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BOOKS FROM THE VALE PRESS

By JAMES HUMPHRY III

DR. Edward Francis Stevens, Colby '89, long a friend and benefactor of the Colby Library, established some years ago (1939) what has now grown into a distinguished Book Arts Collection. In 1944 Mr. N. Orwin Rush, then librarian of the college, reported in the *Colby Alumnus* that "through Dr. Stevens' continuing support (by gifts from his well-stocked personal library) and his wise counsel, the Collection has grown until it has become one of the Library's outstanding features. In the five short years since the inception of the Colby Book Arts Collection, it has proved to be an element of aesthetic educational influence with students."

Among the titles Dr. Stevens presented to the Library for the Book Arts Collection was H. H. Sparling's *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris*. This book gives an excellent description of the work of the famous Kelmscott Press established by Morris in 1891. With this as a basis and a stimulus, the fifty-three books produced by this press were gradually acquired, by gift and by purchase, until, in May, 1950, as readers of this QUARTERLY will remember, the Library was able to announce the completion of its Kelmscott Press Collection.

For our students in the Book Arts and for others interested in the renaissance of fine printing, we began some years ago in a modest way to acquire the books produced by one of the successors of the Kelmscott Press, namely the Vale Press, operated and supervised by Morris's disciple, Charles Ricketts. He began the production of Vale Press books in 1896, the year of Morris's death. Charles Ricketts was as conservative as William Morris, as far as limiting the number of copies of his publications is concerned. In most cases Ricketts produced only 210 copies of

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each title; his largest edition was the two-volume Tennyson: 320 copies. Of *The Centaur* he printed only 150 copies. For this reason very few libraries can ever hope to own complete sets of the Vale Press books. Because of this fact, we feel it ought to be helpful to know just where, at least throughout New England, copies may be seen. We are happy to be able to report that Colby College now owns a complete set of the books produced at the Vale Press. The meaning of the phrase, "produced at the Vale Press," should be kept clearly in mind: the actual printing was done at the Ballantyne Press under the direct supervision of Charles Ricketts, and "Vale Press" was merely the title for the publishing firm of Hacon & Ricketts.

I therefore give a list of the Vale Press books and append to it such information as I have been able to gather about the whereabouts of copies in New England libraries. In the following bibliography the Vale books are arranged in chronological order and I use the numbering given in Will Ransom's *Private Presses and their Books*. The production of the Vale books covers a period of nearly eight years, from 1896 to 1904.

1. John Milton: *Early Poems*, edited by Charles Sturt, [1896]. Frontispiece by Charles Ricketts. Of the 310 copies printed, there are now six in New England: in the Boston Public Library, at COLBY, Connecticut College, Harvard, Smith, and Wesleyan. The Colby copy is bound in a beautiful and appropriately decorated brown morocco binding by the well-known London bookbinder Zaehnsdorf.

2. Walter Savage Landor: *Epicurus, Leontion and Ter-nissa*, [1896]. Title-page border in red; bound in gray paper. Of the 210 copies printed, there are now three in New England: at COLBY, Harvard, and Yale.

3. Sir John Suckling: *Poems*, edited by John Gray, 1896. This was the book on which Frederick W. Goudy stumbled in McClurg's bookstore in Chicago, and in its beauty found the impetus and inspiration that led, eventually, to Gou-

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dy's establishing (in 1903) the Village Press, which has sometimes been called (erroneously) the "oldest" private press in America. Of the 310 copies printed, there are now three in New England, at COLBY, Dartmouth, and Harvard.

4. John Gray: *Spiritual Poems*, translated from a variety of authors, 1896. Frontispiece and border by Ricketts. Bound in gray paper. Of the 210 copies printed, there are now three in New England, at the Boston Athenæum, COLBY, and Harvard.

5. William Shakespeare: *The Passionate Pilgrim and The Songs in the Plays*, edited by T. S. Moore, 1896. With a picture and border by Charles Ricketts. Bound with bluish-gray paper. Of 310 copies, there are only two in New England, at COLBY and Harvard.

6. Michael Drayton: *Nymphidia, and the Muses Elizium*, edited by John Gray, 1896. Cream-colored spine; boards covered with pink-colored paper with a green animal-figure. Of 210 copies there are now three in New England, at COLBY, Dartmouth, and Harvard.

7. Thomas Campion: *Fifty Songs*, edited by John Gray, 1896. Decorated-paper boards; blue-paper spine. Of 210 copies, there are now only three in New England, in the Boston Public Library, at COLBY, and at Wellesley College.

8. Matthew Arnold: *Empedocles on Etna*, 1896. Gray-paper boards. The first page of the text has a border in red. Of the 210 copies printed, there is only one in New England: at COLBY.

9. William Blake: *The Book of Thel, Songs of Innocence, and Songs of Experience*, 1897. Frontispiece and title-page double border by Ricketts; gray-paper binding. Of the 210 copies printed, five are now in New England, at COLBY, Harvard, Trinity, Wellesley, and Yale.

10. Michael Field: *Fair Rosamund*, 1897. Miss Katherine Harris Bradley and Miss Edith Emma Cooper had com-

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bined to use the pen-name "Michael Field," some years earlier, e.g., in *Brutus Ultor* (London, Bell, 1886), of which Robert Browning had a copy. Charles J. Holmes refers (in his *Reminiscences*, 1936, p. 175) to "the charming ladies who gained a well-merited poetic recognition as 'Michael Field' and lost it when the critics learned their sex and plurality." Of the 210 copies of *Fair Rosamund* printed by Ricketts, there are now three in New England, in the Boston Public Library, at COLBY, and at Harvard.

11. Henry Vaughan: *Sacred Poems*, edited by Charles Ricketts, 1897. Title-page border by Ricketts. "Note the cruciform colophon." Bound in gray paper. Of 210 copies, there are four in New England, at COLBY, Harvard, Smith, and Yale.

12. Henry Constable: *Poems and Sonnets*, edited by John Gray, 1897. Gray-paper spine; boards covered with blue paper with red figure. Of 210 copies printed, four are now in New England, at COLBY, Harvard, Smith, and Yale.

13. William Adlington: *The Marriage of Cupid and Psyche*, translated from the Latin of Lucius Apuleius; illustrations by Charles Ricketts, 1897. Two copies were printed on vellum, one of which was destroyed by fire. Of the 210 copies on paper, only two have reached New England libraries, at COLBY and Harvard.

14. Elizabeth Barrett Browning: *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, 1897. Eight copies were printed on vellum and 300 on paper. Of these only two copies (on paper) have reached New England libraries, at COLBY and at Harvard. The Colby copy has been specially bound in blue-green calf by (or perhaps for) John Bumpus, the London bookseller.

15. Sir Philip Sidney: *Sonnets*, 1898. Gray-paper spine; covers with green figured paper. "The engraving of such borders as . . . the border to the *Sonnets* of Sidney . . . represents the labour of three weeks or a month." The original block was destroyed in a Ballantyne fire in 1899. Eight copies were printed on vellum. Of the 210 copies on paper,

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three have reached New England, at COLBY, Dartmouth, and Harvard.

16. Charles Ricketts and Lucien Pissarro: *De la Typographie et de l'harmonie de la page imprimée. Et William Morris et son Influence*, 1898. "This pamphlet was to have been printed by Pissarro," who founded the Eragny Press, in the early books of which the *Vale* type was used; but because of Pissarro's ill-health, only the first eight pages were set up by him. The book was written for a French publisher, Floury, of Paris. It contains two essays, which have (apparently) never appeared in English. The COLBY LIBRARY QUARTERLY, therefore, plans to present English translations of these essays in two future issues—translations made by Professor Richard K. Kellenberger of Colby. Ten copies of this book were printed on vellum, of which Harvard has one. Of the 250 copies printed on paper, five are now in New England, in the Boston Public Library, and at COLBY, Harvard, Smith, and Yale.

17. Thomas Chatterton: *The Rowley Poems*, edited by R. Steele. Two volumes, 1898. "The Briony border with its elaborate tendrils, which decorates the volumes of Chatterton, . . . represents the labour of three weeks or a month." The block was burnt in a fire at the Ballantyne Press in 1899. Eight copies were printed on vellum, of which Harvard has one. Of 210 copies on paper, six are now in New England, at the Boston Athenæum, COLBY, Harvard, Wellesley, Williams (Chapin Library), and Yale.

18. Michael Field: *The World at Auction*, 1898. This is the first *Vale* book which contains half borders. "One purely Renaissance border is an attempt on my part to express admiration for the forgotten designer of the *Dream* of Poliphilus, printed in Venice . . . about 1493." Two copies were printed on vellum. Of 210 copies on paper, four are now in New England, at Boston Public Library, COLBY, Harvard, and Yale.

19. P. B. Shelley: *Lyrical Poems*, 1898. Eight copies on

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vellum. Of the 210 copies printed on paper, the COLBY copy (in red leather binding executed by Zaehnsdorf) is the only one in New England.

20. John Keats: *Poems*, edited by Charles J. Holmes. Two volumes, 1898. "Some very elaborate initials . . . were used in the Keats volumes only." Eight copies on vellum, of which Harvard has one; of the 217 (Ransom says 210) copies on paper, only two have reached New England libraries, at COLBY and at Harvard.

21. D. G. Rossetti: *The Blessed Damozel*, 1899. Ten copies on vellum, of which Harvard has one; of 310 copies on paper, only one has reached New England, at COLBY.

22. William Blake: *Poetical Sketches*, 1899. Gray paper-covered boards; frontispiece and title-page double-border by Charles Ricketts. Eight copies on vellum. Of the 210 copies on paper, there are now three in New England, at COLBY, Trinity, and Yale.

23. S. T. Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1899. This is the first Vale book which contains a piece of Latin. It was planned as a Centenary Edition, in commemoration of the first appearance of the poem in *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. Ten copies were printed on vellum, of which Harvard has one. Of the 210 copies on paper, only one has reached New England, at COLBY.

24. D. G. Rossetti: *Hand and Soul*, 1899. Ten copies on vellum. Of the 210 copies on paper, only two have reached New England, at Clark University and at COLBY.

25. Charles Ricketts: *A Defence of the Revival of Printing*, 1899. This pamphlet, so Ricketts explained in 1904, "was intended to refute some quite unimportant criticisms of my books. . . . I now regret the personal note of this . . . pamphlet." Ten copies were printed on vellum. Of the 250 copies on paper, four are now in New England, in the Boston Public Library, at COLBY, Harvard, and Yale.

26. Robert Browning: *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, 1899. "The bulk of the vellum edition was burnt in the fire

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at the Ballantyne Press. The surviving copies were bound and a flame-shaped tool added to the design of the bindings." Colby has one of these vellum bindings—the only one in New England. Yale has one of the 210 copies on paper.

27. William Shakespeare: *Sonnets*, edited by T. S. Moore, 1899. Two title-pages. White buckram. Of 210 copies, three are now in New England, at COLBY, Harvard, and Yale.

28. Maurice de Guerin: *The Centaur and the Bacchante*, translated from the French by T. S. Moore, 1899. Illustrated by five woodcuts by T. S. Moore. "The original wood blocks of these exquisite . . . designs were burnt at the printers'." Of 150 copies, three are now in New England, at COLBY, Harvard, and Yale.

29a. Alfred Tennyson: *Lyric Poems*, 1900. Ten copies on vellum. Of 320 copies on paper, there are only two in New England, at COLBY and at Harvard.

29b. Alfred Tennyson: *In Memoriam*, 1900. Ten copies on vellum. Of the 320 copies printed on paper, there are now six in New England, at Brown, Clark, COLBY, Harvard, Smith, and Yale.

30. John Addington Symonds: *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, 1900. Two volumes. Ten copies on vellum. Of the 300 copies printed on paper, there are now five in New England, at Brown, COLBY, Harvard, Smith, and Yale.

31. Michael Field: *The Race of Leaves*, 1901. Ten copies on vellum. 280 copies on paper, of which four have reached New England, at Boston Public Library, COLBY, Harvard, and Yale.

32. Omar Khayyam: *The Rubaiyat*, translated by Edward FitzGerald, 1901. With a frontispiece by Charles Ricketts. The quatrains are printed entirely in capital letters, "Vale" type. Colophon in red. Bound in blue-paper boards, with linen spine. Ten copies on vellum. 310 copies on paper, of which only two have reached New England, at COLBY and Dartmouth.

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33. Lucius Apuleius: *De Cupidinis et Psyche Amoribus*, 1901. Edited by C. J. Holmes. 310 copies, of which four have reached New England, at COLBY, Dartmouth, Harvard, and Smith.

34. Percy Bysshe Shelley: *Poems*. Three volumes, 1901. White buckram. 310 copies; ten on vellum. The COLBY set (on paper) is the only one in New England.

35. Sir Thomas Browne: *Religio Medici, Christian Morals and Other Essays*. Edited by C. J. Holmes, 1902. Imperial octavo. *Ex libris*: Thomas B. Mosher. Charles J. Holmes says (p. 175 of his *Reminiscences*): "The decorations based upon the wild bryony, the hop, the honeysuckle, the rose, the violet and the vine (especially on the larger scale of his *Sir Thomas Browne*) have a sparkling colour and a natural grace no less personal to Ricketts than the classical dignity of the designs which introduce the Shakespeare." Ten copies on vellum; 310 on paper, of which only four have reached New England, at COLBY, Harvard, Middlebury, and Yale.

36. Charles Ricketts: *A Catalogue of Mr. Shannon's Lithographs*, with prefatory note, 1902. (Library of Congress card erroneously says "1910?") *Ex libris*: T. B. Mosher. Two copies on vellum, of which Harvard has one; 200 copies on paper, of which only three have reached New England, at COLBY, Trinity, and Yale.

37. William Wordsworth: *Poems*, edited by T. Sturge Moore, 1902. Of 310 copies, only three have reached New England, at COLBY, Dartmouth, and Yale.

38. *Ecclesiastes; or the Preacher, and The Song of Solomon*, 1902. This is the first Vale Press book printed with the "King's" type. Ten copies on vellum; 300 on paper, of which five are now in New England, at COLBY, Dartmouth, Harvard, Trinity, and Yale.

39. William Meinhold: *The Amber Witch*, translated from the German by Lady Duff Gordon, 1903. "Uniform with the Kelmscott Press edition of *Sidonia the Sorceress*,"

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printed by Morris in 1893. Ten copies on vellum, of which Harvard has one; 300 copies on paper, of which only two are in New England, in the Boston Public Library and at COLBY.

40. *The Parables from the Gospels*, with ten illustrations designed and engraved on wood by Charles Ricketts, 1903. Ten on vellum, of which Harvard has one; 310 copies on paper, of which only three are in New England, at COLBY, Dartmouth, and Yale.

41. Michael Field: *Julia Domna*, 1903. Ten copies on vellum, of which Harvard has one. 240 copies on paper, of which four are in New England, at COLBY, Dartmouth, Harvard, and Yale.

42. King James I: *The Kingis Quair*, edited by Robert Steele, 1903. In "The King's Fount" type. Colophon in red. Bound in blue paper, with linen spine. Ten on vellum; of the 260 copies on paper, there are six in New England, at Amherst, COLBY, Dartmouth, Harvard, Smith, and Yale.

43. T. Sturge Moore: *Danae*, 1903. Printed in the King's fount; this is "the last book published by Hacon and Ricketts." Ten on vellum. 230 copies on paper, of which there are four in New England, at COLBY, Dartmouth, Harvard, and Yale.

44. William Shakespeare: *Works*. Edited by T. Sturge Moore. 39 volumes, green cloth, 1900-1903. "Avon" type. "The Avon fount . . . is one of the most handsome and readable of modern types; it is a pity that it could not be excepted from the general destruction" [which Ricketts decreed for all the Vale Press types].—Charles J. Holmes. One of the titles, *King Henry VIII*, in this set of 39 volumes, was inadvertently omitted by Ricketts in his *Bibliography*, 1904. 310 copies printed; four now in New England, at Boston Public Library, COLBY, Dartmouth, and Harvard.

45. Christopher Marlowe: *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, edited by T. Sturge Moore, 1903. Printed for the bene-

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fit of the Society of Romantic Players. Bound in green cloth uniform with the Shakespeare set. 310 copies, of which there are now four in New England, at Brown, COLBY, Harvard, and Yale.

46. Charles Ricketts: *A Bibliography of the Books Issued by Hacon and Ricketts* at the Vale Press, 1904. With a frontispiece engraved by Charles Ricketts. Ten copies on vellum; 250 on paper of which there are now eight in New England libraries, at Boston Public Library, COLBY, Dartmouth, Harvard, Haverhill Public Library, Wellesley, Williams (Chapin Library), and Yale.

SUMMARY

of VALE PRESS Titles in New England Libraries

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----|--------------------------|---|
| COLBY COLLEGE | 46 | Clark University | 2 |
| Harvard University | 37 | Williams College (Chapin | |
| Yale University | 24 | Library) | 2 |
| Dartmouth College | 13 | Amherst College | 1 |
| Boston Public Library | 10 | Connecticut College | 1 |
| Smith College | 7 | Haverhill Public Library | 1 |
| Trinity College | 4 | Middlebury College | 1 |
| Wellesley College | 4 | Wesleyan University | 1 |
| Brown University | 3 | Other New England Li- | |
| Boston Athenæum | 2 | braries | 0 |

DESIDERATA

Now that Colby is equipped with copies of all the Vale Press books, won't some good friend provide us with copies of Charles Ricketts's two "pre-Vale volumes"? These two were printed in commercial founts, before Ricketts had designed the "Vale" type; and they were published by Elkin Mathews & John Lane, *not* by Hacon & Ricketts. At present, Colby has neither of these volumes: (1) *Daphnis and Chloë*, translated by George Thornley, 1893; and (2) *Hero and Leander*, by Christopher Marlowe and George Chapman, 1894.