader must at present patiently await the treat reserved for him by a particular enumeration of such treasures. The Library at Wilton, in Wiltshire, was formed by the famous EARL OF PEMBROKE, in the reign of Queen Anne. Here are the Azzoguidi Ovid, and the St. Alban's Book of 1486: see *Bibl. Spencer.* vol. ii. p. 191-5: vol. iv. p. 373.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1
Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

vii

absence, and the frightful distance of those libraries apart from each other, he resolved to put the truth of such surmise to the test. He came, saw, and was hopeless: nor did the rich book-treasures of *Longleet* or *Stourhead** supply the object so dear to his heart. The moon was deeply in her wane when Lisardo returned—dispirited and dejected: and he was married without having the service read from a copy of the *First English Prayer Book—printed UPON VELLUM*.

The union of Lysander with Belinda was not preceded by any measure of so extraordinary a nature. Thirteen months glided happily away beneath the soft influence of betrothed love; and the first day of the fourteenth month saw them united in the usual manner—the service being performed from an edition of the ‘Common Prayer’ which had reposed upon the velvet cushion only since the time of Baskett. Lisardo and his consort attended the ceremony: the former pertinaciously making his responses from the black-letter text of Oswen,† and the latter having

* *the rich book-treasures of Longleet or Stourhead.*] The magnificent and tasteful residences of the MARQUIS OF BATH, and of SIR RICHARD COLT HOARE, BART.

† *the black letter text of Oswen.*] Oswen was a provincial printer, and carried on his business at Worcester, Ipswich, and Shrewsbury. He merely printed the text of the Common Prayer, as extant in Grafton and Whitchurch—rather omitting and abridging, than substituting alterations. A copy of Oswen’s reprint, now before me, and executed at Worcester, in May, 1549, 4to. affixes the price of the work (as printed at the end of it), at ‘ii shillings and two-pence y piece, unbounde. And the same bound in paste or in boardes, not above the price of thre shillynges and eyght pence the piece.’ This copy, from Earl Spencer’s Collection at Althorp, is fair and sound; wanting the title-page. The printing is of dismal execution. It may be added that Grafton’s impression (at least the copy of it in the possession of Messrs. J. and A. Arch, booksellers) was sold at the same price as Oswen’s, when unbound; but ‘bounde in paste or in boardes couered with calues leather, not above the price of iiiii shillings the piece.’

I can scarcely account for Lisardo’s partiality for Oswen’s edition of our

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

her eyes sedulously fixed upon the silken pages of Baskerville.*

To describe how the first short years of wedlock flew away, with characters so suited in every respect to confer happiness upon each other, were a waste of words and of time; but I will only briefly observe that if all the ‘doves and darts’ which crowd the pages from the ‘Minerva Press’ were concentrated to give force to the quantum of connubial felicity enjoyed by these worthy pairs, they would fall greatly short of that object. Philemon and Lorenzo were neither indifferent spectators, nor indifferent partakers, of this felicity. The former had buried his ‘Beloved’ beneath the yew tree, which his great grandfather, when a child, remembered to have seen planted, with due pomp and parade, by the vicar and churchwardens of the parish; and he resolved upon making the memory of past conjugal happiness cheer him for the remainder of his days. Lorenzo without laying down rigid rules to be engrossed upon parch-

Liturg, except it be on the score of its rarity: for, upon consulting Herbert, vol. iii. p. 1460, it appears that ‘this book was thought so great a rarity, that it was sold to Lord Oxford for ten pounds, at Thomas Rawlinson’s sale, in 1727.’ It is there erroneously called a ‘folio.’

* *the silken pages of Baskerville.*] The Prayer Books of Baskerville are probably more frequently seen within the pews of a church than any other: at least they were so, till within these dozen years past. They are of two forms, or sizes: royal octavo, and crown octavo. Of the former, there were two different impressions; one in long lines, and the other in double columns; and each of these again is varied by the omission, or introduction, of a fancy-border round the entire page. The crown octavo impression, which is the rarer of the two, has no such distinction of border. It is executed in a small character, in double columns, upon thin paper, but of a close and durable texture. I do not remember to have seen more than one copy of the royal octavo in an *uncut state*; and of the crown octavo, not a single copy: so popular were these impressions upon their first appearance. There is a soft and ‘silky’ tint about these volumes which makes them grateful to the eye: but in point of FINE PRINTING, they have each been excelled by a royal and crown octavo Prayer Book from the Press which produces the present Work.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1
Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

ix

ment, or engraved upon granite, had quietly but steadily resolved upon the experiment of Bachelorship for life: and thus the reader will readily conceive, that, with a thoroughly good disposition on each side, no great obstacle should present itself towards the mutual happiness of all parties.

The passion for foreign travel, which has so lately and generally prevailed, had induced the Widower and the Bachelor to explore a few of the libraries on the Continent, in order to extend or confirm their bibliographical knowledge. Accordingly Philemon and Lorenzo hired a roomy carriage, purposely contrived for the accommodation of about threescore stout volumes, and accomplished the object of their wishes chiefly in the capital of France.

In the course of some nine weeks, a letter from the travellers announced their probable return within a fortnight from the date of the dispatch. That period, however, was prolonged by a sudden and violent inclination, on the part of Lorenzo, to visit the cities of Mayence and Cologne: sister-nurses of the art of typography in its infancy. Of this visit I shall at present say little or nothing: only that the bibliographical enthusiasm of our travellers left scarcely a shelf unexamined, or a nook unexplored, for the discovery of an hitherto unknown typographical production; nor were they wholly without hopes of finding a more legitimate resemblance of the physiognomy of Fust than that which adorns the collection of Reuter.*

At length, after the lapse of an extra month, the tra-

* *adorns the collection of Reuter.*] There is, prefixed to the Second Part of Fischer's *Typographischen Seltenheiten*, 1801, 8vo. a copper-plate, in the outline, representing the bust of Fust (from the original, which is carved in wood), both in the full-face and the profile position. I doubt much the genuineness of the original; as well as of the portrait of the same character published in the frontispiece of Mallinkrot's work, *De Ortu Art. Typog.* Colon. Agrip. 1640, 4to. and

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vellers returned, and found their friends not a little overjoyed to receive them. The neighbouring circle of acquaintance was invited to hear of the wonders that had been seen and of the curiosities that had been collected; and for three successive days the chimnies of Lysander, or of Lisardo, never failed to cast forth picturesque volumes of smoke. Their hospitality was indeed without bounds.

The scene of congratulation was however to be transferred to the splendid mansion of Lorenzo. It was essential that Lysander and Lisardo should examine the treasures that had been acquired, and the memoranda that had been taken, during the Continental tour. The weather, although the month of October was pretty far gone into, still continued inviting: and the removal of the scene of action to the distance of some forty furlongs (for the visitors, with the exception of Lisardo,* lived in grey-tinted *fermes-ornées* at about four miles from Lorenzo's residence) could be productive of no inconvenience. It was fitting also that the ladies should enjoy a calm after the late uproar, and that mental recreation should succeed to bodily activity. Accordingly, the period, both of the commencement and of the termination of this adjourned visit, was quickly and formally fixed. 'We will tarry with you some TEN DAYS,' replied Lisardo, in a playful mood. The offer was seized upon with avidity by the generous Lorenzo. 'Let us have, then, a BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DECAMERON'—he exclaimed—'It is long since we discussed those subjects which formerly gave us so much delight. You, Lysander, were formerly

from this latter introduced into the frontispiece of Maittaire's great work upon the annals of printing. Fischer's representation of Fust gives it the air of an ancient Greek or Roman bust.

* See the *Bibliomania*, p. 280-1.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xi

our chief oracle; and I have a perfect recollection, at this moment, of the pleasure and improvement with which we listened to your discourse. We may each, now, take a part in the discussion:—and so let us hasten to the enjoyment of our BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DECAMERON.’

The suggestion delighted Lisardo. He appealed (with becoming deference) to Almansa, whose assent almost preceded the appeal. Lysander cordially approved; observing, that as the brunt of the discourse would not fall upon himself, he should be the more careful in what he advanced, now that his pupils had become critics in turn. Philemon was resolved to take no ordinary share in the discussion;—‘*Three* out of the TEN DAYS shall at least fall to my lot!’ said he: ‘And the same number of days shall witness my oracular powers,’—resumed Lisardo—‘For the rest, let Lysander and our Host act their parts as they please.’

The invitation was quickly accepted: and within twenty-four hours of its being given, the cavalcades of the respective parties were in motion, to reach, pretty nearly at the same time, the residence of Lorenzo. The sun rose cheerily on the morning of their departure. His beams were reflected by a hundred ploughshares which were preparing the earth for another year’s harvest, and the tranquillity of the air was only broken by the melancholy note of the robin. The leaves of the forest had put on their marygold tints, and the distant hills were already purpled in the deepening haze of autumn. The hearts of the visitors were light and unoppressed; and a short hour brought them, within a few minutes of each other, at the outer gate of Lorenzo. You would have smiled at the formality of their approach; and especially at the Caravan, which closed the cavalcade,* being

* *the Caravan, which closed the cavalcade.*] The Caravan is a sort of narrow

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07651-7 - The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

filled to the utmost with books and portfolios. This latter might be considered a sort of baggage waggon, to furnish materials for the discourse; Lysander and Lisardo having resolved to compete with the continental travellers in variety and interest of discussion.

Loudly rang the bell, and quickly flew open the gates which were to receive and enclose the visitors. Some twenty feet were in motion to open carriage doors, and unload the luggage. The old Steward or Seneschal (let us allow every man his due dignity) caused the bugle to sound long and loud, so as to awaken the echoes of every beechen avenue; and the entire establishment of Lorenzo was in motion, giving evidence of the cordiality with which the visitors were received. My readers have probably not forgotten the drawing-room within which these visitors were wont to be entertained; * and therefore I shall here add nothing to former descriptions of Lorenzo's mansion—save that many a bust and many a rare tome had recently enriched his residence. A printing-press, on a small scale, was among the late acquisitions to his book-comforts; but *the Library*, as usual, formed the principal object of attraction. Here Lisardo quickly perceived new book-treasures clad in a Parisian surtout; † and the fruits of the late tour were sufficiently evident in various other directions. But every

oblong carriage, without cover, and is also sometimes used in this country for breaking in horses: not, however, but that quiet and gentle horses may be attached to the Caravan; such at least were those which transported the *Duplicate Volumes* of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, in this very kind of conveyance, to the house of Mr. Evans, in Pall-Mall, for the purpose of public sale by auction.

* See the *Bibliomania*, p. 281.

† *clad in a Parisian surtout.*] That is, bound by Parisian binders. In the subsequent pages (or the EIGHTH DAY) the reader will find a criticism, in due order, upon the merits and demerits of the art of binding in France.