

## AMES'S PREFACE.\*

**W**HEREAS it appears from reason and ancient history, that in the most early ages of the world, mankind had industriously invented other means of communicating their ideas, than merely by the voice,\* not only that they might with freedom converse at a distance, but also to enable them to preserve and transmit to their posterity the most valuable deeds, and most useful discoveries made in the world; they esteemed books, those curious repositories of the sentiments and actions of men, as a real treasure, and the happy possessors, who well understood the subjects they contain'd, were caressed by the wise, and favoured by the great, and consequently were the only truly learned, with whom all prudent princes and philosophers chose to advise.

Books being thus useful and curious, the learned thought it worthy the chief labour of their lives, either to compile, or collect those valuable tracts, and imagined themselves distinguished from mankind more or less, as they excelled in the bulk or goodness of their libraries. Of which I cannot produce a greater instance, than what Dr. Conyers Middleton says in the *Life of Cicero*, p. 136, and 137. 'Nor was he (speaking of Cicero) less eager in making a collection of Greek books, and forming a library, by the same opportunity of Atticus's help. This was Atticus's own passion, who, having free access to all the Athenian libraries, was employing his slaves in copying the works of their best writers, not only for his own use, but

\* The NOTES to this reimpression of it are by the present Editor

† Consult the first two chapters of Mr. Astle's ingenious and splendid work upon '*The Origin and Progress of Writing*,' 1784, 1803, 4to. where this subject is very learnedly and satisfactorily treated.

for sale also, and the common profit both of the slave and the master; for Atticus was remarkable above all men of his rank for a family of learned slaves, having scarce a footboy in his house, who was not trained both to read and write for him. By this advantage he had made a very large collection of choice and curious books, and signified to Cicero his design of selling them; yet seems to have intimated withal, that he expected a larger sum for them than Cicero would easily spare; which gave occasion to Cicero, to beg of him in several letters, to reserve the whole number for him, till he could raise money enough for the purchase. 'Pray keep your books,' says he, 'for me, and do not despair of my being able to make them mine; which, if I can compass, I shall think myself richer than Crassus, and despise the fine villa's and gardens of them all.' Again, 'Take care that you do not part with your library to any man, how eager soever he may be to buy it; for I am setting apart all my little rents to purchase that relief for my old age.' In a third letter, he says, 'That he had placed all his hopes of comfort and pleasure, whenever he should retire from business, on Atticus's reserving these books for him.' Again, in p. 453. 'Atticus lent him two of his librarians to assist his own, in taking catalogues, and placing the books in order; which he calls the infusion of a soul into the body of his house.'\*

And among other writers on this subject, Mr. Watson, in his *History of Printing*, tells us, from an epistle of Antonius Bononia Becatellus, surnamed Panorme, to Alphonsus king of Naples and Sicily, Lib. 5. Epist. '*Significasti mihi nuper ex Florentia,*' &c. 'You lately wrote to me from Florence, that the works of Titus Livius are there to be sold, in very handsome books; and that the price of each book is 120 crowns of gold: therefore I entreat your majesty, that you cause to be bought for us Livy, whom we use to call the king of books, and cause it to be sent hither to us. I shall in the mean time procure the money which I am to give for the price of the book. One thing I want to know of your prudence, whether I

\* Consult the excellent notes of the Abbé Mongault, attached to his French translation of Cicero's Letters to Atticus; Paris, 1714, 12mo. 6 vols.

## AMES'S PREFACE.

5

or Poggius have done best; he, that he might buy a country house near Florence, sold Livy, which he had writ in a very fair hand; and I, to purchase Livy, have exposed a piece of land to sale. Your goodness and modesty have encouraged me to ask these things with familiarity of you. Farewel, and triumph.' There are several passages, which shew the great value and esteem of manuscripts, and that the manner of their conveyance was by notaries, as lands, &c.

I have a folio manuscript in French verse called, 'Romans de la Rose' (from whence Chaucer's translation) on the last leaf of which is wrote, '*Cest lyuir costa au palas de Parys quarante coronnes dor sans mentyr,*' that is, this book cost at the palace of Paris 40 crowns of gold, without lying. (About 33l. 6s. 6d. sterling.)\*

\* The following further particulars from Watson, upon this interesting subject, may be acceptable to the reader:

"All the elogiums which we make of PRINTING, and the honours which we pay to it, come far short of its merit; and we cannot but easily consent to this, if we consider the vast expenses which the ancients were obliged to be at, in procuring manuscripts; whereof I shall give here a few instances.

"Galen saith, in his Commentary upon the third of the Epidemicks, and upon the first book of the 'Nature of Man,' that Ptolomeus Philadelphus gave to the Athenians 15 talents, with exemption from all tribute, and a great convoy of provisions, for the Autographs and Originals of the Tragedies of Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

"But there is no need of proofs so far off, since we want not examples in modern authors, among whom James Piccolomini, Cardinal of Pavia, having intreated Donatus Acciaiolus to buy him Josephus, had for an excuse, that it was too dear: page 114 of the old edition. apud Papiens. 'Josephus, of which you writ, is, in my opinion, too dear, especially this year, when money is scarce with me; therefore let that book alone.

"But what Acciaiolus wrote back to him afterward, concerning the great price of some other books, is yet much more remarkable. See Papiens, as above: 'He has taken out the titles, as you advise me, of the 3 volumes of Plutarch, in which are contained 24 parallels. The price of it cannot be less than 80 crowns of gold. [Or rose-nobles, value 16s. 8d. sterl. a-piece.] Of Seneca's Treatises, we have as yet found only the Epistles, for which they ask 16, or at least 15 crowns of gold.'

"And that it may not be thought, that this high price was only in Italy, see what Gaguin saith of a book, which he sought out at Paris for one of his friends who wrote to him from Rome. 'I have not to this day found out a Concordance, save one that's very

## 6

## AMES'S PREFACE.

About the time of our king Henry II, as I have somewhere read, their manner of publishing the works of their authors was to have them read over for three days successively before the university, or

precious, which Paschasius, the bookseller, has told me is to be sold, but the owner of it is abroad; and it may be had for a hundred crowns of gold.

“ And Paul Jove observeth very pleasantly on this head, how that Jason Mainus, when studying at Padua, fell into such want by his debaucheries, that he was forced to lay in pledge a book of law writ on parchment, which he purchased at a great price. And Petrarchus reporteth of Tuscius, who taught him grammar and rhetorick, that he pawned, for the same cause, two little volumes of Cicero. [In Epist. ad Lucam Pennam.] And Brasicanus tells, that the Emperor Frederick III. knew no better way to gratify John Capnion (call'd, Reuchlin, Præfat. in Salvian. de Provident.) who had been sent to him in an embassy by Edward of Witemberg, than by making him a present of an old Hebrew Bible. They us'd also to be left by testament, as some great heritage, as Nostradamus tells he hath observed in an old instrument about the year 1393 (in the fifth part of the History of Provence, p. 516.) whereby it was provided, ‘ that Alazie de Blevis, Lady of Romolles, spouse of the magnificent Boniface of Castellane, Baron of Germany, making her last will, left to a young lady her daughter, a certain number of books, wherein was writ the whole body of the law, done in a fair letter upon parchment; charging her, in case she would marry, that she would take a man of the long robe, a doctor, a lawyer; and that for that end, she had left her that fine and rich treasure, these exquisite and precious volumes, in abatement of her dowry.’ So that he who gifted a book in those days, gave no small present: seeing four or five manuscripts made a part of the dowry of the daughter of a great lord.” [This anecdote is related by Lambinet, p. 173.] Finally, those MSS. or rather those books, were so rare in those days, that they were not sold but by contracts upon as good conditions and securities, as these of an house of 20000 livres value. Witness that which is still kept in the college of Laon in this city, cited by Brenil, and made in presence of two notaries, Anno 1332, which beareth, that ‘ Jeffrey of St. Liger, [Livre 2. des Antiquit. de Paris, pag. 608.] one of the clergy-men booksellers, and so qualified, acknowledges and confesses to have sold, ceded, quitted and transported; and sells, cedes, quits and transports upon mortgage of all and sundry his goods, and the custody of his own body, a book entitled Speculum Historiale in Consuetudines Parisienses, divided and bound up in four volumes, covered with red leather, to a nobleman, Messire Girard of Montague, Advocate to the King in the Parliament, for the sum of 40 livres of Paris; whereof the said bookseller holds himself well content and paid.’ In those days, kings only and sovereigns, or the rich, could pretend to the sciences: the poor being entirely debarr'd by the excessive price of the MSS. Whereas now a-days, by means of this worthy and noble Invention of PRINTING, every body may have books of all the whole sciences, for a small sum.” *Watson on Printing*, p. 2-5.

‘ In *Stow's Annals* [Life of Edward 1st.] it is said that William de Howton, Abbot of

## AMES'S PREFACE.

7

other judges, appointed by the publick; and if they met with approbation, copies of them were then permitted to be taken, which were usually done by monks, scribes, illuminors and readers, brought or train'd up to that purpose for their maintenance.\*

Croxton, among other gifts, left a bible, in nine tomes, fair written and excellently well glossed by Solomon, Archdeacon of Leicester, and paid for it fifty marks sterling.' Ames's marginal note in my interleaved copy of his *Typographical Antiquities*.

Most of these anecdotes are to be found in Lambinet and Peignot (*Dict. de Bibliologie*) and in other bibliographical authors. From Lambinet [who relies, however, upon the authority of Braun] I extract the ensuing particulars, which are interesting, inasmuch as they relate to the expenses attending the setting up of the first presses abroad. 'Melchior de Stamham, wishing to establish a printing office in the Abbey of St. Ulric at Augsburg, engaged a skilful workman of the same town, of the name of Saurloch. One whole year was occupied in making the necessary preparations. He bought of John Schueseler five presses, which cost him 73 Rhenish florins [about 290 livres of the present value]: he constructed with these materials five other smaller presses: cast pewter-types, and commenced printing in 1473. The 'Mirror of Vincentius de Beauvais' [vide p. 257, post] was the first effort of his press; but he died shortly after the completion of the third part of it. He had spent not less than 702 florins in establishing his office, and putting matters in a train for work. His successor, Henry de Stamham, finding the concern greatly involved, sold the three parts of the 'Speculum' for 24 florins. *Recherches, &c. de l'Imprimerie*, p. 197. For some further particulars concerning the prices of early printed books, vide p. cxxvii, post: note. There is an amusing article, in the first volume of Mr. D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, respecting the prices of manuscripts; and Mr. Roscoe, in his delightful biography of *Lorenzo de Medici*, has adduced a variety of instances of the avidity with which ancient manuscripts, and early printed books, were sought after, and esteemed, by the most eminent scholars of Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

\* The present seems to be a proper place for the introduction of a few remarks relating to the regulation and encouragement of books in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, at home and abroad. Whoever reads the fourth chapter of the third book of Dr. Henry's instructive *History of Great Britain*, need not want further proof of the spirit of those times, in our own country, in the patronage of literature and the general employment of monastic scribes. It was the glorious maxim of this age that 'A convent without a library, was like a castle without an armory.' 'To provide books [says Dr. Henry] for the use of the church, and for furnishing their libraries, there was, in every monastery, a room called the *Scriptorium*, or *Writing Chamber*, in which several of the younger monks were constantly employed in transcribing books; and to which, in some monasteries, consider-

At the time that Printing was introduced, and a little after, the scribes used their utmost efforts to excel, being willing to keep their places, and would say such a book was old, and would add unprofitable; but such an one was new, neat, elegantly wrote, easy to be read, &c. which method of proceeding, by the way, may have occasioned the loss of many a good composition. Indeed before this noble art of Printing by separate types made of metal was found out, there were but few authors in comparison to the great encrease

able revenues were appropriated. A noble Norman, who was a great encourager of learning, left his own library to that of the Abbey of St. Albans, A.D. 1086, and granted two thirds of the tithes of Hatfield, and certain tithes in Redburn, to support the Scribes in the Scriptorium of that abbey. Where there were no fixed revenues for defraying the expenses of procuring books for the library, the abbot, with the consent of the chapter, commonly imposed an annual tax on every member of the community for that purpose. The monks of some monasteries in this period were bitterly reproached for the extravagant sums they expended on their libraries. [Vide M. Paris *Vita Abbatum*, p. 32: *Mabill. Annal.* vol. iv. 651-2: *Martin Col. Script.* vol. i. 1020-21: as referred to by Dr. Henry.] The monastic writers, or copiers of manuscripts, have been thought by some to be the last relics of the Jewish Scribes, or the Roman Librarii. Mr. Astle, in the 8th chapter of his '*Origin and Progress of Writing*;' and Strutt, in his '*Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities*,' have slightly noticed them; but from Lambinet we obtain the following curious account of their history in the middle centuries:

"GERARD DE GROOT, or Gerard the Great, instituted a society called '*Fratres Vita Communis*.' This extraordinary character was born at Deventer, in the year 1340. His parents took the greatest possible care of his education; and at 15 years of age he was sent to Paris to perfect himself in philosophical and theological studies. His general knowledge afterwards procured for him the distinctive appellation of *The Great*: but, in the midst of his intellectual celebrity, he was not free from the justly founded stigma of leading a debauched and luxurious life. An accidental but serious conversation with one of his old schoolfellows suddenly converted him. He now became as grave, devout, and exemplary, as he had been formerly licentious and relaxed. He clothed himself in a doublet of grey, lined with hair, and retired to a monastery at Munikhuisen, where he devoted himself to prayer, and to the reformation of immoral characters. Meeting with unexpected success in this pious avocation, he instituted the society before mentioned; and could boast, among his followers, of such characters as RUDEWYNS and THOMAS A KEMPIS. 'One heart, one soul, one common property,' says Lambinet, 'influenced and supported this illustrious society; whose glory it was that they earned their livelihood by their pen.' They were always distinguished by wearing a grey coat, lined with hair,

## AMES'S PREFACE.

9

of learned men since. But as the method of increasing and propagating books by writing was excessively tedious and expensive, so that few could encourage it, but sovereign princes, or persons of great wealth, the bulk of mankind was in a manner deprived of those

next their skin. A black cowl hung down behind as low as the waist; and whenever they went abroad, they wrapt themselves in a large mantle, which descended to their heels. Their hair was closely cropt in a circular manner. The following representation of their habit is faithfully copied, on a reduced scale, from the print inserted by Lambinet; who appears to have borrowed it from Héliot's *Histoire des Ordres Monastiques, Religieux, et Militaires*, vol. ii. p. 339.



truly valuable advantages resulting from books ; which alone sufficiently shews, how greatly we are indebted to the inventors of that useful, or, as I may justly say, divine, art of Printing. We have now

Successive popes confirmed and extended their privileges ; and in 1402 not fewer than seven monasteries had admitted their rules and imitated their example. Of all the disciples of Gerard, no one seems to have eclipsed the manual fame of the celebrated Thomas à Kempis. His immediate master, Radewyns, tells us that ' he excelled in this department, and devoted his earnings to the support of the common body.' He was the copier of the Bible, in four large volumes ; of a very large Missal ; and of some opuscula of St. Bernard. The viiith plate in Meerman's *Origines Typographicæ* is an evidence of some minor works which were printed from a copy in his handwriting. In the middle of the 15th century the '*Brothers of a Common Life*' instituted public schools for the instruction of the poor and ignorant. As they had taken St. Gregory and St. Jerom for the patrons of their schools, and as the houses in which they dwelt had, almost all of them, some patron's name attached to it—for example, at Grammont and Bois le-Duc, that of St. Gregory ; at Ghent, that of St. Jerom ; these Scribes were, in consequence, called '*Brothers of St. Gregory, or of St. Jerom*.' The Brabant Chronicle informs us that, in the year 1460, the public magistrate at Brussels invited over a body of these '*Brothers*' to establish there public schools of instruction ; and appointed colleges for their reception. Lambinet says he saw at Louvain a most beautiful manuscript Missal, '*Secundum consuetudinem Gallicorum,*' which was printed in 1481, and had been executed by one of these '*Brothers*.' '*C'est un chef-d'œuvre (he exclaims) de typographie, par la netteté des caractères, la blancheur et la force du papier, la largeur des marges etc.*' Consult his very interesting account of these Scribes at p. 331, &c. of his *Recherches, &c. sur l'Origine de l'Imprimerie*. Bruxelles, An. vii. 8vo.

Having stated these few particulars relating to the monastic scribes of the middle ages, I shall add a word or two respecting the regulation and licenses for vending the books thus transcribed.

The method adopted by our Universities in the 12th century, as above stated by Ames, was probably chosen by every University in Europe during this and the two following centuries. The University of Paris, A.D. 1272, instituted a plan, not only for approving books, but for *determining the price of them*. It ordained: '*quod pro exemplaribus aliquid ultra modum salarium vel mercedem seu ultra id quod ab Universitate vel deputatis ab ea taxatum fuerit, non exigent à quocunque.*' In the year 1323, four officers were appointed by this University to regulate the prices of all manuscript books ; and these were called '*Taxatores Librorum.*' Of the greater number of the MSS. bequeathed to the library of Sorbonne, shortly after it was founded, Chevillier tells us that a price was marked upon each ; and that from a catalogue made of them in the year 1292, this library contained more than 1000 priced volumes. At the end of the inven-



## AMES'S PREFACE.

11

no occasion to wait the slow result of the transcriber, but with a little labour, and easy expence, may store our libraries with all the knowledge of our learned progenitors, and have it in our power, with a little study, to be masters of those arts, which they only attained to with the greatest labour and industry.\* And I am perswaded, if

tory or catalogue, the sum total, constituting the value of these books, was thus specified :  
 ‘ *Summa valoris omnium librorum hujus Domús propter intitulos anno Domini 1292 tria millia, octogentæ duodecim libræ, decem solidi, octo denarii.*’ [£3892: 12. 8.]

But the discovery of the art of printing, by multiplying books so rapidly, rendered the interference of these ‘Taxatores’ extremely difficult, and, in most instances, ineffectual. Instead, therefore, of taxing each individual volume, the printers, who were necessarily the first booksellers, were obliged to make out catalogues of their books, with the price affixed to each, to be kept in their shops. These prices were regulated by the four University-Officers ; in this respect imitating the plan which had been adopted with the manuscripts—namely, that the book-vendor was to put a parchment label in his window, with the name and the price of each work, written in a fair and legible hand. Thus we find, in respect of the printers, that Colinæus was obliged to sell his Greek Testament for a sum not exceeding 12 sous. The ‘*Promptuarum Juris*’ of 1520, in 2 vols. folio, was taxed at 50 sous : and a Hebrew Psalter of Robert Stephens at 7 sous. The early priced catalogues of the books of Colinæus and Robert Stephens are in the Sorbonne collection. Consult Chevillier’s *L’Origine de l’Imprimerie de Paris*, p. 368, &c. ; especially 373-4-5, where a variety of colophons are given respecting the sums at which printers professed to sell their publications. Chevillier seems to wish for the revival of these University Book-Censors, in order that ‘*les gens de Lettres, qui épuisent leur esprit par l’étude, ne se verroient pas obligés d’épuiser encore leur bourse, et d’acheter les livres à un prix excessif.*’ It may be worth remarking, that the act of the 25th of Henry VIII. ch. xv. § 4. granting to the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer, and the two Chief Justices, the power of regulating the prices of books, when too exorbitant, was not repealed till the 12th of Geo. II.

\* This circumstance is well alluded to in the Bishop of Aleria’s address to Pope Paul II, prefixed to the first edition of St. Jerom’s Epistles, printed in 1468. ‘It was reserved for the times of your Holiness (says he) for the christian world to be blessed with the immense advantages resulting from the art of printing ; by means of which, and with a little money, the poorest person may collect together a few books. It is a small testimony of the glory of your holiness, that the volumes which, formerly, scarcely an hundred golden crowns would purchase, may now be procured for twenty, and less—and these, well written and authentic ones!’ This is extracted, in the original Latin, by Chevillier, p. 369. A good account of the learned labours of this excellent prelate will be found in the third volume of Mr. Beloe’s *Anecdotes of Literature*, p. 274, &c. Many of his epistles

any one would be at the trouble to compare the present body of our people, in regard to literature and their capacities in affairs, with those of our ancestors, who flourished 300 years ago, when there was no printing, they will readily acknowledge, that this curious art hath not a little contributed to the benefit and improvement of mankind.\*

And here I should be tempted to say something concerning the free use and liberty of the press; but as it has been touched upon by the famous Milton and others, I chuse to drop it, and frankly acknowledge, that it requires greater wisdom and penetration to settle its bounds than I am capable of.† I do also ingenuously confess, that in attempting this history of Printing, I have undertaken a task much too great for my abilities, the extent of which I did not so well perceive at first; but though it is not so perfect a work, as I could wish, yet such as it is, I now submit it to the public; and hope, when they consider in what obscurity and confusion printing in its infancy was involved, they will acknowledge that I have at least cleared away the rubbish, and furnished materials towards a more perfect structure.‡

which throw considerable light upon the learning, and occasionally upon the politics, of the day, are inserted at the end of the catalogue of Consul Smith's books, printed at Venice in 1755, 4to.

\* It may afford some idea of the immense circulation of printed books in these times, and, consequently, [it is to be hoped] of the proportionable influence of knowledge and mental improvement, when it is stated, from accurate premises, that upwards of 120,000 copies of the collective number of periodical publications, are printed and circulated in London EVERY MONTH!

† This important subject, which was strongly agitated in the case of the Dean of St. Asaph, was in a great degree settled by the act of the 32d of the present King's reign; [*Ruffhead's Statutes*, vol. xvi. p.264.] in which the doctrine of libels was so far established, as to make the Juries competent to judge of the intention of the writer, as well as of the fact of publication.

‡ From a cancelled leaf, in the interleaved copy so often mentioned in the course of the biographies of Ames and Herbert, the original passages from the end of this, to the commencement of the concluding paragraph, stood thus:

“ I have endeavoured to make the book as plain and useful as I could, by disposing it