Some Italian Eighteenth-Century Books Acquired by British Travellers in Italy

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I

A book in Latin dealing with weights and measures by an Italian author published posthumously may not appear at first sight to be of particular interest. Yet the author himself is unusual in his literary output, while the copy now in the British Library deserves to be examined for its provenance.

Bartolommeo Beverini was born at Lucca on 3 May 1629 and died there on 24 October 1686. At an early age he became a member of the Congregatio Matris Dei, a religious sub-order of the Clerks Regular, whose General Rector, residing in Rome, was Francesco Guinigi. Beverini published two volumes of poetry in his life-time: Rime, Lucca, printed by Francesco Marescandoli, 1654, and Carminum libri septem, Lucca, apud Hiacynthum Pacium, 1674. In 1665 Beverini was called to Rome to teach theology to his Order, but the following year Cardinal Girolamo Buonvisi sent for him to return to his native town of Lucca to continue there his pastoral work and preaching: he was elected 'primario pubblico lettore di eloquenza dello Studio Lucchese', and remained in this post until his death. 'Eloquenza' probably indicates that he was required to lecture on 'belles lettres', not only theology. The volume of 1674 was dedicated to Fabio Guinigi, Archbishop of Ravenna from 1673 to 1691, and a member of the long-established Guinigi family of Lucca: no doubt a kinsman of Francesco.

Much later, in fact twenty-five years after the death of Beverini, the following book was printed in Lucca in 1711, the printer now being Peregrino Frediani: Syntagma de ponderibus, et mensuris, in quo veterum nummorum pretium, ac mensurarum quantitas demonstratur. This shows that the versatile Beverini had also specialized in the study of so scientific a subject as the history of weights and measures from classical times.

On 3 October 1738, the copy of this book now in the British Library (shelfmark 8506.cc.8, figs 1-2, bought by the British Museum on 11 April 1877) was purchased in Florence by an Englishman whose name, according to his inscription on the title page, appears at first sight to read ‘Charles Trederich’. He turns out to be Sir Charles Frederick (1709-1785), who was thus twenty-nine years of age when travelling in Italy with his older brother John.

The highly elaborate bookplate or ex-libris pasted into the front of the book has unfortunately been partly obliterated by the thoughtless binder who stuck a piece of tape over its right-hand side, thus hiding the last digit of the date of the bookplate. We can see that this bookplate was designed by G. Hains and engraved by W. H. Toms in 175-. Two entries for bookplates by Sir Charles Frederick in the Franks collection of the British Museum are both dated 1752, and this is one of them.

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Fig. 1. 8506.cc.8, title page.
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Fig. 2. 8506.cc.8, inside front cover.
There is no article on William Henry Toms in the Dictionary of National Biography, but Thieme-Becker say that he was born about 1700 and died about 1750. The new Oxford D.N.B., however, has a short article on his son Peter Toms, who was baptized in 1726 and died in 1777. This article states more correctly that W. H. Toms died about 1758, and, as we have already seen, he was still active as an engraver in 1752. He lived in the Holborn district of London. He published in two parts, in 1736 and 1739 respectively, a volume of engravings entitled 'Perspective views of all the ancient churches and other buildings in the cities of London and Westminster.'

I have discovered nothing about the artist G. Hains.

As Bailey remarks, ‘Frederick seems to have taken considerable interest in the design of small arms.’ The bookplate is designed to show a large variety of spears, pikes, two gunpowder barrels, four large guns and cannon balls. In non-heraldic language, the shield contains three doves, and the whole is surmounted by a dove of peace with an olive branch in its mouth, standing on a coroneted knight’s cap. It does not include the name of the owner, who must be Frederick himself, nor does it include a motto.

The collections of Sir Charles Frederick were sold at auction in London in 1786. Part III of the sale catalogue consisted of the printed books and manuscripts, which took ten days to sell, beginning on 5 July 1786. In the seventh day’s sale (Wednesday 12 July) on p. 28, item 816 is described as: ‘Syntagma de Ponderibus et Mensuris. Dissertatio de Nummis Monetariorum.’ No authors’ names are here given, and the sale catalogue does not immediately make it clear that the ‘Dissertatio’ is a separate book, nothing to do with Bartolommeo Beverini. The second item must have been a copy of ‘Dissertatio de numis [sic] monetariorum veterum culpa vitiosis … promotore R. P. Sebastiano Kayser, è Soc. Jesu’, Viennae Austriæ, typis Mariæ Theresiæ Voigtni Vidue, Univ. Typ., [1736], sometimes attributed to to Erasmus Frölich. There is no copy of this book in the British Library.

II

The British Library has a four-volume edition of the dramatic works of Pietro Metastasio, printed in Rome by Bernabò and Lazzarini for the bookseller Giovanni Lorenzo Barbiellini in 1741 (bought by the British Museum on 2 December 1864, shelfmark 1342.b.39; figs 3-4). Each volume contains a coat of arms bookplate with the motto DEO DUCENTE. The shield contains an eagle with wings outstretched, and a hand; and is surrounded by another eagle in similar position. The name of the artist below the motto reads ‘Ezekiel sculp.t’. The four volumes also have manuscript shelfmarks thus: C shelf 5th No. 4, 5, 6 and 16. The volume numbered C shelf 5. No. 16 also bears the note: School Room 1808. DEP. It seems therefore that these books were acquired by a school library and placed on the shelves in 1808. But before we attempt to identify this school, we note that each volume is also inscribed at the top right hand corner of the flyleaf opposite the bookplates: J. Trapp. Rome. March 30. 1742. Someone then in 1814 has added a little sum to show that the books had been bought by Mr Trapp seventy-two years previously.

Joseph Trapp (c. 1716-1769) was the second son of the poet and pamphleteer Joseph Trapp (1679-1747). Between 1731 and 1735 he had translated Virgil’s Aeneid, and in 1741 wrote a poem on Virgil’s Tomb, Naples, which is included in Dodsley’s Collection of Poems. He was elected a fellow of New College, Oxford, in 1739. He travelled to Italy with John Bouverie and Samuel Fuller. They arrived in Florence on 10 June 1741, and were in Rome from 23 October 1741 to 16 February 1742, when the four volumes of Metastasio had only just been published. Our inscription shows that Joseph Trapp was still in Rome on 30 March 1742. He was rector of Harleynton, Middlesex in 1748, and then moved to Strathfieldsaye, some ten miles south of Reading just over the border into Hampshire, where he was rector from 1751 until his death in 1769.

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5 WorldCat OCLC 80348681. Microfiche in Cambridge, from the Leopoldo Cicognara Program, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
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Fig. 3. 1342.b.39, vol. 1, inside front cover.
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Fig. 4. 1342.b.39, vol. 1, first flyleaf.
The engraver of the bookplate was Ezekiel Abraham Ezekiel (1757-1806), a member of a large Jewish family who lived at Exeter. Surprisingly, the bookplate turns out to be not, as I at first thought, that of a school, but of a private house: Haldon House in Devon, not far from Exeter. It was logical, therefore, for the owner of this house, when he decided that he wanted a bookplate, to turn to Ezekiel, who lived and worked in Exeter. The owner of the house was Sir Robert Palk (1717-1798) who had made a fortune in India as Governor of Madras. When he returned to Britain he bought Haldon House in 1769, had it extensively enlarged, and he himself was knighted in 1772. His eldest son, Sir Lawrence Palk, 2nd Bart (c. 1766-1813) was the owner of the house at the time the bookplate was designed, and as we can see from the Franks catalogue, there were two versions of the plate (Franks 22604 and 22605). The family motto, DEO DUCENTE (God is my guide), was added to the plate, but not the owner’s name. A recently published short guide has no mention of the Library or a ‘school room’ in Haldon House, but it is now quite clear to us that there must have been a large library, and one in which by 1808 the owner or librarian had devised a system of shelfmarks. It must have included a considerable collection of manuscripts. 7


The Palks finally abandoned Haldon House in 1892, and this magnificent edifice was demolished in the 1920s. No member of the Palk family could apparently be described as having an interest in historical bibliography.

III

A Rhapsody on Antique Rings Written in Rome

Adamas notissimus & Berenices In digito factus pretiosior.

Juv. Sat. 6. 8

This is a quarto of eight leaves, the last blank, signed AB. pp. 14. This poem was bought by the British Museum on 24 Ma [May] 1859 (shelfmark 11630.f.49, fig. 5). Manuscript notes on the title page read: I. Tekell. Rome. Supposed to be by Thresham & Hippisly. Underneath the words ‘IN ROME’ of the title is written in much blacker ink than the other ms. notes the date 1780. The paper has a watermark of a fleur de lis in a double circle, with initials AMC. I have not identified the origin of this paper.

The capital W of ‘WRITTEN’ on the title page is wrong fount. This shows that the poem was printed on the Continent, most probably in Rome. Sir John Coxe Hippisley (1748-1825), the political writer, lived in Italy in 1779 and 1780, in India 1786-89, and again in Italy 1792-96. Early in 1780 he married his first wife in Rome. Henry Tresham (1749?-1814), a historical painter, was born in Ireland. About 1775 he accompanied John Campbell of Cawdor, who became First Baron Cawdor, in 1796, to Italy, where he lived mainly in Rome for the next fourteen years. During his residence in Rome he published in 1784 ‘Le Avventure di Saffo’, a


8 Quotation from Juvenal, Satire VI, lines 156-7. ‘Adamas’ here means a diamond. Berenice was the incestuous sister of King Agrippa II of Judaea, who died in Rome in A.D.100.
A RHAPSODY
ON
ANTIQUE RINGS
WRITTEN
IN ROME.
1780.

Adamas notissimus & Berenices
In digito fudit preclarior.

[Signature]

Fig. 5. 11630.f.49, title page.
series of eighteen subjects, of which the British Museum’s copy was destroyed in the Second World War. He returned to England in 1789. He published in all five volumes of verse, of which one was ‘Rome at the close of the eighteenth century !!!’, a poem, with notes, London, 1799.

Ingamells has recorded that ‘A Mr. Teckel, whose wife died here last week’, was entertained by William Hamilton at Naples on 10 September 1779, with Lord Herbert.\(^9\) It is possible, but not certain, that this Mr Teckel was the same person who in 1780 wrote his name as I Tekell on the title page of *A Rhapsody*. It is strange, in view of the manuscript notes on the title page, which seem to be entirely plausible, that no indication of authorship remains to this day in the General Catalogue of the British Library. The suggested imprint and date, [Rome? 1780?], cannot be taken further.

\(^9\) Ingamells, p. 932, citing Pembroke Papers, 1:246.