

A Notable Berkshire Printer and Publisher.

By EDMUND NEWBERY.

RALPH NEWBERY was born at Waltham St. Lawrence about 1535 of Yeoman stock, he left the Plough for the Press and became a printer and publisher of some importance in his day. In the third year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, only 84 years after Caxton introduced the craft into England he set up his printing press in Fleet Street just above the Conduit near Fetter Lane, close by St. Dunstan's Church. The House was formerly the home of Thomas Berthelet, the second typographer after Pynson to be appointed the King's printer. Did Ralph Newbery learn the craft of some successor of Berthelet?

He must have been a man of considerable character and ability for he was Warden of the Stationers Company in 1583 and Master in 1598 and 1601. His name may be seen third on the wall of the present Stationers Hall among the very earliest of its masters. According to genealogy in the Royal College of Arms he was appointed Master of the printing house of Queen Elizabeth and latterly of James I. Thus he appears to have been the third printer to hold this title.

Many standard books of historical value were printed and published by him, some of which we will refer to later. He must have had more or less intimate relations with many of the literary men of his day including Hakluyt, Camden, Stow and Holinshed, for he printed and published for all four of them.

Did he know Shakespeare? London was small then and literary men and printers few. He was contemporary with the Poet's active years—Shakespeare being born in 1564 and dying in 1616 whilst Ralph Newbery was, according to the Stationers Company's Register, printer & publisher from 1560 to 1605. It is of interest in this relation to refer to Jaggard's Shakespeare's Bibliography 1911 wherein is described hundreds of volumes the Poet once used or possessed, and among them is Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles which were printed and published by Ralph Newbery in 1577. This edition is known as the Shakespeare edition because it is the one Shakespeare used. That the Poet took material from this book for some of his historical drama is well known. Supporting this supposition is the recent finding of a copy containing an autograph and marginal notes believed to be in Shakespeare's handwriting. Like that of many of the notable people of the Elizabethan Age there is little or no record of Ralph Newbery's personal life, therefore only by deduction and imagination can we form some idea of his personality.

He lived in the days of Raleigh, Drake, Shakespeare, Spenser, when little time was given to diaries or writing of reminiscences and when men were still being burnt at the stake, hanged, drawn and quartered and living dangerously. Any record or portrait there

may have existed of him in Stationers Hall was lost in the Fire of London when the Company's loss was stated to have amounted to £200,000—only the Register being saved. Therein we find some 150 entries relating to him and among them many interesting glimpses of life as it was then. Take the following under date of 25th March 1583—"Payde for bote from Fletestrete to the Tower and from the Tower back agayne to Fletestrete aboute Master Nuberye his man," Spelling had no standard in those days and the name is spelt variously throughout the Register. But—what was the business that Ralph Newbery had with the Tower that required "his man" to journey there and back? Was it part of his duties as Master of the Queen's Printing House or was it to collect books of some poor Catholic for burning on the spot reserved for that purpose and still to be seen from the Stationers Hall? As Warden and Master of the Stationers Company he must have necessarily been on the side of the Ecclesiastical authorities and responsible for the burning of banned books.

There are three entries in the Register of his being fined. On September 28th, 1561 "for that he kepte a boye a yere and not bound." On October 18th, 1564 he, among others fined for keeping his shop open on Saint Luke's Day, and there is a third when he was fined for not attending the Hall. There is also an entry registering his gift of a "stocke of books and privileges of printing to be sold for the benefit of Christ's Hospital and Bridewell."

The Register also records some thirteen registrations of apprentices bound to him which seems to show that he had for the period a fair size printing office. Every apprentice meant at least two qualified craftsmen, and by the dates given in the Register he appears to have always had three apprentices on hand, so this would make at least a staff of nine employees, a considerable number for those days.

Among the entries registering apprentices, the following refers to a nephew "September 29th, 1578—John Newbery, sonne of Robert Newberrie of Waltham Lawrence in the county of Berks. Yeoman, hath put himself apprentice to Ralph Newberrie, citizen and stationer, London, for the term of seven years." This brings mention of his native village, Waltham St. Lawrence, to this day one of the prettiest and least spoilt Tudor villages of Berkshire. Here we find in the Parish Register records of the Newbery family for over 200 years, but the family, from records in the Record Office, London, seems to have held land from early Norman days. There was a John de Newbery of Reading, Attorney to Queen Phillipa of Calais fame. However, Ralph Newbery's forbears were Yeoman farmers and the farm, a moated one, near Womb Bridge (now Callins Bridge) was demolished some years ago. Here he was born in 1535 and in accordance with the conditions of the times doubtless worked on his father's farm from the earliest possible age. How did he acquire the learning necessary to fit him to print and publish books at the age of 25? His father must have been rather above the average to have seen that his son was educated, probably at one of the many grammar

schools close by, possibly at Hurley, Shottisbrook or Reading. We only know that his early life prior to his migration to Fleet Street was during the reign of Henry VIII. Edward VI and Mary—the period of the aftermath of the dissolution of the monasteries. This was the atmosphere of Ralph Newbery's early life and that which permeated the villages, for in the risings against the alteration of Church Services by the peasants and small farm owners, Berkshire was involved. He was a lad at the time. How did it affect his people? To have kept clear of trouble they must have adopted a Vicar of Bray philosophy which seems to have passed on to Ralph, for during his many years as printer & publisher he steered safely through the latter part of that stormy period. After his 43 years at the press he retired and settled at White Waltham, a neighbouring parish, acquiring of Sir Henry Neville the manor of Wolfines. He bequeathed to his native village a cottage and some 2 acres, known as the "Bell-Charity." The cottage has long been converted into the "Bell," a most picturesque old inn opposite the very ancient pound and close to the village Church. The revenue was to provide loaves at Christmas for the poor of Lawrence Waltham. It is now administered by the Church Wardens in the spirit of the old deed dated 1633, wherein occur the words "Witnesseth that whereas Ralph Newbery, late of London stationer, of his charity for the relief of the poorest and neediest persones of the Parish," and further in the deed "for the maintenance and relief of the sayd poore people." He died about 1606 aged 71.

We will now give a brief account of some important books that Ralph Newbery issued, of which there are some 63 listed in the Register of the Stationers Company.

Stow's Annals of England. A standard work of historical reference. It was first printed by Ralph Newbery in 1561. Only an imperfect copy of this first edition is known to exist. Ralph Newbery printed further editions onwards until 1601.

Holinshed's Chronicles of Englande, Scotlande and Irelande. This book was first printed and published in 1578 in 2 volumes by Ralph Newbery. It is known as the Shakespeare edition, because it is the one Shakespeare is known to have used, and from which he obtained many of his plots for his historical plays. As previously mentioned a copy has recently been discovered containing an autograph and marginal notes believed to be in Shakespeare's handwriting.

Hakluyt's Voyages. This was first issued in one volume in 1582 entitled "Divers Voyages touching the Discovery of America and the lands adjacent." Then followed in 1598 in one folio volume "The Principal Navigations, Voyages & Discoveries of the English Nation." Then from 1598 to 1601 in three volumes with the full title. All these were first printed and published by Ralph Newbery. This last compilation by Richard Hakluyt is described by Mr. J. Aubrey Rees in his book "The English Tradition" as the real epic of the English People. Richard Hakluyt was born in 1553 in Herefordshire of good British stock and was educated at Westminster

School, and Christchurch, Oxford, and buried in Westminster Abbey 1616. His works have inspired many writers. The account of the fight of the Revenge is said to have suggested Tennyson's poems and Kingsley's *Westward Ho* owes much to Hakluyt.

Camden's Britannia. First printed in latin and published in 1585 and reprinted and enlarged several times. This work is regarded as invaluable for its historical records, Camden being described as the Patriarch of English Antiquaries.

Lambarde's Peramulation of Kent. 4to 1576. A sort of Domesday book of Kent, being a valuable record of the holdings in the days of Elizabeth.

In addition to the foregoing Ralph Newbery issued the following works :—

"*Travels of Marcus Paulus*." First edition translated into English and printed by Ralph Newbery 1579.

"*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*."

"*A Book of the Invention of the Art of Navigation*" 1578.

"*Stow's Sumarie*" 1590.

"*Ecloges Epitaphes and Sonattes*"

A handsome Latin Bible in folio by Junius Tremellin. 1593.

In conclusion it may be of interest to mention other members of this Berkshire family who over the centuries have followed in the footsteps of Ralph Newbery in book production.

THOMAS NEWBERY. 1563-1580, elder brother of Ralph. Author of the first book for children named "*Dives Pragmaticus*"—a booke in Englysh metre of the great Marchaunt man, very preaty for children.

JOHN NEWBERY. 1594-1603, cousin of Ralph and son of John Newbery the explorer and merchant adventurer (see Hakluyt's *Voyages*) Stationer & publisher at the Ball in St. Paul's Churchyard, London.

NATHANIEL NEWBERY. 1616-1634. Printer & publisher.

NATHANIEL NEWBERY. 1634-53. Printer & publisher. Son of above.

THOMAS NEWBERY. 1653-1656. Printer & publisher.

WILLIAM NEWBERY. 1685-1701. Publisher.

JOHN NEWBERY. 1740-1766. Publisher, writer of children's books and associate of Oliver Goldsmith & Dr. Johnson at the Bible & Sun, St. Paul's Churchyard, London.

FRANCIS NEWBERY. 1766-1779. Nephew and successor of John Newbery.

EDMUND NEWBERY. 1781-1802. Publisher of, among many other works, a complete translation of the Works of Voltaire.

WILLIAM NEWBERY. 1782-1805. Publisher of Chap Books, 54 Upper Mary-le-bone St., Fitzroy Square.

NEWBERY & Co. 1857. Publishers of the Life of Right Hon. Viscount Palmerston. 28 Percy St., Rathbone Place.