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**Our Portrait Gallery.**

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**JAMES KEW, LONDON.**



THE most difficult branch of the binder's art, the one requiring the most varied and comprehensive knowledge, with the ripest practical experience, is that of book cleaning and renovation, and amongst binders in general very little is known of the subject. Even amongst those who know the usual requirements for book cleaning, there often arises a difficulty with some particular stain which baffles all efforts to eradicate it, and added to this there are certain other demands made by book collectors, summed up in the term book restoration, including many peculiar optical illusions for the uninitiated, with which ordinary binders are quite powerless to cope. Missing parts, which if restored would give great value to a book, have to be found, and paper bearing the same watermark as that in the book has to be discovered, with many other demands quite apart from those usually made upon the binder. This work has been brought to the perfection of a fine art by one binder in particular, and it is to him we propose to introduce our readers.

James Kew was born in London on October 2nd, 1834, and being the son of a binder, he was, at the proper age, able to claim the trade without the usual form of legal indenture, commencing to learn it under Messrs. Clarke & Bedford in 1847. After being there for some time, he left to accept employment under Mr. White, of Pall Mall, who was the first bookseller to introduce a systematic trade in the rebinding of old books, and who kept workmen on his premises for the purpose. In 1851 he went to work for the late Josiah Westley, with whom he stopped until the bankruptcy of that firm, when he went back to White's for the remainder of his time. In 1853 he joined the then recently formed Society of

Day Working Bookbinders, but did not stay long in London, being drawn away to Cambridge by an offer from Messrs. Macmillan. While there, Messrs. Holloway, of Bedford-street, Covent-garden, sent for him, and he entered their service, remaining with them till 1859, when he accepted an offer from the late Robert Riviere. It was in the house of that celebrated binder that he first began to take an interest in the cleaning and mending of old work, and to make

himself proficient, he commenced to practice at home, at the same time attending a course of lectures on chemistry delivered at the School of Mines, Jermyn-street. The result of assiduous study, and the opportunities of practice in Mr. Riviere's shop, brought him under the notice of Mr. Quaritch, who, in a lecture at the Society of Arts, spoke of him as the only one out of all the binders of London who had shown any real ability in this branch of the art.

While at Mr. Riviere's, Mr. Kew was sent to the Public Record office, where he was engaged for about four months in cleaning and restoring the Domesday Books, which are such precious volumes that they were not allowed out of the premises, and all the tools and presses required had to be taken and set up in the building. At the time of the marriage of the Prince of Wales with Princess Alexandra of Denmark,

a copy of every paper containing any record of the event was preserved, and these were all placed in Mr. Kew's hands to split and mount in volumes made for the purpose, a piece of work upon which His Royal Highness complimented Mr. Kew very highly. Later on, he was sent with the late Mr. J. Starie down to Hughendon, the residence of the late Earl of Beaconsfield to restore and bind some valuable books in that gentleman's library, and Mr. Disraeli

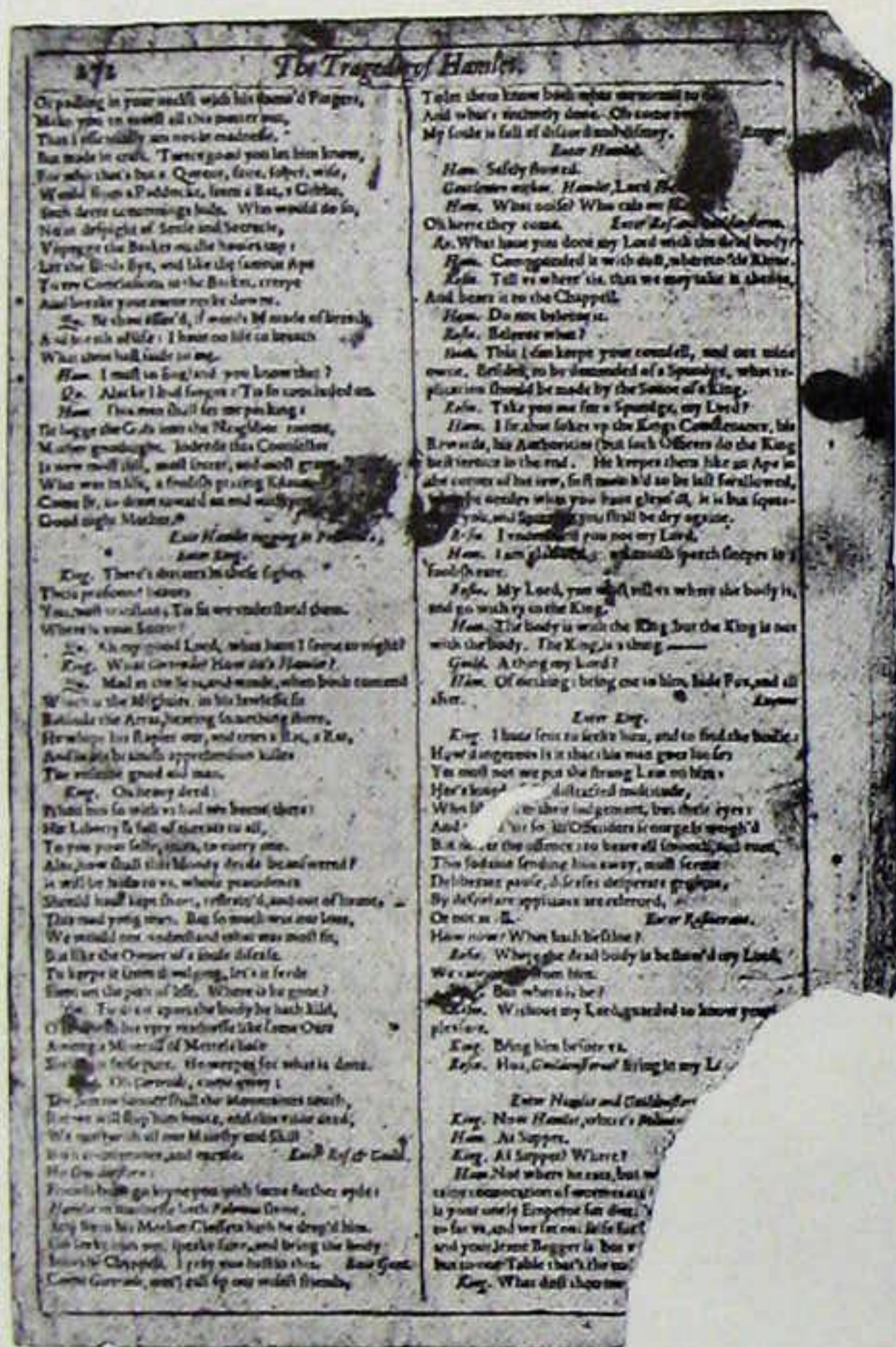


JAMES KEW.

would often walk into the apartment reserved for the work, early in the morning, to chat over books and processes with the workmen engaged.

These were a few of the principal events of his life while with Mr. Riviere, and prior to his starting in business for himself some ten years ago. Since that time he has worked for some of the world's most famous bibliophiles, as well as for binders in the trade, and many of the most rare and priceless works known to the book world have passed through his hands.

When we looked in at his little workshop at No. 14 Lisle-street, Leicester-square, we found him literally up to his eyebrows in a huge assortment of litter, every piece of which was valuable to him, though we might have hesitated if asked to give a shilling for the



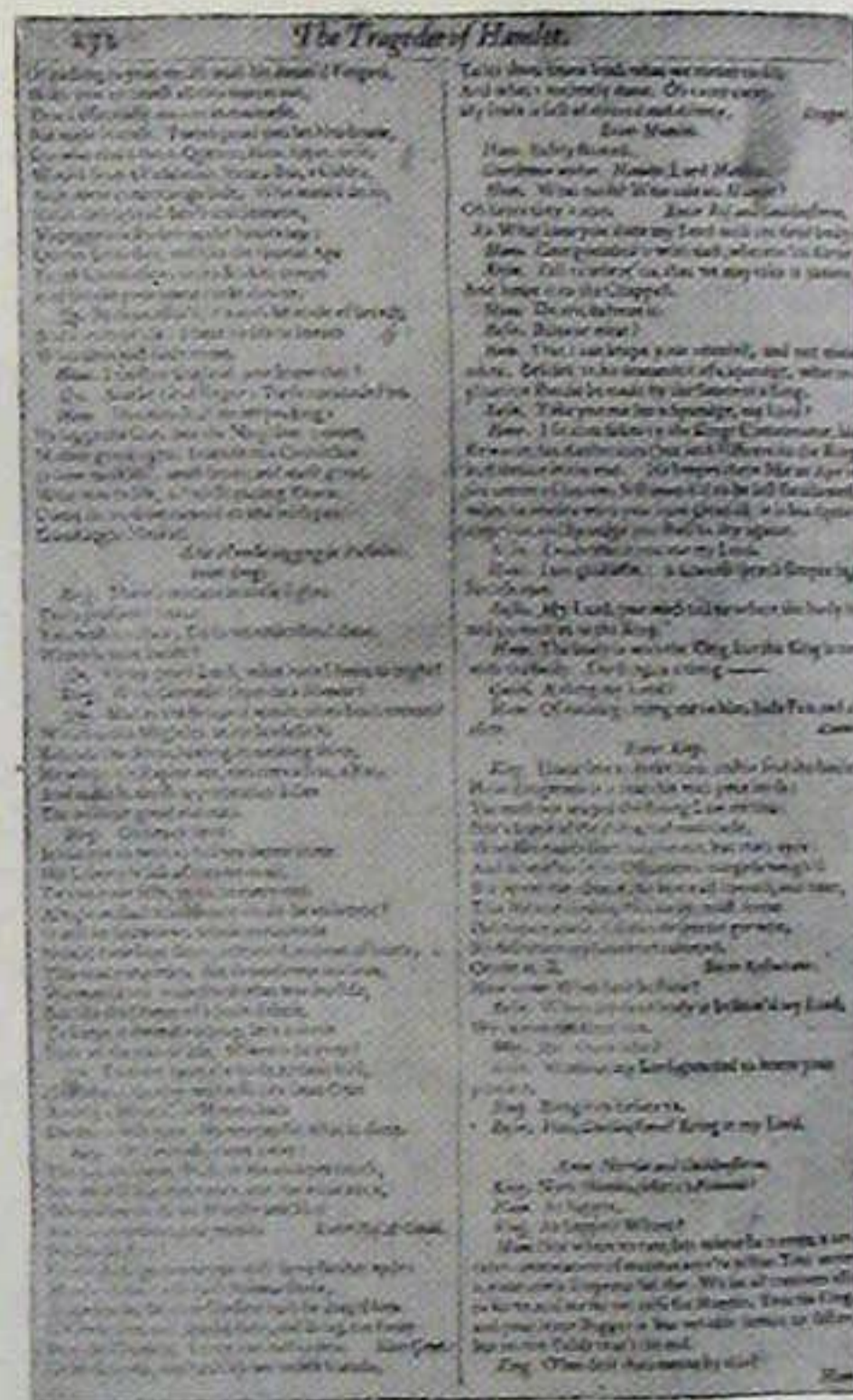
1.—ORIGINAL.

lot: bits of old maps, proclamations and broadsides, fragments of every conceivable variety of paper, and printed in a bewildering variety of type. This is his stock-in-trade; his plant, a few benches and shelves, with baths, and long lines to hang the sheets on while drying; his tools, an old knife or two, scissors, paste brush, and folder; and over them his own head. It is the head which is worth the most; price not known, as he declines to sell.

It is a queer business this, demanding an enormous consumption of time and exemplary patience and perseverance. Here is a book with torn and tattered margins which must be mended with paper of the same texture and hue. All around are hundreds of parts of volumes which may have to be ransacked all through to find some suitable piece, old volumes

bought up simply for the sake of the profuse margins, which will yield good sized strips of the sort of paper desired. Another book is filled with stains of many varieties which are to be taken out, and which will require several different modes of treatment, especially as we find different kinds of paper used in the make up of the book. In another, worms have been burrowing and revelling in the havoc they have made; these must be filled up and the print restored.

One job Mr. Kew had in hand was a volume of the first folio edition of Shakespeare, in which there were several leaves badly torn, badly worn, stained, and worm-eaten. Now, what could the ordinary binder do with a book made incomplete by the loss of several corners of the sheets? He would be helpless. Mr. Kew, however, has a number of pages of this and other precious works, and out of his stores he finds material wherewith to restore the part destroyed.



2.—RESTORED.

We regret that our photographer has reproduced these pages in different sizes.

He has kindly given us permission to reproduce in reduced form one page of a leaf from this book, showing it as it came to him, and in its restored form. It is, perhaps, not one of his best efforts, but it was one handy, and those who know the work will know how poor the paper is to handle and clean.

Sometimes one page of a book will be disfigured beyond all possibility of cleansing, then another leaf must be found; the old one is then split and preserved for some other job, to be cut up perchance for the sake of a word here or a letter or two there. At times thousands of leaves of printed matter have to be looked through for a few letters of a particular type, which have then to be split off, and mounted; or some old watermark must be found to complete one on the paper of a damaged book.

Many peculiar processes have to be employed to complete some works. "I must not tell you all the

