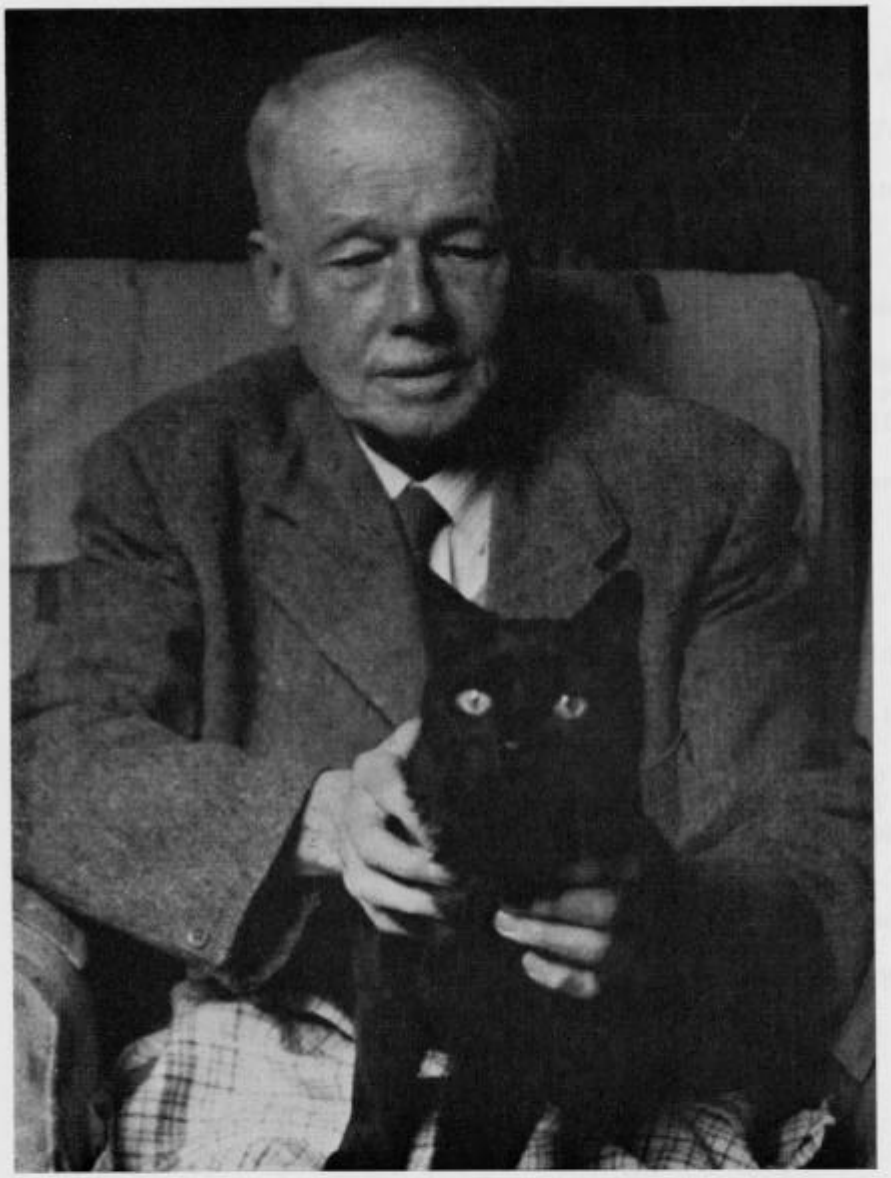
PLATE XXVII



VICTOR SCHOLDERER, C.B.E.

VICTOR SCHOLDERER

1880–1971

ANY suggestion that Victor Scholderer was a 'man of one book' would be completely misleading, and an insult to his sensitivity and his broad cultural interests, yet he did spend some seventy years, as near as makes no matter, in the British Museum service, working on one book, the *Catalogue of Books printed in the XV Century*. It is a tribute to the man and to the liveliness of his intellect, that this exceedingly long stint on one exacting job did not in any way dim his zest for life or his sense of humour or his humanity. In his late sixties he found great joy in being addressed by his younger colleagues as Uncle Victor—and Uncle Victor he remained to a widening circle of colleagues until his death in September 1971. This may have been a reflection of his desire to get away from his own intrinsic detachment and from the loneliness of the long-distance specialist cataloguer. I remember many years ago being touched by his expression of pleasure that I had got away from the formal J. V. Scholderer and addressed him in notes and memoranda as Victor Scholderer—a little later on, of course, as Victor alone.

Scholderer established himself as a world figure in his chosen field of activity, yet, as has been common and traditional in the Department of Printed Books in the British Museum, very few of its newly appointed assistants ever *chose* the field they were to work in: they were, after a period of apprenticeship to the routine work of the library, allotted to tasks for which their natural aptitudes and education seemed to fit them. Scholderer was no exception to this general rule, but in his case fate seems to have intervened. He entered the British Museum in June 1904, to fill a vacancy caused by the death in 1903 of the great incunabulist, Robert Proctor, and in view of his later commitment to the study of the Museum's incunabula, this succession seems almost to have had a prophetic significance.

Scholderer gives his own account of his first day in the British Museum, in the slim volume of his *Reminiscences*,[1] published on his ninetieth birthday in 1970.

[1] *Reminiscences by Victor Scholderer*. Amsterdam: Van Gendt & Co. 9 October 1970. All the quotations in this article are, unless otherwise specified, taken from this book.

I took up my new duties on 13 June 1904. . . . I have a lasting recollection of a group of colleagues gathering round the new arrival to introduce themselves, in what was then the Catalogue Room at the east end of the building. Those who impressed me most at first sight were F. D. Sladen, a very gentlemanly man, thoroughly *bien pensant* and utterly amiable; his contrast, the Irishman Philip Wilson, wild-looking and unkempt, with whom I got on better than did some; Raffles Tucker, whose often proclaimed hankering after the big stick in domestic and public affairs belied his great good nature, and who wrote humorous verse with extreme undergraduate skill; and Leonard Wharton, a nephew, I believe, of Wharton the translator of Sappho, known to me since my Colet Court days, of odd appearance and equally odd ways, in whom there was no guile. Presently Sladen took me off to assign me a seat in the so-called First Supplementary Room and to induct me into the art of cataloguing copyright books, the first barrowload of which rather scared me. Then Tucker came along to invite me to join him and some others at lunch in the local Express Dairy—a friendly gesture indeed; we were companioned by the establishment's black cat which Tucker, like myself a 'philaelure' in grain, insisted on nursing on his lap during the meal (it once succeeded in snatching his chop from the plate, to the enormous amusement of the waitresses). Later in the day I was summoned to appear before the Director, Sir Edward Maunde-Thompson, who asked me whether I was 'an arts man', and when, not quite understanding what this meant but guided by the tone of his voice, I denied it, he said that he was glad to hear it, as too many of the staff wasted their time on music and such-like flummery. This was quite in character, as Sir Edward was very much of the old school, always wearing a silk hat, insisting on the rest of us raising hats when we passed him, and having vetoed the provision of hot water in the washing-rooms as a new-fangled luxury.

Scholderer's apprenticeship to the art of cataloguing copyright books did not last very long; within a very short time, A. W. Pollard, whom he had known through his family before he came to the Museum, took him up and explained to him the mysteries of the 'full-dress *Catalogue* of incunabula, which the Trustees had sanctioned shortly before the death of Robert Proctor in 1903 and of which Pollard was in charge'. He soon, in his own words, 'decided that incunabula were what I must work on for my living'. As this task was to last him for the rest of his life, and indeed to dominate his interests and activities, it is fitting that something be said to explain the importance and prestige attaching to it and the challenging intellectual qualities it called for. These are summarized in characteristically forthright fashion by Sir Walter Greg in 1942:

So the cataloguer, beginning with enumeration and description, is forced by the nature of his work to become the student of everything that affects either the original fashioning or the subsequent fortunes of the books that come within his purview; and if he is philosophically minded he must come in the end to realise that it is this life-history of books that is the true study of the bibliographer.

This, as I see it, is how the study of fifteenth-century books—and the same methods have, of course, been in some measure extended to later periods—has penetrated to the heart of the subject. For in the ultimate resort the object of bibliographical study is, I believe, to reconstruct for each particular book the history of its life, to make it reveal in its most intimate detail the story of its birth and adventures as the material vehicle of the living word. As an extension of this follows the investigation of the methods of production in general and of the conditions of survival. In setting this aim before it, bibliography definitely passed from the dilettante stage to the technical. And it was the work of the incunabulists, and of those who followed their lead, that transformed bibliography from a study the main interest of which was artistic to one governed by the methods of scientific enquiry.[1]

Books printed in the fifty years following the invention of printing, i.e. before 1501, have always been prized for their early date, their rarity, and in many cases their great aesthetic appeal, and have attracted the attention of collectors and scholars. They display the very individual characteristics of their printers, in the types used and the setting and the layout of the page, and it has been found that by studying these characteristics it is usually possible to make useful deductions about the place of individual books in a printer's total production and hence their approximate dates; in the numerous cases where books contain no indication of the printer or even place of production, it is often possible, using the same means, to assign a book to a particular printer and place of production. Important stages in the study of these books were marked by William Blades's *Life and Typography of William Caxton* (1861–3) and by the work of Henry Bradshaw, Librarian of Cambridge University, who made a special study of fifteenth-century books printed in the Netherlands. Bradshaw laid down an important principle—let the book speak for itself. It was R. G. C. Proctor, however, an assistant in the British Museum from 1893 to 1903, who by the publication in 1898 of his *Index to the early printed books in the British Museum* created the grand landmark, to use a phrase of Scholderer's, in the whole

[1] *The Bibliographical Society 1892–1942. Studies in Retrospect.* The Bibliographical Society, 1945, p. 27.

study of incunabula. Whereas Bradshaw had worked on only a small portion of the field, having applied his methods only to the output of fourteen towns of the northern Netherlands, Proctor carried it over the whole area of Western typography, ranging the scores of printing centres with their hundreds of presses, in order of first appearance, on all the evidence available, and separating, on the same principle, the founts of type used in each individual press. The student who in 1897 could have had no clear notion of what had been achieved in the way of printing at even the most important cultural centres, was, after the publication of the *Index*, in a position to form a reasonable idea of what had been printed in printing offices all over Europe.

The immediate result of the publication of Proctor's *Index* was, to quote Scholderer again:

> somewhat comparable to that of the launching of H.M.S. *Dreadnought* in 1906. It gave instant pause to the experts, who after a time made its conclusions their own. To its author it brought two fresh duties at the British Museum—one that of bringing together in their new order the incunabula still scattered about the general library, the other that of elaborating the succinct information of the *Index* into the detailed catalogue which the Trustees desired to see published.[1]

It was on the preliminaries of this catalogue that Proctor was engaged when, on a solitary walk or climbing expedition, in the course of a holiday in the Tirol, he disappeared and has never been heard of again.

Proctor's task now devolved upon A. W. Pollard, who associated with himself in the work two recent arrivals in the Museum, Arundell Esdaile and Victor Scholderer. In his *Reminiscences* Scholderer writes of his close association with Esdaile and records an entertaining anecdote about him: 'He was rather overwhelmingly tall and broad and it is recorded that a colleague's small daughter, who had never yet spoken, on his coming into the room broke the silence of a lifetime with the words "too much!".'

And so, about 1905, he was put on to the study of the early books of Strassburg and entered on the work that was to last him throughout his life. Pollard had no doubt been impressed with Scholderer's excellent record and was also glad to have an associate from a family where German was spoken—his parents were both German. Otto Scholderer was an artist born

[1] *The Bibliographical Society 1892–1942*, p. 35.

and trained in Frankfurt-am-Main; he was in Paris, where he was on close terms with Manet and his circle, at the time of the Franco-Prussian war, but, because of the war, he was forced, to his lasting regret, to leave. He and his wife, Luise, settled in England in 1871 and they became naturalized British citizens shortly before Victor's birth in 1880. In his *Reminiscences* Victor speaks warmly of his happy family life; his father was 'easy-going, absorbed in his art'; it was his mother who supplied 'the necessary discipline, in the course of which she came to assess my outstanding qualities as obstinacy and being "so positive"'; happily they bore each other few grudges! It was a musical family; Otto was a keen amateur violinist and Oswald Sickert, the father of Walter Sickert (who was, incidentally, a pupil of Otto's) joined him frequently in domestic performances. Victor himself retained throughout his life a deep love of Beethoven. Though the quality of Otto's painting is thought to have deteriorated somewhat during his sojourn in London, he enjoyed a reasonable success as a portraitist and had a wide circle of artist friends.

Victor was born to an enriching family life, and though his shyness kept him somewhat aloof, this happy period of his life provided a lasting base for his future contentment. His school days which, he assures us, were of the non-traumatic kind, were passed successively in a small private school, St. Paul's Preparatory School (Colet Court), and finally St. Paul's itself. 'Being unathletic and the son of an artist, I tended to non-conformity but did not carry this far enough to make me truly offensive to the schoolboy Establishment. Moreover, I took kindly to the classics.' In due course he won a scholarship to Trinity, Oxford, and went up there in October 1899, at which time also his parents chose to go back to Germany. His father, a sick man, besides being rather disappointed with his life, survived repatriation little more than a couple of years.

Victor went down from Oxford with a second in Greats 'after a gruelling viva voce'. He says little himself about his time at Oxford, but Henry Pelham, the President of Trinity, a man, according to Scholderer, 'of genial authority', gives a rather more revealing account: 'He did brilliantly at St. Paul's, won an open scholarship here—got a 1st class in Honour Moderations and the Gaisford Prize for Greek Verse—he just missed a 1st in Greats, how I cannot understand. He knows German perfectly—has unusual literary instincts and gifts and is in himself a most charming person.' This was in the letter of

recommendation which Pelham wrote for Scholderer when he applied for a post in the British Museum. At that time, and indeed for many years thereafter, entry into the Museum was conditional on success in an entrance examination. To prepare for this, Scholderer spent some time in Paris, staying with Henri Fantin Latour and his wife, who were old friends of his father. He was successful in the 'pretty stiff Museum examination, bringing me out marginally ahead of another old Pauline, Leonard Magnus; during the viva voce in German I remember Oskar Sommer, the examiner, did his best to dissuade me from entering the Museum at all!'

When Scholderer presented himself for duty in June 1904, the great and by that time almost legendary figure, Robert Proctor, had, as has been mentioned above, disappeared in the previous September, displaying, in the words of his friend and colleague, A. W. Pollard, in the manner of his supposed death, 'the self-same qualities and the absolute disregard for difficulties and craving to meet them unaided in his own way . . . that had made him face undaunted the task of describing every fount of type used in Europe up to 1520, and read through the catalogue of the British Museum as a preliminary'.[1]

Is it possible to capture an intimate picture of Scholderer at this time? Certainly he must have been a very different kind of person from the self-confident individualist whose death provided the place in the Department of Printed Books which it fell to his lot to fill. He had been a delicate child, as he notes in his *Reminiscences*: 'every now and then as I was a delicate child, my mother took me for a week's sea air to Littlehampton, that most idyllic of seaside resorts.' He must have been shy and reserved, and because of the return of his parents to Frankfurt, followed by the death of his father, he presumably felt rather lonely, not to say deserted.

Pollard had taken him under his wing evidently before he went to the Museum, showing him 'the glories of the Kelmscott Chaucer soon after its appearance in 1896', and later, when Scholderer joined the B.M., Pollard's friendship continued and, in Scholderer's own words, he could not have had a better instructor, friend, and guide. This interest and attention continued when he became Pollard's colleague, as is indicated by an anecdote given in the *Reminiscences*: 'The physical effort of shifting great folios and swarming up ladders, which the

[1] *Bibliographical Essays by Robert Proctor with a memoir*, by A. W. Pollard, 1905, p. xxxix.

location of the books in the old part of the library entailed, was at first very irksome and one day I flagged so visibly that Pollard [twenty odd years his senior, be it remembered], who was inured to this kind of thing, asked me whether I really wanted to go on with the work.' Scholderer speaks appreciatively of his friendliness in the following passage: 'His interests went far beyond bibliography and, well-informed, fair-minded and kind as he was, he made up to me in some degree the loss of my father', but he goes on, significantly, to say that he found it hard to get on to terms of intimacy with Pollard, in whom he found 'a strain of didactic severity and occasional outbursts of temper'.

He was evidently more at home with two almost contemporary colleagues, Henry Thomas (later Sir Henry), who also worked for a brief spell on the catalogue of incunabula, and Harold Idris Bell (later Sir Harold), with whom he shared both lodgings (in Crouch End in North London) and a deep interest in English and Classical literature. This was the beginning of a lifelong friendship which blossomed into deep affection during the Second World War and afterwards when Sir Harold and Lady Bell went to live in Aberystwyth and received frequent visits from him.

Work on the British Museum catalogues is truly co-operative and it is not now possible to single out the work on which Scholderer's talents were directly employed at that time; he tells us that his earliest efforts were directed to the early books of Strassburg and these were doubtless mainly an apprenticeship.

As with the fifteenth-century catalogue, Pollard introduced Scholderer to the Bibliographical Society, in which he was to be a prominent figure for nearly seventy years. One of the first tasks he performed for the Society, doubtless looked upon as a useful piece of training, was to produce the first regular catalogue of the Society's library, which was published as an appendix to the Society's *Transactions* in 1907; he also assisted Pollard in his Secretarial duties from 1909 to 1912 and undertook the librarianship of the Society's library in 1909. He remained Librarian from that date until 1938. He had already written his first review for *The Library* (then also edited by Pollard)—*Das Mainzer Fragment der Weltgericht*—in 1905, and by the time the first volume of the *Catalogue* was published in October 1908, Scholderer had already contributed two short articles connected with early printers in Basel.

By the time Part II of the *Catalogue* appeared in February 1912, Pollard had been directed to more general departmental duties—he became Assistant Keeper (an office later given the more prestigious title of Deputy Keeper) in 1909—and the greater part of the work devolved on Scholderer, though the over-all editorship remained in Pollard's hands. Part III, 1913, which completed the German presses, showed a further development, in that Scholderer collaborated in the introduction to the volume, contributing the technical 'Notes on the Presses'. This was a progression which continued steadily over the years.

When the Pollard caravanserai moved on to Italy, this part of the work, devoted to the productions of Subiaco and Rome, was largely in Scholderer's hands, though still under Pollard's supervision. It was already completed when war broke out in 1914, and as the catalogue was temporarily discontinued because of the war, it was published separately.

In the meantime, again at Pollard's instance, Scholderer was prevailed upon to compose an introduction to Henrietta Palmer's *List of English Editions and Translations of the Classics*, published by the Bibliographical Society in 1911. This was a task which Scholderer approached and carried out with evident enjoyment, providing informed and informative comment.

Scholderer was now the accepted successor of Pollard and was at work on the Italian presses which appealed so much to him. His private life was also at its most peaceful and contented. His widowed mother had joined him in 1907 in a house near Pollard in Wimbledon and he and Pollard became fellow-commuters to work and played tennis together, and one summer found themselves holidaying together at Sheringham.

Another happy event at this time—one later to be described by Scholderer as 'one of the most lustrous blessings shed upon me by my star', was his marriage in May 1913 to Frida Semler, daughter of a senior executive of the German railways, with whom he was to enjoy thirty-seven years of happy married life. When the First World War came, Victor and his wife and mother were living in Merton Park near Wimbledon. In Scholderer's words, they 'escaped the worst attentions of the hysterical Germanophobia', but it must have been a trying time for his wife who retained throughout her life many of her German characteristics. Indeed, Scholderer in his *Reminiscences* describes the situation as 'a severe trial which she stood up to with a steadfastness that was the admiration

of all who knew her'. Scholderer himself was not medically fit for military service and in February 1916 was seconded to the War Office, where he worked on the publication *Daily Extracts*, taken from the enemy press.

> We were supplied with the newspapers of Germany and the rest through a neutral source and my task was to select and translate items of economic interest from the German dailies. It was heavy going, but the company, which included, besides the Museum contingent, John Middleton Murry and J. T. Sheppard the Hellenist, was stimulating, although there were lapses in translation now and then, as when the German 'Stickstoff' was rendered 'glue' instead of 'nitrogen'!

The long irregular hours and the discomforts of commuting told on him after a time, and a transfer back to the Museum being arranged for him in November 1917, he 'returned to the more placid conditions of the Museum', though probably not to his catalogue, since the Museum's valuable and rare books had been sent away to the National Library of Wales and to the strong-rooms of the house of Mr. Dyson Perrins, the well-known collector, near Malvern.

> The description and illustration of the fifteenth-century books printed at Venice has proved not only laborious on account of their number, but beset with special difficulties owing to the co-existence of two systems of dating, in one of which the year began on the first of January, in the other on the first of March, also to the frequent formation of temporary partnerships, the passing of type from one printer to another, and the use by several different firms of the same or nearly indistinguishable founts. Even before the war other duties had reduced my own personal share of the Catalogue to very little, but Mr. Henry Thomas and Mr. Esdaile were still giving part of their time to it, though Mr. Scholderer was the only continuous worker. Since work was resumed, though it has been a pleasure to me to act as consultant and Mr. F. G. Rendall has given valuable help, Mr. Scholderer has definitely taken my place as Editor, and it is a great satisfaction to me that the completion of the Catalogue is in such eminently competent hands.

So wrote A. W. Pollard in June 1924, as Keeper of Printed Books and now on the verge of retirement from the Museum service.[1]

For Scholderer the period following the Armistice was evidently a time of real happiness and tranquillity: 'regular work was gradually resumed . . . and the Catalogue had a clear run of some twenty years between the wars. So did my

[1] *Catalogue*, Part V, 1924, p. v.

wife and myself, and we spent many happy vacations both in the South and in the North. As such they have no history.' This euphoric assessment, written nearly fifty years later, can be taken as an expression of his satisfaction, recollected in tranquillity, of the most effective period of his life's work. It makes no mention of the fact that he was severely extended by his concentrated work on the Italian section of the *Catalogue*. In 1929, after completing the sixth part, he was forced to take time off to recuperate; it took six weeks' holiday in Taormina in Sicily to restore him to full strength.

His great achievement of this time was the completion, with the publication of Part VII in 1935, of the Italian section, comprising in all some 4,180 editions, the largest collection of such books then ever fully catalogued. Following the example of Pollard in the introduction to the last part of the German section, Scholderer took the opportunity to compose a masterly survey of Italian book-production in the fifteenth century, including a study of the subject-matter of the books produced. This disquisition, like that of Pollard's, Scholderer looked upon as slightly *ultra vires*, but, as he said, it broke ground which had lain uncultivated too long. Dr. von Rath, the head of the German Wiegendruckkommission, paid him the compliment of making a formal request to the Trustees of the British Museum to be allowed to print the essay in German in the *Beiträge zur Inkunabelkunde*. Scholderer used this material as his theme for the Annual Italian Lecture of the British Academy in 1949.

Scholderer had formally retired from the Museum on his sixty-fifth birthday, 9 October 1945, before the next volume, containing the section France and French-speaking Switzerland, appeared, but he stayed on at the request of the Trustees to see it through the press. It came out in 1949, more than ten years after its predecessor, the long delay being due to the fact that the books were more difficult to get at, having been removed from the British Museum because of the war, about which it will be necessary to say something later. The volume contains the by-now-expected general introduction giving a survey of book production in France and a detailed discussion of the progress of printing in the various centres. This was the last volume with which Scholderer was connected as editor, though he continued to supply informed assistance with Part IX, the Netherlands (1962), and with other parts which were still unpublished when he died. Thus his association with this

work, highly significant in its specialized field, lasted for close on seventy years. When the first part came out in 1908 it was thought that it would be completed in six parts: two for Germany, two for Italy, and two for other countries, with a general index to the whole in Part VI. When Part V came out in 1924, Pollard wrote 'It can now be foreseen with approximate certainty, that the Catalogue will be completed in three more parts'. In the nineteen-fifties, when I was Keeper in the Department of Printed Books, I was equally ingenuous enough to cherish a hope that the work might be completed in 1958, fifty years after the work started! There can, however, be no hesitation in saying that the range and authority of the work have grown remarkably under the able hands of Pollard and Scholderer and their successors and that it has provided the world with an exemplar of skilled, informed, and dedicated scholarship. It also provides an example of continuing disinterested collaboration. The edition of so specialized a catalogue was naturally small and by the nineteen-sixties complete sets of the published parts had become difficult and expensive to acquire. It was a great satisfaction to me, therefore, as Director, to be able to recommend to the Trustees that a photolithographic reprint be undertaken. The opportunity was taken to reproduce the Museum's working copy, which contains numerous manuscript additions and corrections by various hands, the majority being by Scholderer.

Examples of Scholderer's elegant handwriting can therefore be seen throughout the reprint. It can be seen, already fully developed, in his written letter of application for a position in the British Museum in 1903. It is not a calligraphic hand in the strict sense of the word, yet his Dutch friend Marie Kronenberg refers to it as 'his beautiful handwriting, one of the most nearly perfect I have ever seen'.[1] It demonstrates a natural sensitivity to handwriting, which flowered in the nineteen-twenties in Scholderer's work with a committee of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, for whom he designed the new Hellenic Greek type. He was once again following in Robert Proctor's footsteps. Proctor wrote what Scholderer rightly calls a magisterial treatise on *The Printing of Greek in the Fifteenth Century*, published by the Bibliographical Society in 1900, and just before his death had completed a new Greek type. 'Few would deny' wrote Scholderer in his treatise on *Greek Printing Types*, in 1927, 'that Proctor's fount, completing

[1] *Essays in honour of Victor Scholderer*. Karl Pressler, Mainz, 1970, p. 35.

the Complutensian as it does, stands out as the finest Greek type ever cut.'[1] He did add that it is suitable only for fine printing in the archaistic tradition, and would not, regrettably, bear reduction to a commercial size. Scholderer's own type, designed no doubt with the encouragement of Stanley Morison, aims 'to produce a type which shall be distinctive, but in which no single sort, whether majuscule or lower-case, shall be conspicuous beyond its fellows'. His new type was cut by the Lanston Monotype Corporation and has been used by *The Times*; the first book printed with the type was an edition of Προμηθεύς Δεσμώτης, prepared by Scholderer himself in 1930.

Scholderer became a Deputy Keeper of Printed Books in 1929, a promotion well deserved for his work on the Museum's incunabula. Accession to this office might well have detached him from the work he loved and for which he was uniquely equipped, but fortunately the promotion was regarded as an acknowledgment of his work and achievement and he was not required to undertake administrative duties—which he would almost certainly have cordially disliked. Administration, however, finally caught up with him in 1939. He tells the tale in his *Reminiscences*:

> The August crisis was becoming daily more acute, when one evening I was rung up after supper by the Keeper of Printed Books: Henry Thomas, the senior Deputy Keeper was delayed abroad, so would I take charge of the valuables of the Department due for safe deposit in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth?—Yes.—Then be at the B.M. at half past eight tomorrow morning. So curtly was my life re-directed for seven years to come. Robin Flower, in charge of manuscripts, travelled down to Wales with me that day: our treasures were duly deposited and we ourselves lodged in the Bellevue Hotel; my wife followed shortly, as did more Museum personnel. There were coffee parties in the cosy rooms of the Bellevue, and when the College reassembled in October there were morale-sustaining concerts by the academic string quartet, reinforced by a most admirable local pianist, Charlie Clements. So we continued, phonily well-off (war being formally declared on 3 September), until Dunkirk in June 1940.

Having his incunabula available, Scholderer was able to continue his work on the British Museum Catalogue, and he was also able, by 1 June 1940, to complete a *Hand-list of the Incunabula in the National Library of Wales*, which appeared, printed on the Library's own press, as the Library's tribute to Johann Gutenberg's fifth centenary.

[1] *Greek Printing Types 1465–1927*, with an historical introduction by Victor Scholderer. London, Trustees of the British Museum, 1927, p. 15.

Seven years at Aberystwyth not only provided Victor and Frida Scholderer with a marvellous refuge from the rigours of war-time London, but won Victor's lasting affection for it. It was not only the beauty and friendliness of the place, but the friendship it brought him with the Flowers and their circle and with Sir Harold and Lady Bell, who had gone to live there after Bell's retirement from the British Museum in 1944. Victor was much attracted to the Flowers; he admired Robin's talk and his poems, was 'greatly taken with his semi-Bohemian household of wife and three daughters'. Barbara, the eldest of the three, was an exceptionally gifted scholar, to whom Victor became much attached after the death of his wife in 1950. She too died, in her forty-fourth year in 1955. In his 1970 *Reminiscences* he wrote that 'her memory lives with me undiminished'. The closer personal relationships fostered by life in close association with Museum colleagues whom he liked and respected, and in a community as small as that of Aberystwyth, seems to have had a liberating effect on Victor's life. His enjoyment was further enhanced by occasional contacts with distinguished visitors. He writes of one such visit by Paul Maas, the Greek scholar and refugee from Hitler: 'I have a lively recollection of a coffee party in our lodgings for him and Barbara Flower, at which he held our absorbed attention with a talk on the legend of Iphigenia; it appeared to interest even the cat!'

The return to London was delayed because the Scholderers' house in Wimbledon had been badly damaged by one of the last flying bombs, but it was at last accomplished in 1946. Victor had meanwhile retired, but, as has already been mentioned, had been asked to stay on to see Part VIII through the press; this volume was published in 1949.

Release from the daily routine simply gave greater opportunity for a wider range of bibliographical activity. He was President of the Bibliographical Society in 1946–1948, and became a Fellow of the British Academy in 1948, delivering the Annual Italian Lecture of the Academy in 1949. It fell to his lot in 1947 to write an obituary in *The Library* of an old German friend, Konrad Haebler, a fellow incunabulist who had died in his ninetieth year. Scholderer recalled in his *Reminiscences*, on the occasion of *his* ninetieth birthday, a sentence in a letter to a friend written by Haebler shortly before his death, 'May Heaven preserve you from living to be ninety'.

Frida Scholderer passed away suddenly in August 1950, on the very day that Dr. Marie Kronenberg, his old Dutch

friend of over thirty years' standing, had been invited to tea. She records that Victor's letter telling her all about Frida's death was most touching, and as has been said already, he refers to his married life as a 'lustrous blessing'.

Scholderer's life had now to be remodelled and he gave up his house in Wimbledon and took a flat in London where he remained to the end of his life. He acquired a new field of activity, which I recall with some pride, because it was largely at my request that he and another newly retired colleague, A. F. Johnson, were asked to take on the task of continuing the British Museum's catalogues of pre-1600 books. The idea of such a series was conceived in the early nineteen-twenties by Henry Thomas under A. W. Pollard, then Keeper of Printed Books, doubtless influenced by the Bibliographical Society's *Short-Title Catalogue of pre-1640 English Books*, then taking shape. Pollard's introduction to the first volume, the *Short-Title Catalogue of Spanish Books in the British Museum*, points out that, for the purposes for which the book was intended, to serve as a guide for students to what the Museum had in the way of early Spanish books and to facilitate further acquisitions by the Museum, all that was necessary was to provide authors' names and short titles. Three volumes by Henry Thomas appeared in quick succession: the catalogues of Spanish books (1921), of French books (1924), and of Portuguese and Spanish-American books (1926), but at that point the Trustees undertook the publication of a new edition of the General Catalogue of Printed Books, and work on this and many other useful projects was perforce abandoned. The opportunity of using the experience, knowledge, and skill of two such retired colleagues as Scholderer and Johnson was too good to miss and they worked to such good effect that within fifteen years catalogues of the Italian books (1958), the German books (1962), and the books of the Low Countries (1965) were completed and published, not to mention in another year lithographic reprints of the original French, Spanish, and Portuguese catalogues. This was a superb achievement of two scholars in their seventies, and they provided one invaluable addition to these catalogues: indexes of printers.

Work on these catalogues brought Scholderer, to his lasting pleasure, into close contact with several younger members of the Department of Printed Books, notably Dennis Rhodes and Anna Simoni. He became then 'Uncle Victor', a form of address which, as I have said, pleased him and to which he

readily responded. He did, indeed, take great pleasure in the society of younger people, as was demonstrated by the alacrity with which he accepted every year his invitation to the Francis family's Boxing Day party. He was intrinsically a shy man and his reserve was no doubt fostered by the formality of life in the British Museum before the First World War and by the rather solitary nature of the work on which he was engaged; perhaps also the fact that, though born and brought up in England, his home life both before and after his marriage was largely German. It seems, as I have said, that the war period in Aberystwyth played an important part in breaking down the barriers.

Scholderer's own account of visits to or from colleagues in other libraries seems to suggest to me, at any rate in these much freer and easier times, more constraint than one would have expected between men who had so much in common. Among his heroes were three bookmen doctors; Sir William Osler was one.

> I first knew of him when Pollard suggested that I should come with him to some presentation to be made by Osler. In view of the tediousness of most such occasions, I was rather surprised at this, but I went and Osler had not been speaking for ten minutes before I had become a life-long Oslerian. As Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford I retain a mental vignette of him solemnly 'taking tea' on the floor of his drawing room with two delighted little girls. Later I was privileged to edit a bibliographical appendix to his admirable *Incunabula Medica, 1467–1480*, published in 1923, four years after his death.

Among the scholars whose help Scholderer acknowledges in his work on this list of 217 medical books was the second of the three doctors, Dr. Arnold C. Klebs, of whose hospitality at Nyon on the Lake of Geneva he writes: 'His hospitable house, Les Terrasses, utterly belied his description of it as "klein aber mein"—not only did it contain a separate flat for visitors, but there was also a building in the garden housing his collection of early scientific books as well as his librarian, Mademoiselle Lang.'

The third of these collectors was Sir Charles Sherrington, O.M., whom Scholderer greatly admired. He speaks of him as 'most amiable and unassuming of men. He came to the Museum from time to time to be shown an incunable or two or to present one from his own random collection and incidentally to talk about poetry.'

Of his more professional colleagues, 'incunabulists of the stricter observance', he tells a tale or two, including one, not without some malice, about Marie Louis Polain, 'who puzzled me terribly at our first encounter by smilingly holding out a book and saying "seel"; it was not until he added "malade" that I realised that this meant "it is ill"—the book was dilapidated and needed rebinding'. Scholderer relates how he and his wife 'looked Polain up in his Parisian bachelor *chartreuse* and he hurried us through all the sights of the city, letting us pay for everything!" Dr. Marie Kronenberg explains what may provide the reason for this kind of comment. She relates that

> once when I was talking in Paris with M. Polain about Victor, whom he had recently met, he said: 'Il me semble qu'il est un peu juif. Ne croyez-vous pas? Pour le reste c'est un bon garçon.' I was amazed. To me this judgment proved that M. Polain had apparently more talent for describing incunabula than living people. Jewish blood in this man of a perfect Nordic type? and the definition 'bon garçon' of an eminent and distinguished scholar, a complicated nature both scientific and artistic! I could not forbear to tell Victor this qualification of him by Polain at our next meeting. The more so, as for long we two had agreed in appreciating Polain's work more than his character. 'No', said Victor, 'as far as I know I have not a drop of Jewish blood in me. In fact I would not mind having some. It gives you a good backbone in life.' And as to 'un bon garçon', he was sorry not to be able to pay Polain the compliment in return. He would rather characterize him as 'a naughty boy'.[1]

Sure enough, in his *Reminiscences*, Scholderer says 'One could not help liking Polain, but he was sometimes a very naughty boy'. Curiously enough, as he relates himself, Scholderer had 'the honour of figuring in a Nazi proscription list as "Jew and Director of the British Museum"—characteristically two 100% untruths; I still wonder who caused them to be wished on to me.'

Though I believe that some of Scholderer's most valuable qualities he owed to his German origins, his attitude to Germany seems to have been critical at all times; speaking of his father's return to Frankfurt in 1900, he notes 'Life had disappointed him . . . and the Kaiser's Germany, so different from the Germany of his youth, exasperated the disappointment'. Of Hitler and the antecedents to the Second World War he writes bitterly:

[1] *Essays in honour of Victor Scholderer*, 1970, p. 38.

From the very beginning I had felt 'in my bones' the menace of Hitler. The futility of appeasement and all the wishful devices for keeping him at arm's length was always evident to me, and I was daily forced to acknowledge the insight of Heine's remark that the German fool pursues his folly with a grisly thoroughness of which a superficial French fool (or British for that matter) has no conception. In 1932 my wife and I stayed a few days in Germany on our way to Sweden, and mental pressure was already such that the exchange of German soil at Sassnitz for the Swedish ferry taking us to Trälleborg was a physical relief, comparable only to that at the end of a violent thunderstorm.

The Scholderers had no children and it is not surprising that after his wife's death Victor should have suffered from loneliness. He had few really intimate friends, but he continued to find much happiness with his younger Museum colleagues and in working in the Museum. George Painter, his most recent successor as 'incunabulist' writes with conspicuous feeling about his latter day visits to the Museum.

Perhaps his happiest working hours were those spent in the Arched Room [the room set aside since Proctor's time for work on the incunabula], cataloguing new accessions which were always saved for his delight, adding fresh touches to older entries in the future accessions volume . . . or revising the outdated Mainz and Bamberg sections of the first volume of the British Museum Catalogue.

In those days he would approach swiftly from the distances of the Arched Room (as I last saw him on a morning in May 1971), always a little frailer but still ever young, with eyes twinkling under frosty brows, to tell a harmlessly ribald story, narrate his last night's dream, and settle down to catalogue a newly acquired incunable. The process of collating, by raising each leaf to the light and inspecting the watermark, was a particular joy: 'It's meat and drink to me!' he would exclaim. He handled an early book with the mingled delicacy and firmness which are natural to the trained incunabulist; but as he examined it, sometimes humming a quiet tune or uttering inaudible imprecations, his face wore a formidable expression of ruthless determination, until the moment of victory when he had wrested all its secrets.[1]

He was indeed all of a piece; the serious young man who had come to work in the Museum in 1904 remained equally serious in his old age, but he had mellowed into a charming companion with a joyous appreciation of good conversation and a good story (of which he always had a fund). Throughout his life he read widely and deeply, his standbys being Homer and the Greek tragedians, Virgil, Wordsworth and Shelley,

[1] 'Victor Scholderer—in Memoriam', in *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 1972, pp. 416 ff.

Goethe and Heine. From time to time, also, he was moved to express his thoughts and feelings in serious and melancholy-seeming verse, which he occasionally contributed to periodicals. These were collected together and published in two slight volumes, *The Avenue and other Verses* in 1959, and *Women of Troy* in 1965. His serious writing, however, was devoted entirely to studies connected with early printing; over two hundred articles from his pen provide a continuous reflection of the day-to-day work on which he was engaged. A list of these is prefixed to *Fifty Essays in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Bibliography* selected and edited by Dennis Rhodes in 1966. This book, published to mark Scholderer's eighty-fifth birthday, was followed five years later by a *Festschrift*, also edited by Dennis Rhodes, to which scholars from seven different countries contributed. His own writings, mostly but not all, reviews, continued through 1969, and in that year he produced the small, happy volume of memoirs to which frequent reference has been made in this sketch. This beautifully written book seems to me to be completely characteristic of Victor Scholderer; its style is lucid and straightforward; it is modest and witty; it gives a vivid, perceptive insight into the milieu in which he worked, and into the world in which he lived so happily. With his poems it enables those who were not his intimates to obtain revealing glimpses of the man behind the learned, esoteric volumes on which he spent his life.

Among the tributes paid to Scholderer during his life were honorary doctorates of the Universities of Durham and Wales, the Gold Medal of the Bibliographical Society, honorary membership of the Gutenberg-Gesellschaft, and Fellowship of the Pierpont Morgan Library. In 1961 Her Majesty the Queen conferred on him the C.B.E.

It was in his beloved Aberystwyth that he died in September 1971, within four weeks of his ninety-first birthday. He had formed the habit of visiting his many friends there every summer. During this last visit he was taken ill and was unable to return home. He was attended to the last by two of his Welsh friends; one of them, Eiluned Rees, a former colleague in the British Museum and now a member of the staff of the National Library of Wales, was, it is happy to recall, with him at the end.

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