

XXIX. *Letter from JOHN WINTER JONES, Esq. of the British Museum, to Sir HENRY ELLIS, K.H. Secretary, upon the discovery of two rare Tracts in the Library of that Institution, hitherto unknown, from the Press of William Caxton.*

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Read 12th June, 1845.

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British Museum, June 3, 1845.

DEAR SIR HENRY,

IN the course of my labours at the British Museum, a volume came recently into my hands containing two tracts: the first, "Meditacions sur les Sept Pseaulmes Penitenciaulx;" the other, a French version of the "Cordiale, sive de quatuor Novissimis." It became my duty to ascertain all the typographical particulars relating to these works, as they had been hitherto but partially described in the Museum Catalogue; and I was much struck, in the course of my inquiry, by the resemblance between the types with which they are printed, and those used by the first English printer. A closer examination has led me to the conclusion that they are actually the production of Caxton's press. The "Meditacions" are printed in the same character as the French and English Recueil of the Histories of Troy, and the first edition of the Game of Chess.<sup>a</sup> The Cordiale is printed in the same type as the English version of the same work, made by the unfortunate Antony Widvile Earl Rivers; the Propositio clarissimi Oratoris Magistri Johannis Russell, the second edition of the Game of Chess, the first edition of Chaucer's

<sup>a</sup> Dr. Dibdin, in the 4th vol. of the Bibliotheca Spenceriana, mentions a history of the life of Jason, in French, printed in the same character as the Recueil, and discovered in the Bibliothèque du Roi, at Paris, by M. Van Praet, who sent an account of the book to the Dr., and which account was by him communicated to the Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxxii. part 2. pp. 3, 4.

Canterbury Tales, the Mirrour of the World, and several other pieces, printed by Caxton.

It is a remarkable circumstance that neither the *Meditacions* nor the *Cordiale* appears to have been known to any bibliographer. M. Brunet, in his *Manuel du Libraire*, describes a French version of the *Cordiale*, or, I should rather say, of one of the works so called, for there are many bearing that or a similar title,<sup>b</sup> but which differ totally from each other. It

<sup>b</sup> The four last things—Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven—have employed the pens of many writers, and great confusion exists among some of the early pieces upon this subject, which were published anonymously. The *Cordiale* appears to have been the first of these works, and is attributed to Henricus de Langenstein, or de Hassia, (who died in 1397,) by Fabricius, who, however, adds that the authorship has been given, in some manuscripts, to Thomas Ebendorffer de Haselbach. There is not, in fact, any satisfactory proof that the *Cordiale* was written by either of these authors; and by the greater number of bibliographers it is treated as anonymous. There is equal uncertainty respecting the author of the French translation, which is the subject of the present notice. M. Barrois, in his *Bibliothèque Prototypographique*, describes two manuscripts of this version, (Nos. 833 and 1812,) which he attributes in his index to “Jehan Mielot, le moindre des secretaires de Philippe le Bon.” This, in all probability, is the same Jean Mielot to whom M. Paulin Paris, in his *Manuscripts François de la Bibliothèque du Roi*, vol. ii. p. 110, and vol. iv. p. 201, attributes one of the translations of the *Speculum Humanæ Salvationis*. We are not informed upon what evidence these statements are made, and I find no notice of such a person as Jean Mielot in the various authorities I have been enabled to consult. A short account of Jean Mielot, chanoine de St. Pierre à Lille, is given by Paquot, *Histoire Littéraire des Pays Bas*, who states that he translated two works relating to St. Adrien, by order of Philippe le Bon, but makes no mention either of the *Cordiale*, or the *Speculum Humanæ Salvationis*. Another French version of the *Cordiale* was printed at Oudenarde, about the year 1480; and an acrostic in eleven verses, at the end of the volume, gives the name of Thomas le Roy as the translator. *Brunet, Manuel du Libraire. Tit. Quatuor Novissimis (de)*. Thomas le Roy is involved in as much obscurity as Jean Mielot.

Hain, in his *Repertorium Bibliographicum*, gives the titles of 27 editions of the *Cordiale*, viz.: 21 in Latin, 2 in English, and 4 in Dutch, all printed in the fifteenth century. It may be mentioned, as a proof of the rarity of the French versions, that not one appears in this very accurate and comprehensive catalogue of books printed before the year 1500.

St. Bonaventura wrote “*Sermones quatuor Novissimorum perutiles et necessarii*.” These form a totally different work from the *Cordiale*, but, having been printed anonymously, are frequently confounded with it: an edition printed about 1480, has been entered erroneously by Hain (notwithstanding his general accuracy) among the editions of the *Cordiale*. The *prima pars* of the

is evident, however, that if the same work (which I greatly doubt), it cannot be the edition now under consideration, as, in addition to other discrepancies,

“*Sermones*” begins, “*Ad excludendum igitur negligentiam,*” &c. The *Cordiale* and these *Sermones* have been attributed to Thomas Aquinas, but upon no credible authority.

A third work, *De quatuor Novissimis*, which has also been confounded with the *Cordiale*, was written by Dionysius a Leeuwis, or a Rickel, a Carthusian Monk, who died in 1471, called by Seemiller, “*Quidam Carthusianus,*” and generally known by the appellation “*Dionysius Carthusianus.*” *Articulus I.* commences, “*In omnibus operibus tuis memento novissimorum. In Ecclesiastico scripta sunt verba hæc, in quibus admonemur ut novissima ista jugiter ac indelebiliter nostræ imprimamus memoriæ,*” &c. The earliest edition mentioned by Hain was printed at Antwerp in 1486.

Nicolas Denyse, a French Minorite, was the author of a fourth work, which was printed at Paris in 1509, by Regnault, under the title “*Divinis humanisque dignum conspectibus preclarissimum opus super quatuor novissimis cui Speculum moralium titulus prefertur.*”

Another author, about whom little appears to be known, is Jean de Carthéni, a Carmelite, who died in 1580, as stated in the *Bibliotheca Carmelitana*, or in 1588 according to a note by La Monnoye, in vol. iv. p. 372, of *La Croix du Maine* and *Du Verdier*. His work, *Des quatre Novissimes, ou fins dernières de l’homme*, as he states in his dedication to Sabina, Countess of Egmont, was compiled by him in Latin from the writings of “*holy and Catholic doctors,*” and afterwards translated by himself into French. It was printed at Antwerp in 1573.

A friar of the order of Celestins, a native of Rouen, named Bigot, wrote on the *Four Last Things*, in French verse : his work does not appear to have been printed.

Diego de Granados wrote “*Opusculum de quatuor Novissimis,*” which is preserved in MS. in the Harleian Collection.

A discourse on the same subject, by Joseph Boyse, was published at Dublin, in 1724 : another, by William Sheppard, at London, in 1649 ; and a third by Simon Birckbeck, at London, in 1655. Birckbeck, in the preliminary matter to his treatise, gives the following list of authors in addition to some of those enumerated above :—*Joannes Cacchenius*, Antwerp, 1588 ; *Gabriel Inchino*, Cologne, 1652 ; *Petrus Bessæus*, Cologne, 1629 ; *Hieronymus Dresselius*, Cologne, 1635 ; *Isaac Ambrose*, London, 1640 ; *Robert Bellarmin*, Cologne, 1626 ; and *Robert Bolton*, London, 1633.

Among the *Roxburghe Ballads*, there is a piece consisting of 34 verses of 4 lines each, with the following title, “*The Great Assize ; or Christ’s certain and sudden appearance to Judgment ; being serious considerations on these four last things, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. By Mr. Stevens, Minister. To the tune of ‘ Aim not too high,’ &c.*” This appears to have been printed in the latter half of the 17th century.

To the above must be added the venerable name of Sir Thomas More. The following passage in his life, printed in the last edition of Wordsworth’s *Ecclesiastical Biography*, from a MS. in the Lambeth Library, describes his treatise in the following words. “*He made a very devoute booke, intituled De quatuor Novissimis, wherein he describeth vice and virtue even to the quick : but this work was never finished.*” This fragment is inserted in the edition of his English works, printed by Cawood,

it is said by Brunet to be in verse and prose, while the Museum copy is in prose only. The *Meditacions* appear to be unknown even as a work.

The extreme rarity of these pieces would render them objects of great curiosity by whomsoever printed; but they become peculiarly interesting when viewed as claiming a place among our own typographical antiquities. I hope to be able to offer sufficient proofs in support of the parentage I venture to claim for them. This task is rendered somewhat difficult, by the absence of all indications of date or place of printing on the works themselves. Caxton, in the course of his amusing gossip by way of introductions or conclusions, alludes in many cases to his previous labours, and thus frequently affords evidence, upon points of authorship or printing of a particular book, which is not to be derived from the book itself; but after a careful examination of these sources of information, I have been unable to discover the slightest allusion to either of the pieces now before me. Still there appears to me to be sufficient proof, both of a positive and negative character, to justify us in adding them to the list of Caxton's works.

1. Of the identity of the types with those used for works known to have been printed by Caxton, there can exist no doubt.

2. As to the first type, that of the *Meditacions*. Some bibliographers would exclude the French *Recueil* and the first edition of the *Game of Chess* from the list of Caxton's works. The confined limits of a notice like the present will not allow of any detailed examination of this question; but the following remarks are submitted, inasmuch as it is important to show the great probability that *all* the books printed with this particular type issued from Caxton's press. That Caxton printed the English translation of the *Recueil* (for a copy of which the Duke of Devonshire gave the large sum of £1,060 18s.) there is evidence upon the work itself, in the conclusion to which he says: "Therefore I have practysed and lerned at my grete charge and dispense to ordeyne this said book in prynte, after the maner and forme as ye may here see;" and this statement is further corroborated, if corroboration be wanting, in the introduction to the *Golden Legende*, wherein he enumerates the *Recueil* among his works. That the first edition of the

Waly and Tottell, in 1557, vol. i. p. 72—102; and is also noticed by Dr. Dibdin, in the introduction to his edition of Robinson's translation of the *Utopia*, p. lxxxix.

Game of Chess was printed by him, may be inferred from the following passage in the introduction to the second edition. After speaking of the authorship of the book, he proceeds: "Which at suche tyme as I was resident in brudgyes, in the counte of Flaundres, cam into my handes, whiche whan I had redde and ouerseene, semed ful necessarye for to be had in Englishshe . . . . And whan I so had achyeued the sayd translacion, I dyde do sette in enprynte a certeyn nombre of theym, whiche anone were depessed and solde: wherfore bycause thys sayd book is ful of holsom wysedom, and requysyte vnto euery astate and degree, I haue purposed to enprynte it, shewyng therein the figures of suche persons as longen to the playe." Upon the strength of the above evidence, the French Recueil, being printed in the same type, has always been attributed to Caxton by the greater number of bibliographers; and, although not so valuable as the English version, the last copy sold was purchased for the sum of £200 by the British Museum, and would have produced a much larger sum (actually offered) if the owner would have consented to sell his book to a private individual.

3. With respect to the second type. The second edition of the Game of Chess, the *Mirroure of the World*, *Tully of Old Age*, *Raynard the Fox*, and others, bear Caxton's name as printer.

4. Caxton is the only printer known to have used these types.

5. The Recueils, both French and English, and the first edition of the Game of Chess, have each thirty-one lines in a page, and the size of the page in each corresponds. The *Meditacions* have the same number of lines, and the size of the page is the same; in short, there is a striking resemblance between these four works on all mechanical points; and it may be worthy of remark, that the French history of Jason, mentioned above, is described as having thirty-one lines, and being of a quarto size.

6. The justification of the French *Cordiale* is extremely imperfect. That of the English version is equally defective; and such is the case, to a greater or less degree, with many of the works printed by Caxton in this character.

7. In the *Mirroure of the World* (line 15 of the recto of leaf 4), in *Raynard the Fox* (the last line of the book), and also in the *Dictes and Sayenges of Phylosophers* (line 20 of the recto of leaf 73),—all of which bear

Caxton's name, and are printed in the type of the Cordiale, or the second type,—a very peculiar &c. occurs, of the following form 209, which is identically the same with that used in the English Recueil, and also in the Meditaciones (printed in what I have called the first type, and corresponding with it in character), but which I have never met with in the works of any other printer. This shows that both types were in Caxton's possession, and must be allowed to have considerable weight, as an additional argument in proof that the Meditaciones were printed by him.

8. Some weight should likewise be given to the circumstance that the two works are bound together in the same volume, and have evidently been so connected from a period not far removed from the date of printing; for the verso of one blank leaf, and the recto of another inserted between the tracts, are covered with *wise sayings*,<sup>c</sup> in a hand writing of the time of Henry VII. or VIII. while on the recto and verso of the same leaves the printing ink has set-off.

Having thus given my reasons for supposing these works to have been printed by Caxton, I will now proceed to a more particular description of them. I have added a collation, consisting of the first two or three words of the first and last lines of each leaf, by means of which any other copy or fragment may be at once identified. At present they must be considered to be unique.

*Meditacions sur les Sept Pseaulmes Penitenciaulx.*

THIS piece consists of thirty-three printed leaves, followed by a blank leaf. Each page contains thirty-one lines. There is no pagination, signatures, catchwords, nor initial letters. The meditations are preceded by a prologue, which begins as follows:—

“A vraye penitance est comme aucune eschielle par laquelle lomme pecheur  
“1. “qui selon la parabole de leuangille descendy de Jherusalem en Jherico monta  
“de rechief de Jherico en Jherusalem / cest avision de paix.”

<sup>c</sup> The following is a specimen: “There ben iiij thyngs full harde for to knowe which way that they wyll drawe. The furst ys the wayes of a younge man. The seconde, y<sup>e</sup> course of a vessell in the ssee. The thyrd, of an adder or of a serpent srent. The ff<sup>r</sup>th of a fflowle sittynge on any thyng. Too wyffs in one howse, ij cattis and one mouse, and ij dogges and one bone—these shall nev<sup>r</sup> accorde in one.

This prologue terminates on the sixth line of the recto of the third leaf; after which follows:—

“ La premiere meditacion sur le premier pseaulme penitencial qui commence/ domine  
“ ne in furore tuo arguas me ne que in ira tua corripas me.

“ On tresdoux seigneur Jhūscrist Juge du siecle qui es a mettre les bons en  
“ m. “ tō royaume celestiel et les mauuaiz au feu eternel/ Quant le coupable et  
“ indigne pecheur,” &c.

The second meditation commences at the seventeenth line of the verso of the sixth leaf.

The third commences at line thirteen of the verso of the tenth leaf.

The fourth commences at line thirteen of the recto of the fifteenth leaf.

The fifth commences at line one of the verso of the twentieth leaf.

The sixth commences at line twenty-six of the recto of the twenty-eighth leaf: and

The seventh commences at line one of the verso of the thirtieth leaf.

The lines are reckoned exclusive of the headings.

The whole work concludes with the following sentence:—

“ Puis encores sil te plaist me donne que par ce septenuaire des pseaulmes de penitence les quelz correspondent aux sept affectz de lomme prins pour les sept degrez de leschielle de penitence Je puisse mōter et paruenir atoy en celle tant glorieuse cite de Jherusalem en laquelle tu habites et te offrir avec les sains et beneurez le sacrifice de loenge sans fin / Amen.

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Leaf 1.	1 A vraye penitance	quelz cōpaignēt
	2. par ainsi que	continue et estende/
	3. autre / ainsi que	troublee de ce
	4. mesmement que	mon gemissement /
	5. mon lit mon	et mon dieu
	6. sil te plaist	ta/. Beneureux
	7. et les pechiez	pine du dos
	8. Ainsi raison ou	riete de deuinemēs
	9. les maulx actribuent	par ces deux
	10. ne se domptent	sement et doucement
	11. des paines eternelles /	flechi en bas

Leaf 12.	a elles que	res avec moy
13.	Autrefois Je tay	en moy mes
14.	dorgueil / mais tant	congneu ton saint
15.	et soyes mon	nibus tuis ¶
16.	et fait mal	reuele et manifeste
17.	la bouche de	mens Je lay
18.	seullement mon cuer	tabit lingua mea
19.	des pechiez de	ce dont le
20.	laquelle par lors	goisseuse douleur si
21.	Je aore sire	char / et ce
22.	et eu tousiours	doulz sire aton
23.	fait semblable a	in generacōe ¶
24.	Et pour tant	les mesmes choses
25.	oroison et priere	faire respōce Certainemēt
26.	les dessus nommez	uoir que ata
27.	Car ce que	soit songneux den
28.	Puis la sieue	le mencion de
29.	et de toutes	uers toy / mais
30.	lanonce enuers toy /	que Je ne
31.	et me dis	eaue atoy / Je
32.	les uains de	amoy Joyeuses et
33.	plainement que mon	neurez le sacrifice
34.	[blank leaf].	

*Liber de Quatuor Novissimis.*

This tract comprises seventy-one printed leaves, preceded by a blank leaf. It has twenty-eight lines in a full page, and, like the *Meditacions*, wants signatures, pagination, catchwords and initial letters. The entire work is divided into four parts; each part is preceded by a prologue, and treats of one of the four novissima, and is again subdivided into three minor portions. The headings both of the parts and subdivisions are printed in red ink.

The book commences with a table of contents, as follows:—

Ce present traictie est diuise en quatre parties principales; Desquelles chascune contient trois autres singulie / res parties en la fourme qui sensuit;

1. a premiere partie principale est de la mort corporelle et contient en soy trois parties singulieres.

a premiere est comment memoire de la mort fait soy humilier‡  
 a seconde est comment memoire de la mort fait mesprisier toutes choses‡  
 a tierce est comment memoire de la mort fait a lomme entreprēdre penitance ⁊ lac-  
 cepter de bon cuer sans constrāite.

&c.

This table terminates on line eight of the verso of the first leaf, and is fol-  
 lowed by the prologue, which ends at the bottom of the following page: the  
 verso of the following leaf is blank. Then follows:

“ Cy commence la premiere partie des quatre derrenieres choses qui sont a aduenir‡  
 “ A premiere partie des quatre derrenieres choses Dont la memoire Retrait  
 “ l. “ lomme des pechiez cest la mort presente ou temporellet Et pour ce  
 “ dist saint Bernard ou miroir des moynes La souueraine philozophie est tousiours  
 “ penser a la mort+”

The first part terminates on line twelve of the recto of the eighteenth  
 printed leaf, after which follows the prologue to the second part, which ends  
 on the verso of the nineteenth leaf, with the words—

Cy fine la premiere partie  
 de cestui present liure‡

The second part concludes at the bottom of the verso of the forty-first  
 printed leaf.

The third part concludes on line twenty-three of the recto of the fifty-  
 eighth leaf: and

The fourth terminates on the verso of the last leaf, in the following  
 words—

—————“ Or  
 pleust adieu quilz fussent bien sages et bien entendus et quilz pourueissent aux choses  
 derrenieres / dont la frequēte memoire et recordacion Rappelle des pechiez a culpe aux  
 vertus et conferme en bounes œuures, par quoy on paruient a la gloire eternelle‡  
 Amen.

Explicit liber de  
 quatuor Nouissimis.

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Leaf 1.	[blank]	
2.	Ce present traictie	comme par exemple
3.	noter que selon	[blank]
4.	Cy commence la	Car elle ne
5.	Et que diray	forgent lor et
6.	Mais on ne	peult Il aduenir
7.	Cest homme fait	Et list on
8.	obtint maintes	me non finer
9.	Vrayement vous folz	sa terre dõt
10.	en vne terre	se humiliassent en
11.	Sachent toutes gens	cy / Il le
12.	en la mort	Certes mōseigneur
13.	O tu fol	entendisses bñ ces
14.	Item pietre de bloix	briefue depuis son
15.	Se adam viuoit	tiesme chappitre† Vecy
16.	et men Jray	certain point Cest
17.	qui est mis	mēces a toy
18.	Or te hastes	leust ainsi fait
19.	tout ce quil	marie venant en
20.	Lors seront les	de cestui present
21.	Comment laccusation	partient a la
22.	langoureux qui luy	pecheurs A ce
23.	liniquite deffrain est	reux ⁊ ny
24.	O combien desolez	sepulchre et pourquoy
25.	qui au Jour	sons ainsi nous
26.	Contre cecy parle	bes de salomon
27.	Et a ce	Nostreseigneur dieu
28.	qui se font	pour ce est
29.	que nostreseigneur	vifz tu luy
30.	trouuer misericorde	qui chassent les
31.	ou nom de	vous ent † Cest
32.	laquelle yst hors	saint Jheronime
33.	toutes et quanteffoiz	donne de bien
34.	Certes toutes ces	gneur ⁊ qui
35.	Et qui aura	paine selon leurs
36.	Adoncqs yceulx	lors Il leur
37.	Pourtant mes frerez	larrons qui les
38.	Or aduint que	toutes choses solides

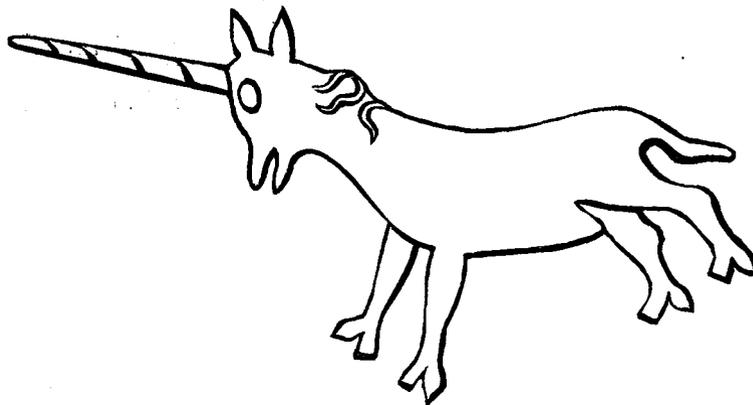
Leaf 39.	sont ouuertes / auquel	nostreseigneur Jhūcrist
40.	amiable et doulx	se deust demain
41.	passeroit toute la	en son xxiiij <sup>e</sup>
42.	de vmbre de	siecles et tempz
43.	Cy commence le	dra et brulera
44.	tellemēt allume et	est trouble quant
45.	ou telles choses	froit des neiges
46.	O combien miserable	et de merueilleuses
47.	et quil sapparust	Item en ecclesiaste
48.	sont comme les	moult grant et
49.	testes comme Il	tueur pour desemparer
50.	le pecheur condempne	toutes Illec aduenir
51.	sainte escripture comme	que sa couuersacion
52.	denfer Ja soit	ruch en son +
53.	fumiere / car tous	reur / et ardra
54.	perpetuellemēt et sans	cilles / et par
55.	aller par la	foiz mil ans
56.	la puissance diuine	teroit / qui est
57.	tout ne deffauldroit	tume denfer aux
58.	tu ten Retiraras	vie mais selle
59.	derrenier et a	dispute des couleurs
60.	sens Ains de	est Il escript
61.	Reluiront comme le	sains bienheurez est
62.	tant habōdant quil	mēt+ La grasse
63.	qui sont causes	et avec ce
64.	Cellui doncques qui	es sieclis des
65.	Royaume ouquel	ce est Il
66.	Entre en la	beatitude de tous
67.	ta face Je	char+ Cest doncques
68.	a eslire / et	extremitez de Joye
69.	avec les biens	tu seras guery
70.	bon cheualier Jhesucrist /	en larmes des
71.	corps estoient conuerties	Certes Il nen
72.	est mauuaise et	quatuor Nouissimis

When or where these pieces were printed, it is impossible to say. There is great reason to suppose that some of Caxton's earliest productions, viz. The two Recueils, the *Propositio Johannis Russell*, and the first edition of

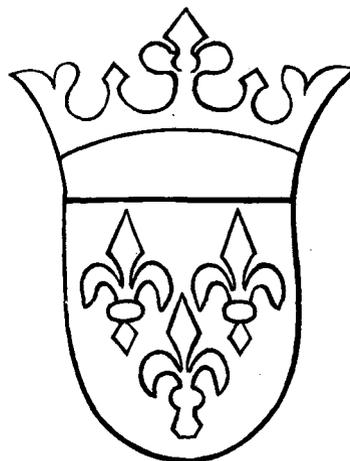
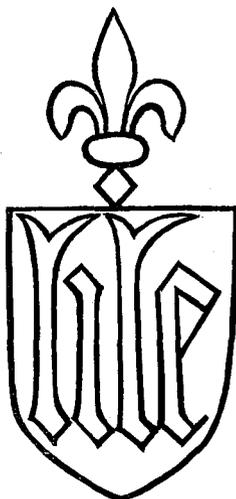
the Game of Chess, were printed abroad; and it is extremely probable that the *Meditacions* and the *Cordiale* were also printed by him before he established his press at Westminster. Two circumstances favour this conclusion: the first, the absence of all remark in the works by Caxton himself; indeed, I am inclined to regard them as pieces upon which he exercised himself in his new art: but secondly, and mainly, the fact that they are printed in the French language; for after Caxton's return to England, he appears to have confined himself entirely to works in his native tongue, with the exception of the *Decretorium Sacerdotum*, the *Statutes of Richard III. and Henry VII.* and the *Horæ*, for which English would not have been considered the proper dress. If this conjecture be correct, they must have been printed not later than the year 1474, as in that year, or immediately afterwards, he commenced working his press at Westminster. It may be worthy remark, that the type in which the *Cordiale* is printed appears to have been used as early as the year 1469 or 1470; the order of the Garter having been sent to Charles Duke of Burgundy by Edward IV. of England in the former year, and the speech, or "*Propositio*," of John Russell, the ambassador on this occasion, having, in all probability, been printed immediately after its delivery.

The water-marks are those that occur in books printed in the Low Countries, and are as under.

*In the "Meditacions."*



*In the "Cordiale."*



These water-marks tend to strengthen the presumption that the works above described were printed in the Low Countries, but they cannot be considered as affording any direct proof to that effect.

I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir Henry,

Your very faithful Servant,

J. WINTER JONES.

To Sir HENRY ELLIS, K.H.  
Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries,  
&c. &c. &c.