THE BRITISH BOOKMAKER.

Notable Bookmakers.

THE CHISWICK PRESS.

There is a saying, "happy is the nation that has no history." In applying this to a certain printing establishment we must perforce apply it in the reverse form, for proud indeed should be the firm of Messrs. Charles Whittingham & Co., of Tookes-court, Chancery-lane, London, of their reputation—the result of a century's work.

The Chiswick Press is one of the oldest of British printing houses, and their quaint title of "printers and book manufacturers" entitles them to a notice in this journal—representing as it does "bookmakers" of all shades and opinions. The founder of the firm, Charles Whittingham, settled in London about the end of last century, and the career of the firm has been one of uninterrupted success.

As our immediate object is to give an account of the rise and progress of this famous Press—its latter-day history being a matter of notoriety—we will touch on the subject as briefly as possible. For the sake of clearness it will be best at once to discriminate between the two Charles Whittinghams as:

Charles Whittingham I. (the uncle and founder) circa 1790—1830.

Charles Whittingham II. (the nephew) 1840—1876.

Towards the latter part of the first period there was some sort of partnership existing between the two, and in 1860, when the second Mr. Whittingham became less active, Mr. John Wilkins, his apprentice, and subsequently manager, was taken into partnership. When he died, in 1869, Mr. Wilkins' son, John Charles Wilkins, succeeded him in the firm at a later date. The partnership of Whittingham & Wilkins was, however, dissolved in the same year that Charles Whittingham II. died.

We are indebted very largely to the Athenæum of 1876 for many of the details now given of this famous Press.

Charles Whittingham I., the founder, was born on June 16th, 1757, at Calleddon, in the county of Warwick, and was apprenticed to Richard Bird, printer and bookseller, of Coventry, in the year 1779. He subsequently worked as a journeyman at Birmingham, and, on his arrival in London, at the office now Hansard's.

He commenced business on his own account in a small way in Fetter-lane about 1790, but a few years afterwards we find him in Dean-street in the same neighbourhood—the growth of business probably necessitating the removal. Early in this century he had another small establishment in Leather-lane which he kept going at the same time—a sure sign that he was prosperous. Still advancing, we find him removed a few years later to more commodious premises in Goswell-road.

Very frequently books may be picked up at second-hand bookstalls bearing his imprint of these dates with the different addresses attached.

In 1810 he started at Chiswick, taking the "High House" on the Mall. This mansion was used both as
THE CHISWICK PRESS
ESTABLISHED A CENTURY

LONDON
CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE
1890

TITLE-PAGE SHEWING CHISWICK PRESS BORDER AND PRESS-MARK.
character which it had never before attained... Is typographical and pictorial excellence the labour of the Chiswick Press have been unrivalled... In short, in every style of book-printing, from the diamond 6mio. to the large letterfolio, from the cheap novel to the costly historical volume, Mr. Whittingham was alike successful. In private life he was an amiable man, and his estimable qualities endeared him to his friends as closely as his ingenuity has recommended him to the public.” Such praise must have shown the very high appreciation with which his efforts on behalf of the craft and literature were received.

In 1840, Charles Whittingham II., the nephew, succeeded to the business. As before mentioned, he had had some sort of unwritten partnership with his uncle, for just before the decease of the latter books are to be found with the joint imprint of C. & C. Whittingham. The nephew had also managed the Tooks-court business at one time entirely on his own account. These premises at Tooks-court already possessed a history before they were occupied by the Whittinghams, for they had been previously held by Valpy, another printer of some note.

The second Charles Whittingham was born at Mitcham in Surrey, on October 30, 1795, and died April 21, 1876. He was apprenticed to his uncle at Chiswick, through the Stationers’ Company, and became a liverman of the Company in 1818.

About 1828 began his connection with that eminent bibliographer, William Pickering—a name revered in the annals of publishers and booksellers. These two men were continually in each other’s society—ever plotting and scheming some new idea in printing and publishing. According to the late Mr. Henry Stevens, it was their custom to meet and discuss the merits and points of all contemplated works. Books thus thought out, and with free scope given in their production, could not fail to be worthy of the time and study bestowed on them. It is to be regretted that nowadays greater care and consideration are not given to the making of books. In these days of steam and other innovations, a free hand is not always allowed the printer; he is seldom allowed to make any suggestion, having to obey implicitly the instructions of his employer, the publisher, therefore he is not always to blame for the bad taste so frequently seen in the get-up of modern books.

It was during this period that the Chiswick Press acquired such an unrivalled collection of ornamental borders, head and tail pieces, together with initial letters—a collection of original designs that no other printer in Europe could boast of either in number or excellence. Many of these were original and registered—some others adapted from the earliest and best printers of the Dutch and Italian schools. These designs were all engraved on wood, and the originals preserved for duplicating as required. The original woodcuts may perhaps some day form the nucleus of a museum similar to that of Plantin at Antwerp, for no other English firm is so rich in history or effects. Many of these ornaments were designed by Mr. Whittingham’s daughter. A few have been kindly lent for this article together with the red and black press-mark.
It was in 1843 that the revival of old-style printing took place, in which method the Chiswick Press has excelled so much—notwithstanding some other firms have attempted it at a later period. We quote from Mr. Talbot B. Reed's valuable book, "A History of Old English Letter-Foundries," (1887): "In 1843 a revival of the Caslon old-style letter took place under the following circumstances, which, as they initiated a new fashion in the trade generally, call for reference here. In the year 1843, Mr. Whittingham, of the in the same style, and eventually he was supplied with the complete series of all the other founts. Then followed a demand for old faces, which has continued up to the present time."

The book was immediately reprinted in a smaller size of type (pica). This edition has been erroneously considered to be the first printed in the old-style. All this occurred years before anyone else thought of taking up the new fashion, and to this day the Chiswick Press stands alone for its genuine old-style printing.

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Chiswick Press, waited upon Mr. Caslon to ask his aid in carrying out the then new idea of printing in appropriate type ‘The Diary of Lady Willoughby,’ a work of fiction, the period and diction of which were supposed to be of the reign of Charles I. The original matrices of the first William Caslon having been fortunately preserved, Mr. Caslon undertook to supply a small fount of Great Primer. So well was Mr. Whittingham satisfied with the result of his experiment, that he determined on printing other volumes

It was in 1859, owing to the increased demand, that Messrs. Miller & Richard commenced cutting their admirable series of old-style faces—a character of type somewhat lighter in face than Caslon’s. Since that date the use of that style of type has been almost universal for good bookwork.

Mr. Whittingham had several founts of type cut especially for him, the firm still holding the original punches and “strikes” or matrices, and the types are still in use. One of the special founts is a Caxton
black letter, which is considered by experts as the nearest approach to what Caxton himself used. Another of these is a curious roman type somewhat after the style of Froben, an early printer of Basle, that is, the letters, in type-founders' language, are cut on their back. In addition to their own fonts, Messrs. Caslon's old-face and Messrs. Miller & Richard's modernized old-style, they have a selection of French, Dutch, and Flemish types, which they have imported from time to time. With this unique collection of types they are placed in an almost unassailable position. We give here a few samples of old-style types in general use at the Chiswick Press, with their approximate dates.

Black letter, based on Caxton, 1477.
To Caxton is due the introduction of printing into this country, & Wynkyn

Black letter, based on Wynkyn de Worde, 1527.
To Caxton is due the introduction of printing into this country, and

Flamand, cut by Fleischm in 1743.
To Caxton is due the introduction of printing into this country,

Old face Roman, cut by Caslon in 1720.
To Caxton is due the introduction of printing into this country, and Wyn-

Old style Roman, cut by Miller & Richard since 1850.
To Caxton is due the introduction of printing into this country, and

It was only recently that the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone eulogised some of the old Pickering publications which were printed by Mr. Whittingham. He referred particularly to the Prayer Book, a series of folio volumes printed in black letter. Mr. Gladstone confesses that he is an admirer of the old-faced types, and we may rely on his judgment and taste in matters of printing.

At the first Arts and Crafts Exhibition, in 1888, many of the finest productions of the Chiswick Press, executed during Mr. Whittingham's lifetime, were shown, and were generally admired for their quaintness and thorough workmanship. At the same Exhibition, last year, more modern works were exhibited and equally admired. The éditions de luxe of both modern and old-style characters could hardly be surpassed anywhere for their beauty.

Probably the old account books of the Chiswick Press would disclose more royal, noble, and private customers than any other firm. It has been patronised by many of the learned societies, and the catalogues of private libraries it has printed from time to time would form a small library in themselves.

We understand that an interesting and comprehensive work is in preparation, which will embrace the biographies of the two Charles Whittinghams, together with the complete history and bibliography of the principal works printed at the Chiswick Press from the foundation to the death of the second Charles Whittingham in 1876—the later records probably being reserved for an appendix. The work will be amply illustrated with views, portraits, and specimens of old titles. An eminent and well-known scholar is engaged in the compilation. We had hoped to have secured the portraits of the founder and his nephew for this notice, but they are not yet obtainable, and we perhaps may be able to give them later on, if it be our privilege to review the work when published.

Mr. Whittingham had retired from any active part in the management for some years previous to his death on April 21st, 1876. He was buried at Kensal Green, by the side of his associate, William Pickering. The Athenæum of that date, in noticing his decease, speaks of him as "a man of taste and eminent printer," and later on the same journal writing of the Press, said: "The Chiswick Press has long held a recognized position in this country, and the reputation abroad of its many productions has largely contributed to the high standard of English printing during the last three-quarters of a century. Its books are as marked and distinct, perhaps, as those from the famous presses of the Alduses, the Stephenses, the Plantins, and the Elzevirs, or, in more recent times, of the presses of Baskerville in England, of Didot in France, of Ibarra in Spain, of Franklin in America, or of Bodoni in Italy." Coming down to the present time we find that Messrs. Whittingham still sustain their proud reputation, some of the finest books of the day being issued from their Press.

It is peculiarly apropos when we consider that the first Charles Whittingham was so celebrated for his woodcut printing that they should have just printed Mr. Linton's "Masters of Wood Engraving." This is, probably, one of the finest and most luxurious books of the year, and is a thorough example of good work—both from a literary and bookmaking point of view.

The management of the Press for the past eight years or more has been vested in Mr. C. T. Jacob, the author of several technical works. Mr. Jacob is an old apprentice of Mr. Whittingham's, and has been connected with the firm for very nearly twenty-five years. He has risen from the most humble position in a printing-office, and is well known in outside trade circles. He has now an assistant in the person of Mr. W. B. C. Bell, a son of Mr. John Bell, Mr. Jacob's predecessor in the management, who retired through failing health early in 1882, and who died in 1884, on the voyage home from New Zealand, which he had taken for the benefit of his health.

Mr. Jacob was born in London in 1853, and entered the Chiswick Press when little more than 12 years old. At that period there was no Factory Act, and sixty-three hours constituted his week's work. In working his way through the different departments, he made himself thoroughly proficient in every detail, and on a vacancy occurring in the counting-house he was in 1877 selected for the position, assisting in the