

THE STATIONERS' COMPANY.

BY

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SINCE the foundation of the London and Middlesex Archæological Society, the Stationers' Company have had the pleasure of welcoming the Members here upon two occasions, first in 1860, when the late Mr. John Gough Nichols read an interesting paper which will be found in Vol. II of the Transactions, and secondly in 1881, when his observations on the history of the Company were supplemented by a paper which will be found in the 6th volume of the Transactions. I must therefore crave the indulgence of the elder members of the Society for some repetition in my remarks this evening of what has been stated previously. The Stationers' Company stands in somewhat a different position from many of the Livery Guilds in that it cannot boast of a *great* antiquity, but it has already attained a respectable age, having celebrated a few years since its 500th anniversary. Mr. Arber, in the introduction to the 1st volume of his valuable work, "The Registers of the Stationers' Company," has set out proof of the existence of the Company as a Society or Brotherhood of Textwriters in 1403, and it was not until 1557 that the Charter was obtained from the Crown incorporating the Company under the style of the Master and Keepers or Wardens of the Mistery or Art of a Stationer of the City of London. In the same year Sir Gilbert Dethick, Garter Knight, Principal King of Arms,

granted to the Company the arms they have hitherto borne, viz. : " Azure on a chevron an eagle volant with a diedem beetweenee two roses guels leved betweenee iii bookes clasped gold: in chiefe yssuinge out of a cloude the sonne beames gold a holy esprete the winges dysplaed silver with a diedem gold." No crest or supporters were ever granted to the Company; they were, however, gradually assumed in the 18th century and used for many years, but of late the assumption being unauthorised has been discouraged, the arms being usually engraved surrounded with the motto: " Verbum Domini Manet in Eternum," which has been in use since 1788.

The first Common Seal of the Company was recorded at the Heralds' College at the visitation of London in 1634, and the device is of considerable interest, " The figure of St. John with a nimbus round his head, his right hand raised in the act of blessing, whilst in his left he holds a cup from which is issuing the serpent of wisdom; at his feet is a shield of the arms of the Company of Stationers, on his right side stands an eagle holding in his beak an inkhorn and penes."

Having obtained the Charter of Incorporation, the Company next applied to the Court of Aldermen to be granted a livery, and in February, 1560, at the earnest suit and prayer of John Cawood and others, the right to use and wear a livery and liveryhood was granted to the Company, which thenceforth ranked amongst the Livery Companies of the City of London, and since that date every person admitted to the Livery or Clothing of the Company is in fact clothed with a livery gown of browne, blewe, and skerlett.

You will, I fear, be disappointed that I cannot give you a detailed account of the Company in its earlier days before the incorporation. It would, perhaps, not be difficult to compile an interesting account of what might have taken place in its early history from 1357 to 1557, but the composition would be too romantic to be acceptable in this Hall and to this assembly. The entire destruction of Stationers' Hall and its contents in 1666, puts the compiler of a history of the Company at a great disadvantage, for the early records of the Company were almost entirely destroyed by fire. Fortunately, the Clerk of the Company at that time resided in Clerkenwell, and had with him in his house at Clerkenwell Green the Master and Wardens' Account Book, which dates back to 1556, with a few other books which were saved.

Mr. Ames' volumes contain much information relating to the members of the Company before the incorporation, and the valuable publications of the Bibliographical Society are continually bringing to light useful information relating to early printers.

The first Hall of the Company of which we have any information was situate near Milk Street, and is believed to be on ground now occupied by a portion of Messrs. I. & R. Morley's extensive premises; but before the grant of the Charter the Company migrated to a building on the South-West side of St. Paul's Churchyard abutting on the property of the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's. The exact site of this Hall could probably be traced with the help of the ancient plans of the Chapter estate, as immediately in the rear of the building was a grass plot or piece of ground which the Company purchased of the trustees

for sale of the Dean and Chapter's land under the provisions of an Act of Parliament passed for that purpose.

The old Hall was converted into the "Feathers Tavern," and after the Great Fire was sold to Alderman Sir William Turner to provide funds for erecting the building in which we are now assembled.

It is evident that as the Company increased in number and importance greater accommodation was required, and in 1611 funds were subscribed to purchase of the Earl of Abergavenny and his son their town mansion, then known as Burgavenny House. This property, situate within the Ward of Farringdon Within, was bounded on the West by the City Wall, on the East by the garden to London House and Ave Mary Lane, on the South by the property of the Goldsmiths' Company and the Merchant Taylors' Company and St. Martin's, Ludgate, Parish Church, and on the North by the property of the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's. In the time of Edward II it had belonged to John, Duke of Britaine, Earl of Richmond, and subsequently passed to the Earls of Pembroke, and was for a time known as Pembroke's Inne until it became the residence of the Earl of Abergavenny. Apparently but slight alterations were made in the Earl's residence to adapt it for the purposes of the Company's trading business and for a Hall, and for nearly 40 years a very extensive publishing business was carried on there, until the old building was found so much decayed and out of repair that the annual dinner of the members of the Society was obliged to be held elsewhere, and funds were raised to defray the cost of rebuilding. But a few years elapsed before the Hall was entirely

destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666, and also a great mass of stock which was stored there, and was removed from there to the crypt of St. Paul's when the fire commenced, for safety, but without effect. No sooner, however, had the fire subsided, than steps were taken to raise funds to erect the present Hall, and a contract was entered into with Stephen Colledge, the Protestant joiner, to wainscot the "Hall with well-seasoned and well-matched wainscot, according to a model delivered in." That Colledge did his work well is evidenced by the present state of the wainscot, after upwards of two centuries' constant wear. Very slight alteration has been made in the Hall since its erection beyond moving a dais which was at the North end and inserting the present stained glass windows.

The screen at the South end of the Hall is well worth careful inspection, also the Court buffets or cupboards, now fixed on the South side of the steps leading from the Hall to the Court Room on the one side, and the Stock Room on the other side. These Court cupboards, originally considerably higher, have been cut down and bolted against the wainscot; they were formerly moveable, and stood behind the Master's chair on the dais, and in them was displayed the Company's plate. Around the wainscot of the Hall are hung the pavises or shields on which are painted the arms or family insignia of the members of the Court of Assistants; these shields were, upon State occasions, carried by Freemen of the Company in procession from the Hall to Blackfriars, when the Master, Wardens, and Livery proceeded up the river, and on embarkation were hung over the side of the

barge ; the Freemen were clad in long gowns of light blue flannel, with yellow facings, being the proper livery colours of the Company, according to their heraldic bearings. In the 16th and 17th centuries the river was the general way of communication to and from Lambeth and Westminster and the City, and the Master and Wardens were continually waiting upon His Grace of Canterbury, upon the business of the Company, at Lambeth, and to obtain his license to print almanacs and other books. Upon the occasion of going to Westminster with the new Lord Mayor, it was for many years the custom of the Company, whilst His Lordship was being presented to the Barons of the Exchequer, to row their barge across to Lambeth to pay their respects to their patron, who returned the compliment of sending his servants to the riverside with a hamper of wine to regale his guests. The Barge Master was an important personage, and on state occasions was decorated with a large silver badge bearing the arms of the Company.

The North window in the large Hall has been recently placed there, and was the gift of the late Mr. Joshua Whitehead Butterworth, F.S.A., a past Master of the Company ; it represents William Caxton presenting his first sheet to King Edward VI and his Queen, whilst around the bordure are seen the devices of several early printers, members of the Company. The windows on the West side of the Hall are memorials of Archbishop Cranmer, patron of the Company at the date of incorporation, St. Cecilia, in commemoration of St. Cecilia's feast, which was for many years held annually in the Hall, William Shakespeare, William Tyndale, and William Caxton.

William Caxton is believed to have been a member of the old Stationers' Company. Tyndale's translation of the Bible was a source of great profit to the Stationers' Company, and when the authorised version was compiled, the revisers met frequently at Stationers' Hall. The recent appeal of the Bodleian librarian for funds to repurchase the first folio of Shakespeare has brought prominently into notice the important connection of this Company with literature in the early part of the 17th century. In 1610 the Stationers' Company agreed with the University of Oxford to present a copy of every book printed by the Company to the University, and Sir Thomas Bodley was appointed by the University to receive the books. In accordance with this agreement, the Company, in 1623, sent to Oxford a copy of the first folio of Shakespeare, and this book has recently been found in the library of Mr. W. G. Turbutt, at Ogsten Hall, Derbyshire. In order to restore this book to the Bodleian Library, a sum of £3,000* is needed, and it is to be hoped Mr. Nicholson will be successful in collecting it. The agreement between the University of Oxford and the Stationers' Company was soon superseded by a statutory enactment requiring every printer to reserve three copies of the best and largest paper of every book now printed or reprinted by him, with additions, and before sale to deliver them to the Master of the Stationers' Company, to be delivered by him to the Keeper of His Majesty's Library and the Vice-Chancellor of the Universities, and a provision to this effect has been repeated in every subsequent

* This amount has since been secured, and the book will be returned to the Bodleian Library.

Copyright Act. But to return to the buildings, the Court Room adjoining this Hall on the West is of the same date as the Hall, but was enlarged at the end of the 18th century by the addition of the Card Room, which is built on the site of the old City Wall. The garden on the South side of the Court Room is the place where the heretical books which were seized by order of the ecclesiastical authorities and ordered to be burnt, were destroyed.

In the Court Room the Court meetings are held, and members are admitted to the freedom and livery, and the apprentices bound. In the printing trade, the ancient custom of binding apprentices is still largely followed ; each apprentice bound at Stationers' Hall receives from the Company a Bible and Prayer Book, and many of these books have been produced as valuable treasures 50 and 60 years afterwards. Formerly, all apprentices were bound as indoor apprentices for seven years, but a few years since, upon the application of the Court of this Company, the Court of Common Council passed an Act enabling outdoor apprentices to be bound for a shorter term in accordance with modern practice. The rules relating to binding apprentices were stringently enforced ; for many years, master printers alone were allowed to bind, but in 1664, Richard Ferbank, a journeyman printer, was allowed to take an apprentice, who, being lame in one of his hands, was incapable of exercising the mystery of printing, upon a promise to employ him in selling books. Applications to bind an apprentice without personal attendance at the Hall were refused, but in 1681, upon the special request of Samson Evans, a bookseller at Worcester and a

member of the Company, he was allowed to bind an apprentice at Worcester by indentures sent down to be sealed at Worcester.

An apprentice having served his time faithfully to his master, was entitled to the freedom of the Company upon payment of the fine and fees; admission could also be obtained by patrimony and by redemption or purchase, but in this Company it has never been the custom to admit any person to the freedom by redemption, unless connected with the trade of a stationer, printer, bookseller, or bookbinder, or a cognate trade. Authors have been rigidly excluded, but in 1647 the Court of Aldermen directed the Company to make one William Dugard free, and "he, being a deserving gentleman who may be helpful in correcting the Company's school books," was admitted without fees. Joseph Urquhart, a Quaker, was denied admission in 1690, as he refused to take the oath of office, and in the next century William Argair, an orange merchant, was refused the freedom, notwithstanding he had obtained an order from the Court of Aldermen for his admission; a few years later the freedom was refused to Mr. Robert Mylne, the successor of Sir Christopher Wren as Surveyor of St. Paul's Cathedral and Architect to the Company. Mr. Mylne suggested the motto on Sir Christopher's tomb, "*Si monumentum requiras circumspice,*" and was interred by the side of his distinguished predecessor.

Promotion from the freedom to the Livery was an honour frequently thrust upon members of the Company much against their will, and proceedings were continually threatened and taken against Freemen to

compel them to accept the honour and pay their fines ; amongst others, Jacob Tonson and Richard Bentley were to be sued "for the penalty of their contempt in refusing the clothing of the Company," but before process was issued "they submit and are received." Occasionally, members are suspended from the Livery. In 1634, Michael Sparkes was so treated, "He having stood in the pillory with Mr. Prynne by sentence of the Court of Star Chamber." For many years the qualification for the livery of one of the twelve Companies was the possession of property to the value of £1,000, and of the other Companies £500, and no journeyman in any trade or business was eligible. The livery gown was to be decently faced with fur, and no lace or embroidery was allowed. In 1635 an order was made that Assistants were to come to the Hall on Court days in ruff bands, and none of the Livery to presume to come in a falling band or other unseemly habit on pain of forfeiting 12*d.* Gowns were to be worn on the barge on Lord Mayor's day, and no children to be admitted.

From the Liverymen were chosen the members of the Court of Assistants, which constituted the governing body of the Company. The selection has usually fallen upon the senior members of the Livery, and for many years past an interval of about 40 years has elapsed between admission to the Freedom and admission to the Court of Assistants. The Master of the Company is elected annually, on the Saturday after St. Peter's day, and also two Wardens, styled the Upper and the Under Warden, whilst the two Renter Wardens, who are chosen from the junior liverymen, are elected on the 26th March. It is well known that

the Charter granted to the Stationers' Company by the Crown in 1557, was granted with the object of controlling the Press and creating a powerful engine for the suppression of literature distasteful to the Court and ecclesiastical authorities, at the same time it is equally clear that the Stationers were desirous of obtaining it for the purpose of advancing their trade, which was then increasing rapidly in extent and value.

For the protection of their members numerous rules and regulations had been made by the Brotherhood or Society of Text Writers, and a joint stock had been formed for the purpose of providing capital for multiplying copies of manuscripts; a record of these manuscripts and the proprietors was kept by the clerk of the society in what was styled the "Hall Book," and from this private regulation sprang the present law of copyright.

Thus, it will be seen that in this Company there were three separate and distinct interests, viz., the Company as a Corporation and Livery Guild, the trading partnership, and the Official Record of Literary Property.

By the terms of the Charter extensive powers were granted to the Master and Wardens over printers; and searchers were appointed to ascertain:

1. What every printer printed, the number of the impressions, and for whom.
2. How many apprentices every printer keeps, whether they are his own, or other men's, or whether he keeps any workmen who are neither apprentices, journeymen, nor brothers admitted.
3. Whether any be kept in work as a journeyman who is not free nor a brother of the Company.

4. How many journeymen every printer employs.
5. How many presses every printer employs.

In 1587 orders were made (amongst others):

1. That no formes of letter be kept standing to the prejudice of workmen.
2. That no book be printed to exceed the number of 1,250 or 1,500 at one impression, except four yearly impressions of the "Grammour," four yearly impressions of the "Accidence," all primers and catechisms.
3. All works on the nonpareil or brevier letters, which are not to exceed 2,500 or 3,000 at most. Excepting also the Statutes Proclamations with all other books belonging to Her Majesty's Printing Office, which are not to be limited, and excepting all calendars printed red and black, with all almanacs and prognostications.

That no apprentice be employed, either at composing or at the press, when any able honest man wanting work reasonably requires it, and that hereafter no more apprentices be taken into any printing house than are allowed by the decree of the Star Chamber. All controversies with workmen to be decided by the Master, Wardens and Assistants of the Company.

In 1595 the High Commissioners made an order that no book or pamphlet be printed without being licensed under the hand of the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London, and upon Valentine Symmes printing contrary to this order, the Master and Wardens seized his forme of letters and printing materials and melted the letters and then returned the metal. For a similar offence Edward Venge's press and letters were sawn to pieces and melted.

The activity of the Commissioners called forth protests from the Lord Mayor, whereupon the Archbishop wrote to his Lordship requesting him not to interfere in the searches and seizures of unlicensed books made by order of the High Commissioner. Books seized by order of the Archbishop of Canterbury or Bishop of London were brought to the Hall and damasked or burnt in the adjoining garden.

The freemen of the Company from time to time complained to the Master and Wardens of the numerous differences in the trade, and a Committee was appointed to treat about the conclusion of these differences.

The following general heads of these grievances as drawn up in the 17th century are not without interest at the present date :—

1. By the secret underminings and intruding of foreigners into the houses of noblemen and others.
2. By their public shop keeping, a privilege not granted to strangers in any part of the world.
3. By their keeping and encouraging none but foreign workmen.
4. By private printing and importing impressions of books not only injurious to property, but obnoxious to both Church and State.
5. By cutting, engraving and writing all sorts of scandalous pictures on cards and otherwise.
6. By haberdashers, brokers, stallkeepers, market higglers, street hawkers, vagrants and others who daily promote the sale of counterfeit impressions.

7. By the destruction of the whole trade of binding by inartificial slight and deceitful work.
8. By undermining the stationery trade in exposing for sale all sorts of paper defective both in number and goodness.

The number of presses was limited, and strict supervision kept over what issued from them, thus the printer to the Company of Parish Clerks was required to enter into a bond of £500 to print nothing on his press but the Weekly Bills of Mortality.* At this time numerous presses were battered and the letters melted by order of the Star Chamber.

Ordinances controlling printing were made by Parliament in 1643, but these were not effectual, and soon afterwards the table or Court of Assistants "remarking the great want of a law to restrain the exorbitances of printing, and to secure property in copies, and being informed that the Parliament before their adjournment had appointed a Committee for that purpose, of which Mr. Prynne is chairman, and a Bill having been presented to him, but nothing thereon done, Mr. Warden Crooke is earnestly desired to solicit the business with Mr. Prynne, or otherwise as occasion may offer." In the following year Mr. Warden Crooke was requested to speak with Sergeant Keeling concerning the Bill drawn up for printing, and prevail on him to press the Attorney General for despatch, also to move the Bishop of London to be procurable in forwarding its passing into an Act and to give such fees as he sees cause. The Wardens' intervention and judicious distribution of fees was effectual,

* A print of one of these Bills of Mortality printed by Ann Rivington can be seen in the vestibule.

and, in 1662, the Bill was passed into law. It was to be in force for two years only, but was renewed for a further term by 16 Car. 2, cap. 8. Shortly after the Bill received the Royal assent, Sir Edward Nicholas, Secretary of State to King Charles I and King Charles II, intimated that he expected his fees for two letters written by him and signed by His Majesty to the Parliament for passing the Act, and Mr. Crooke was directed to "present him with what was fitting." Presents were frequently voted to distinguished persons. In 1632 £10 was presented to Mr. Recorder Littleton (afterwards Lord Keeper and created Lord Littleton of Munslow), upon his being made Reader to the Temple, as a remembrance of the Company's love to him, and, in 1637, a gratuity of £20 was given to the King's Attorney "for his love and kindness to the Company in negotiating the new decree in the Star Chamber." In 1660 a copy of the Book of Martyrs of the best paper, ruled, bound in Turkey leather gilt with the King's arms stamped on it, was ordered to be provided and presented to His Most Excellent Majesty as a token of the Company's "duty and submission" to his royal person and government.* Many distinguished lawyers were retained for the Stationers, who were so continually involved in law suits that the Clerk of the Company was required to be one bred an Attorney. Sir Roger Cholmley, appointed Recorder

* This Book of Martyrs was a source of great profit to the Stationers' Company. A few years since an original copy in three volumes, black letter, was found in the Parish Church of Appleby, Westmorland, with the ring to which the chain was attached which fastened it to the reading desk. The book bears the inscription—"The gift of Richard More, Stationer of London, to the Parish Church of Aplebye, in Westmorland, 1632." More was a native of Appleby, who went to London and was apprenticed to Matthew Lownes, and afterwards carried on business in or near Fleet Street as a bookseller, and ultimately took a share in the Book of Martyrs.

of London in 1535, and afterwards Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, held a general retainer for many years ; also Sir Thomas Jones, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas 1683-92, Sir Heneage Finch, Speaker of the House of Commons, who was paid a retaining fee of 11s. per term, John Bradshaw the regicide, William Steele, afterwards appointed Lord Chancellor of Ireland, Sir Lislebone Ling, Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Edward Northy, Attorney General, Baron King, Lord Chancellor, Viscount Harcourt, Lord Chancellor, and Sir Dudley Ryder, Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench.

The duties cast upon the Master and Wardens by the High Commissioners were very onerous. Much time was spent in searching for illegal presses. George Wood, of Stepney, was a frequent offender, one press having been seized, he set up another one in Grub Street, so John Hamon's press in Petticoat Lane, being defaced in the presence of the Master, Wardens and Assistants, another was found a few days afterwards belonging to him in Shoreditch. Occasionally seizures appear to have been made in error, two presses taken in Duke's Place being restored to Roger Norton, and upon another occasion the Beadle of the Company was indicted in the Crown Office, when counsel advised the Company to pay a fine and not to plead against the King.

But the duties of the Company were not always so arduous. Upon all State occasions the Stationers took rank with the other Livery Guilds according to the directions of the Court of Aldermen or Common Council. In 1561 the Stationers were ranked next after the Poulters, but so many complaints were made

to the Court of Aldermen by different Companies concerning precedency that a Committee was chosen to hear these complaints, and the Stationers attended and complained that their Company was rated very high in assessments but very low in their standings and marchings. Some years afterwards a contest arose for precedency between the Companies of the two Sheriffs, when the Court of Aldermen declared that the Company of the Senior Sheriff should take precedency before that of the Junior Sheriff. Great dissatisfaction was, however, felt at Stationers' Hall with the rank allotted to the Company upon the occasion of processions through the City, but this was allayed when the Company purchased a State Barge, which was directed by the Court of Aldermen to lead the procession on Lord Mayor's day. The assessment towards pageants and public solemnities was a heavy burden, and when, in 1614, the Company was assessed at £200 towards a gratuity from the City to the King, the sum of £100 only was paid into the Chamber of London, and this was accepted. In 1632 the Company was called upon to contribute their proportion of a fine of £6,000, afterwards reduced to £1,000, which was imposed on the City for the murder of John Lambe by the populace in the streets of London on the 23rd June, 1628. Frequent loans were made to the King, and to meet these the plate had to be sold; in 1660 the City invited the King, the two dukes, his brothers, and both Houses of Parliament to dine at Guildhall on July 5th, and then called upon the Livery Guilds to lend £3,000 towards the expense; the Stationers were rated at £30, but the Court thinking the Company over-rated declined to lend more than £25.

For many years before the incorporation the Stationers had carried on a lucrative trade in printing and publishing. The capital or stock was subscribed by a limited number of members of the society, who appointed a committee of management, elected annually on the 1st March, to manage the affairs of the partnership. The work was put out amongst the partners, and the profits, after providing for the poor and widows of deceased members, was divided annually amongst the partners; separate accounts were kept for the different ventures, which were described thus: the English Stock, the Scotch Stock, the Irish Stock, the Latin Stock, the Bible Stock, the Ballad Stock, and of these the first-named has survived to the present day. The principal publications were hornbooks, A.B.C's, psalters, primers, almanacs, and later, school books.

The statutory duties relating to registration of copyright have increased very considerably of late years. In addition to the registration of all works coming within the legal definition of a book and the collection of copies for the public libraries, paintings, drawings and photographs have been registered at Stationers' Hall since 1862, and the number of these entries is very considerable. Although the Stationers' Company has long since ceased to exercise any of the powers over the trade conferred by the Charters and bye-laws, they discharge many useful functions, and on the present roll of members will be found representatives of most of the best known publishing and printing houses.