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## Citation

Hofer, Philip. 1947. A newly discovered book with painted decorations from Willibald Pirckheimer's library. *Harvard Library Bulletin* 1 (1), Winter 1947: 66-75.

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# A Newly Discovered Book with Painted Decorations from Willibald Pirckheimer's Library

**T**HE late Seymour de Ricci attributes to Michael Kerney the first suggestion that certain illuminations found in books from Willibald Pirckheimer's library might be by Albrecht Dürer, the humanist's life-long friend.<sup>1</sup> Since Kerney wrote, there have been many additional, and specific, claims advanced to which this essay is intended to add a little light, rather than heat, and to furnish at least one new piece of information.

The new information is the immediate cause of writing. In the summer of 1945 the scholar and London bookdealer E. P. Goldschmidt noticed an exceptionally fine Aldine Greek and Latin Aesop, Venice, 1505, among the books to be sold by Viscount Hambleden at Sotheby's, on July 16. On the first text page his practiced eye immediately recognized Pirckheimer's arms emblazoned, and he purchased the book after only moderate competition. He then showed the volume to Mr Campbell Dodgson, emeritus head of the British Museum Print Room, and an eminent authority on German art, who tended to agree with the attribution of the painted arms to Dürer. Finally he offered the volume to an American client and it is now on loan in the Department of Graphic Arts of the Harvard College Library.

Much circumstantial and artistic evidence can be built up to support the theory of Dürer's authorship. But since numerous claims have already been made for other illumination, as explained above, it seems wise to examine the evidence in this particular discovery coldly. The writer does not pretend to be an authority on Dürer, but only to fairly painstaking research on these arms, and to a keen desire to make no more claims than can be safely supported. More experienced scholars will have to pass on the conclusions. Among these it is hoped that Professor Erwin Panofsky will review the whole subject when he publishes a

<sup>1</sup> Seymour de Ricci, *English Collectors of Books and Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 26, n. 1; Michael Kerney, 'Willibald Pirckheimer 1470-1530,' in *Contributions towards a Dictionary of English Book-Collectors, as also of Some Foreign Collectors*, ed. Bernard Quaritch (London, 1892-1921), Pt. I (May, 1892).

third edition of his recent very successful two-volume work on Dürer.

Here, first, are the facts about this copy of the Aldine Aesop. Such inferences as can be drawn from them, and an aesthetic appraisal, will then follow in the proper order as the writer moves from certainty to personal opinion.

The book was printed by the scholar-publisher, Aldus Manutius, at Venice in October, 1505. This was just before Dürer's second trip to that great trading center, from which he wrote back to his wealthy friend as early as the 6th of January 1506. Almost at once Dürer mentioned to Pirckheimer that he had already despatched some of the books he had ordered for his patron. We know from further letters<sup>2</sup> that Dürer had been commissioned particularly to seek Greek books (in which important language of Renaissance scholarship Pirckheimer was one of the first scholars in Germany to become proficient), and also that Dürer was in financial debt to Pirckheimer, a situation which often obtained throughout the remainder of the artist's hard-pressed life. These are the only facts which can be brought to bear. What follows is deduction or conjecture.

It would not be unnatural, however, for Dürer to try to please his patron by exerting his artistic talent. Pirckheimer's appreciation of Dürer's ability is well evidenced by his letters. Moreover, it was a custom of the day frequently to make and exchange presents. Dürer's journal of his trip to the Low Countries in 1520-21 is full of such instances. With Pirckheimer he was on the closest terms. Many fine drawings<sup>3</sup> and paintings are extant which show his interest in heraldic and ornamental design. About a dozen drawings are for bookplates or marks of ownership, and three of them are for Pirckheimer personally, as well as a woodcut and an engraving for the same purpose.<sup>4</sup> We do not know from Dürer's letters, however, that he ever illuminated a book for Pirckheimer. The only book decorations that are certainly<sup>5</sup> car-

<sup>2</sup> Notably in letters of 28 August and 13 October 1506. For all Dürer's letters see *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. III, *Dürers Briefe, Tagebücher und Reime* (Vienna, 1872), pp. 3-66.

<sup>3</sup> Reproduced by F. Lippmann, *Zeichnungen von Albrecht Dürer*, Vols. I-VII (Berlin, 1883-1929), especially plates 39, 51, 82, 264, 299, 565, 602, 643, 675, 793, 804, 845, and 901.

<sup>4</sup> A. Bartsch, *Le Peintre Graveur* (Leipzig, 1866), VII, 192, Appendix #52, and 113, #106 respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton, 1943), II, 161-162, lists those which have been attributed to Dürer. Most of these he is inclined to doubt.

ried out by his own hand are the forty-five marginal pen drawings in the Emperor Maximilian's 'Prayer Book,' which are signed and dated 1515 — nearly ten years later than the period in question. An example from this book is shown in Plate IIb.

There is one near-contemporary piece of evidence in favor of Dürer's authorship of this particular Aldine Aesop decoration. Pirckheimer's library, in an absence of male heirs, descended, after his death in 1530, to his favorite daughter Felicitas, who had married into the Imhof family of Nuremberg. In 1634, one of her descendants, Hans Hieronymus Imhof, was charged by the other heirs, whose banking affairs had gone very badly in the first part of the Thirty Years' War, to sell the bulk of these books, which had previously been held, despite a sale of art objects to the Emperor Rudolph in the early 1580's. H. H. Imhof kept a financial notebook<sup>8</sup> — his 'Gcheimbuchlein' — and under this year 1634, on folio 72 recto, he records the sale of '14 books from the Pirckheimer Library' which he describes item by item, particularly as to the illumination, which he states was by Dürer's own hand ('ist von gummi farben von Albrecht Dürer's hand gemahlt').

Number IX in this list is unquestionably the Aesop under discussion. Not only does Imhof correctly identify it as an edition in Latin and Greek, but he also describes one of the two illuminated initials as containing an owl, and a painted coat of arms which is supported by 'ein Wilter mann und weib; halten das Birckheymerwappen in Händen.' The wild man and woman do support Pirckheimer's shield as stated. Imhof believed the illumination to be by Dürer, and the purchaser, Mathieu (or Matthijs) van Overbeke of Leyden, a collector of Dürer's art, was of the same opinion. The latter paid a price of 300 Reichstaler for the fourteen books, which was decidedly more than their current worth as printed classics. To be sure, the sale does not of itself prove that these fourteen books are nearer to Dürer than the many other books which exist with painted Pirckheimer arms. It only shows that they, at least, were considered authentic by the near descendants of Dürer's closest friend, and by a collector who paid a good price — and a few years later bought several more items from this source in the same belief.

<sup>8</sup> The MS was before 1939 in Nuremberg. It is partially reprinted — in so far as it refers to the books — by Erwin Rosenthal in *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, XLIX, Beiheft, Teil I (Berlin, 1928) in an article on 'Dürers Buchmalereien für Pirckheimers Bibliothek.'



Τα γὰρ πάντα φύσιν πῶν ἐσθ' ἀνθρώποις ἠκείβωσαι μὲν καὶ ἄλλοι,  
 καὶ τοῖσ' αὖτ' αὐτοὺς περιέδωκεν φέροντες. αἰσώπου δὲ δοκεῖ  
 μὴ πῶρ' ἄλλοτ' ἐπιπυόιασ' τῆσ' ἠδικῆσ' διδασκαλίαν ἄ-  
 ψάμετος, πολλῶ τῶ μίξω τούσ' πολλόνσ' αὐτῶν παρελάσαι.  
 καὶ γὰρ οὐτ' ἀφ' οὐρανὸν ἔβησ' οὐτ' ἀπὸ γῆσ' ἔβησ', οὐτ' ἀπὸ  
 ἰσορείαν ἦν ὁ πρὸ τῆσ' κατ' αὐτῶν ἠλικίαν ἔβησ' χρόνος, πῶ  
 τὸν θεοῖσ' ἀπαθίμετος, ἀλλὰ μύθοισ' τὰ πάντα παρὰ δὲ βῶν,  
 οὐτῶ τῶσ' πῶν ἀκρωμένωσ' ἀγρῶν ἠυχαῖσ', ὡσ' αἰσώτεσ' αὐτῶσ' λογικῶσ' τρι-  
 εῖσ', ἢ φρεσῖν, ἀ μὴτ' ἐρεθισμῶσ' ἀλάτικεσ'. καὶ αὐτῶσ' πάλιν μὴ προσέχειν ἰκεί-  
 νοισ', οἷσ' πολλὰ τῶν ἀλόγων ἐκαστῶσ' τρυφῶσ' προσεχικῶτα μυστέται.  
 ἔξ' ὧσ', ἀ μὲν κινδυνῶσ' ἐπιρμένωσ' ἰαυτῶσ' δέσφα, ἀ δὲ μίξωσ' ἐπὶ τοῖσ' κα-  
 εῖοισ' τῆσ' ἀφιλείαν ἔτυχε. οὐτ' ἄρα ἰνῶσ' ὅσ' ἐκ αὐτῶν βίαισ' φιλοσοφῶσ'  
 πολιτείας εἰκόνα προδέμνωσ', καὶ ἔργοισ' μάλλον, ἢ λόγιοισ' φιλοσοφῶσ'  
 εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὅσ' ἀμοσίον τῆσ' φρυγίαν κατῆγε τῆσ' μεγάλης ἐπίκλησιν. πῶ ἢ  
 τύχη γένοιε δοῦλος. ἐφ' ὧσ' καὶ σπείρασ' μοι δοκεῖ, εἰ τῶσ' πλάττωσ' εἰ γο-  
 γῶσ' καλῶσ' ἄμα καὶ ἀληθῶσ' εἰρηθῶσ'. ὡσ' τὰ πολλὰ γὰρ ταῦτ' ἔφασκεν ἴσταν  
 τῶσ' ἀλλήλοισ' ὅσ' ἦ, τὴ φύσιν καὶ ἠέμος. αἰσώπου γὰρ πῶσ' ψυχῆσ', ἢ μὲν φύ-  
 σισ' ἐλευθέρωσ' ἀπέδωκεν. ὁ δὲ παρ' ἀνθρώπων ἠέμος εἰσ' σῶμα πρὸσ' δουλείαν  
 ἀπέδωκε. ἴσταν μὲν οὐδ' οὐτῶ πῶσ' τῆσ' ψυχῆσ' ἐλευθέρωσ' ἀμύνασθαι.  
 ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶσ' πρὸσ' πολλὰ καὶ πολλὰ γὰρ μεταφέρειν εἰσ' σῶμα, τῆσ' οἰκείαν  
 ἐκείνησ' ἔσφασ' οὐχ' οἷσ' τ' ἐγλύεσ' μετασῆσαι. ἐτύχησ' δὲ ὅσ' εἰσ' μόνον δοῦλος,  
 ἀλλὰ καὶ δουσιδέσ' τῶσ' ἐπ' αὐτῶσ' πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἶχε. καὶ γὰρ φο-  
 ξῶσ' ἦσ'. σιμόσ' πῶσ' ῥῖτα. σιμόσ' εἰσ' βράχιλον. πρὸσ' χεῖλοσ'. μέλασ'. ὅσ' καὶ τῶσ'  
 ὀνόματ' ἔτυχε. τιμῶσ' γὰρ αἰσώπου, τῶσ' αἰθιοπῶσ'. προγῶσ' βλαίωσ'. καὶ  
 κυφῶσ'. τῶσ' καὶ εἰσ' ὀμηρικῶσ' θεοῖσ' τῆσ' ἀλαστότητ' τοῦ εἰδῶσ' ὑπὸσ' ἀλ-  
 λόμελοσ'. ἢ δὲ δὴ πάντων ἐσ' αὐτῶσ' χεῖρσ' ἦσ', εἰσ' βραδύγλωσσοσ', καὶ εἰσ' τῶσ'  
 φωνῶσ' ἀσπῶσ' τε καὶ ἀσπῶσ' ἀσπῶσ'. ἀ πάλιν καὶ δοκεῖ πῶσ' δουλείαν αἰσώ-  
 πῶσ' παρὰσ' ἀμύνασθαι. καὶ γὰρ δὴ καὶ θῶμα αὐτῶσ' ἦσ', εἰ οὐτῶσ' ἀτόπωσ' ἔσταν  
 τῶσ' σῶματ' ὅσ' ἐγλύεσ' τῶσ' πῶσ' δουλοῦσ' αὐτῶσ' διαφυγῆσ'. ἀλλὰ εἰ μὲν  
 σῶμα τῶσ' ἦσ' τῶσ' ἀσπῶσ'. πῶσ' δὲ ψυχῆσ', ἀγχινοῦσ' ἐπιφύκει, καὶ πρὸσ'  
 ἐπίσταν πῶσ' ἐπιβελῶτασ'. ὁ κεντῆ μέτωσ' ἰνῶσ' αὐτῶσ', ἀ τε πρὸσ' οὐ-  
 δὲσ' οἰκείαν ἔργωσ' οἰκείωσ' ἔσταν, σκάπῆσ' εἰσ' ἀγρῶσ' ἔσταν ἔσταν. ὅσ' ἀπὸσ'  
 δὲσ' πρὸσ' μῶσ' τοῦ ἔργωσ' εἶχεσ'. ἀσπῶσ' μὲν δὲ ποτὴ καὶ τῶσ' δεσπότησ' πρὸσ'  
 εἰσ' ἀγρῶσ', ἔσταν πῶσ' ἔργωσ' ἐπιστομῶσ' δέσταν, γαρτῶσ' τῶσ' σῶματ' ἔσταν  
 σπῶσ' ἀμύνασθαι, δῶσ' ἔσταν. ὁ δὲ αὐτῶσ' τῶσ' ὑπέρωσ' ἔσταν ἔσταν, ἀσπῶσ'  
 πρὸσ' τῶσ' οἰκείησ', τῶσ' γὰρ ἦσ' ὄνομα τῶσ' παιδί, φυλάτῆσ' ἐκείλοσ', ὡσ'  
 αὐτῶσ' μὲν εἰσ' λουζῆσ' παρὰσ' ἔσταν. συμβαδὲ οὐτῶσ', καὶ τῶσ' αἰσώπου κατὰσ'  
 τῶσ' χεῖρσ' εἰσ' ἀσπῶσ' εἰσ' πῶσ' οἰκείησ', ἀσπῶσ' ὁ ἀσπῶσ' λαβόμελοσ',  
 βουλήσ' τῶσ' πῶσ' σῶματ' ἐπὶσ' προτείνει. ἐμφορῶσ' εἰσ' δοκεῖ τῶσ' σῶ-  
 ματ' ὅσ' ἦσ'. καὶ ὁ δεσπότησ' ἠμῶσ' τῶσ' ζήτησ', ἀλλ' ἠμῶσ' τοῦ αἰσώπου  
 κατὰσ' μαρτυρήσ' ἠμῶσ', ὡσ' εἰσ' τῶσ' οἰκείησ' εἰσ' σφραμῶσ', καὶ τῶσ' σῶματ' ἀ-  
 σπῶσ' ἀσπῶσ', καὶ ἔσταν ἀσπῶσ' θεμελίωσ' τῶσ' πρὸσ' τῶσ' οἰκείησ' εἰσ' δὲσ', ἔσταν



PLATE I

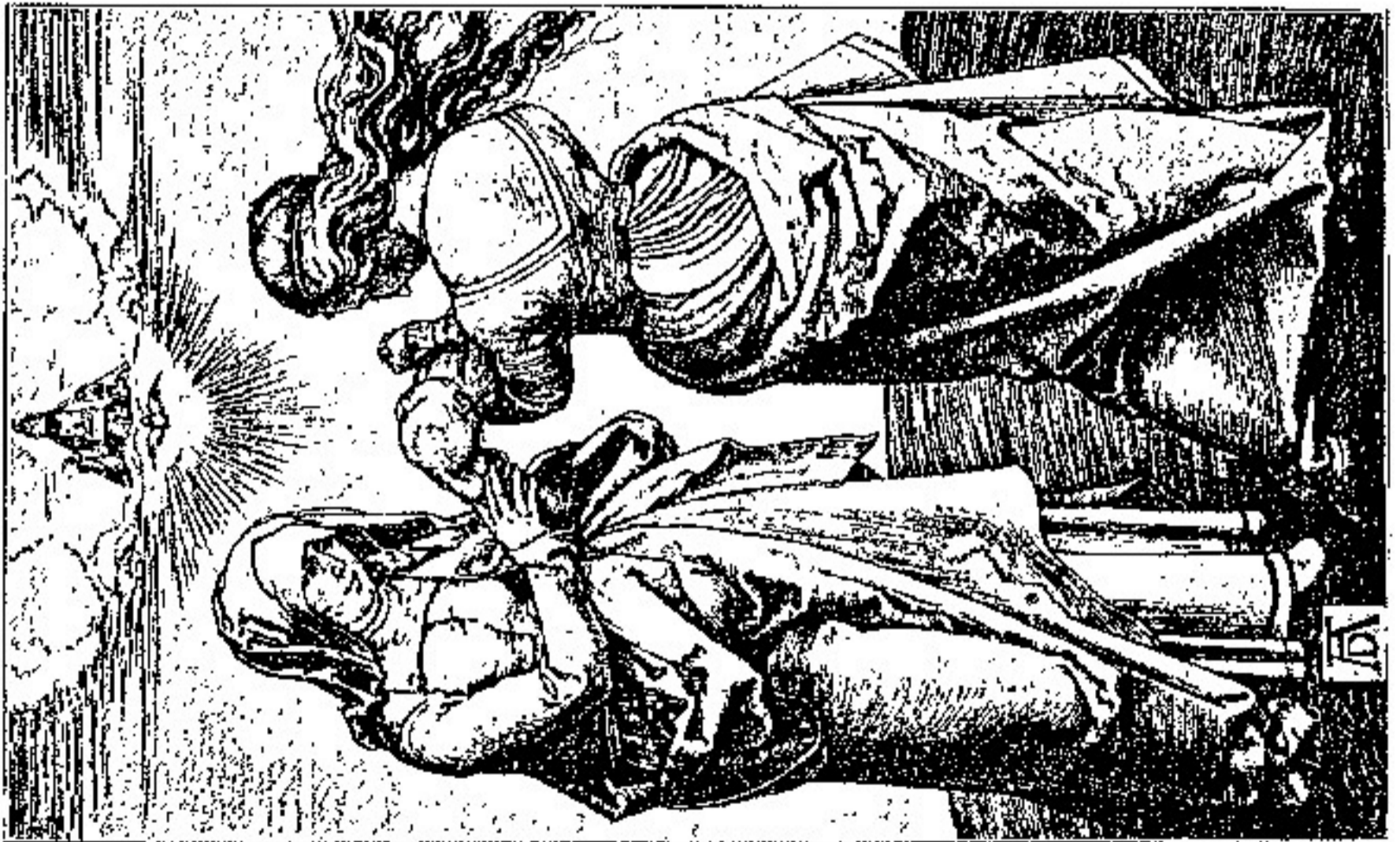
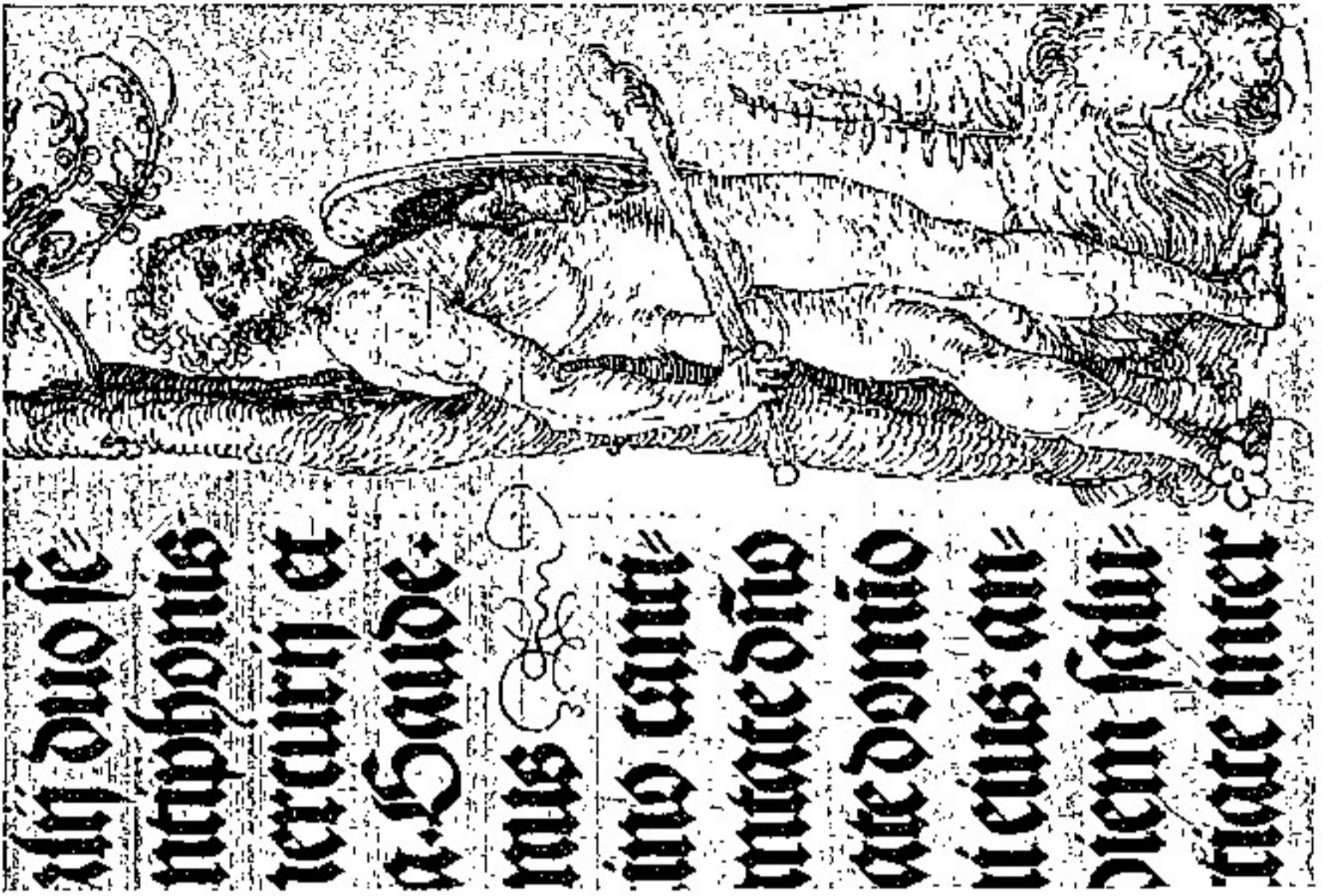




PLATE IIIb

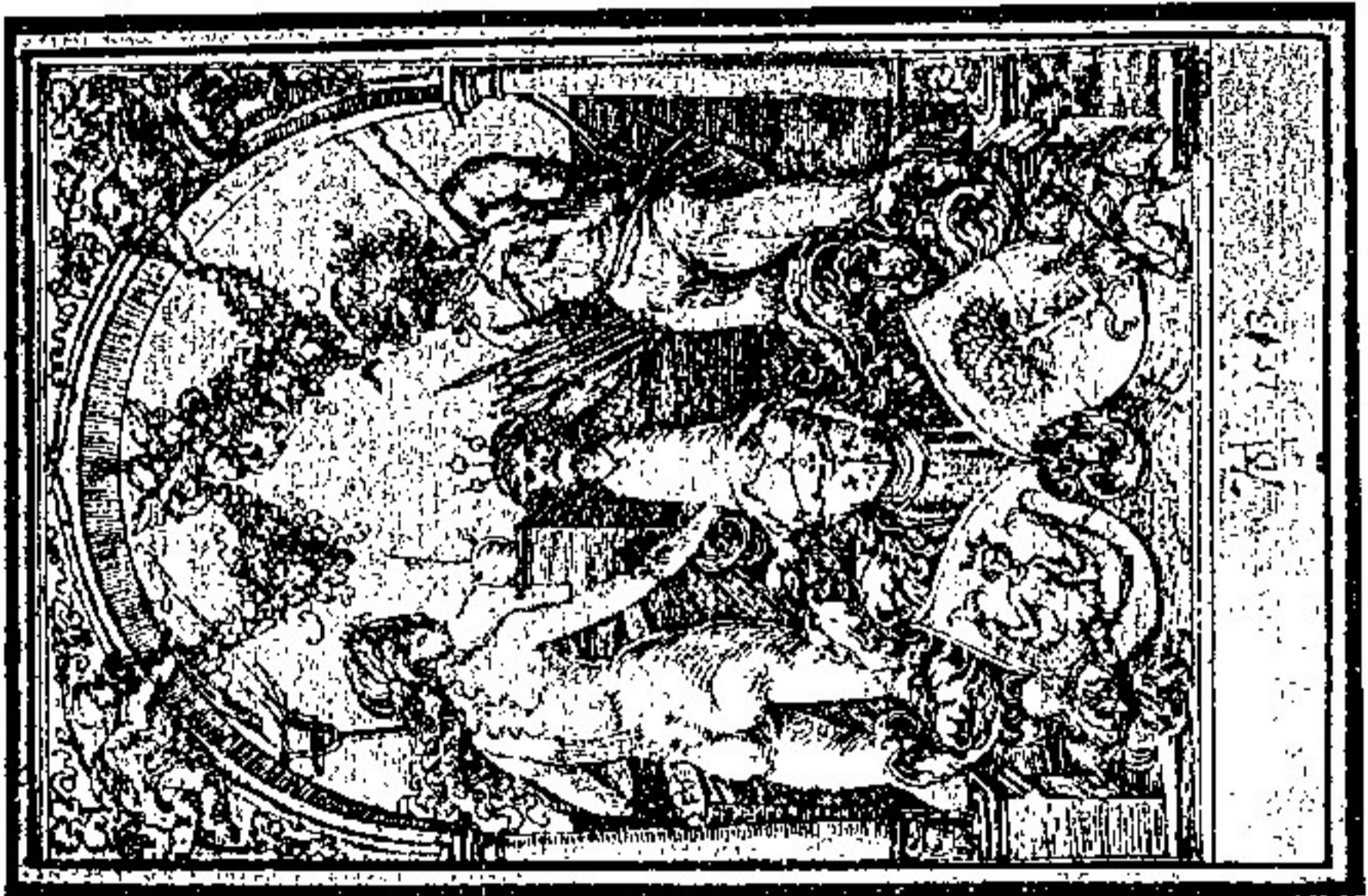


PLATE IIIa



PLATE IVb

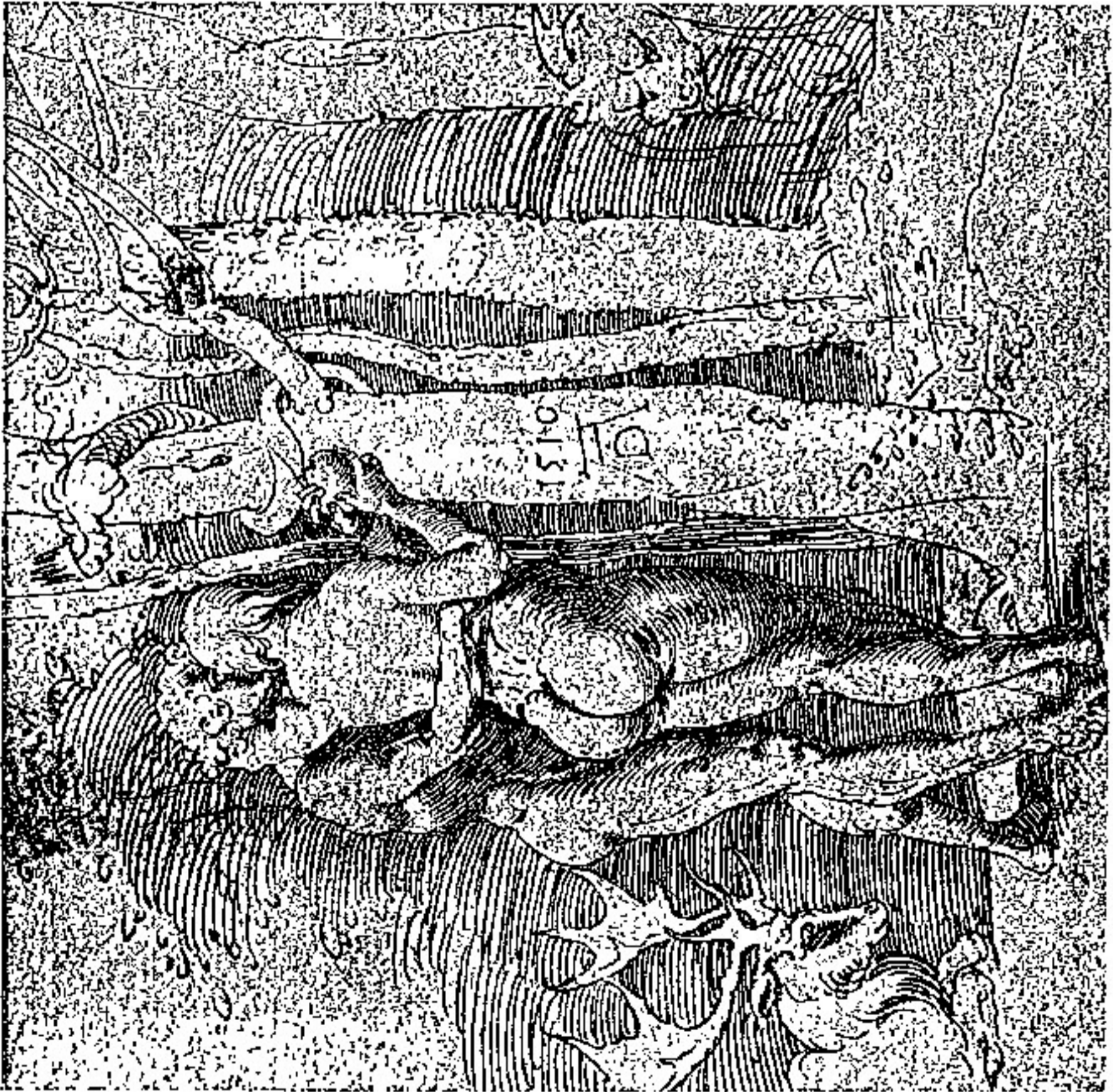


PLATE IVa



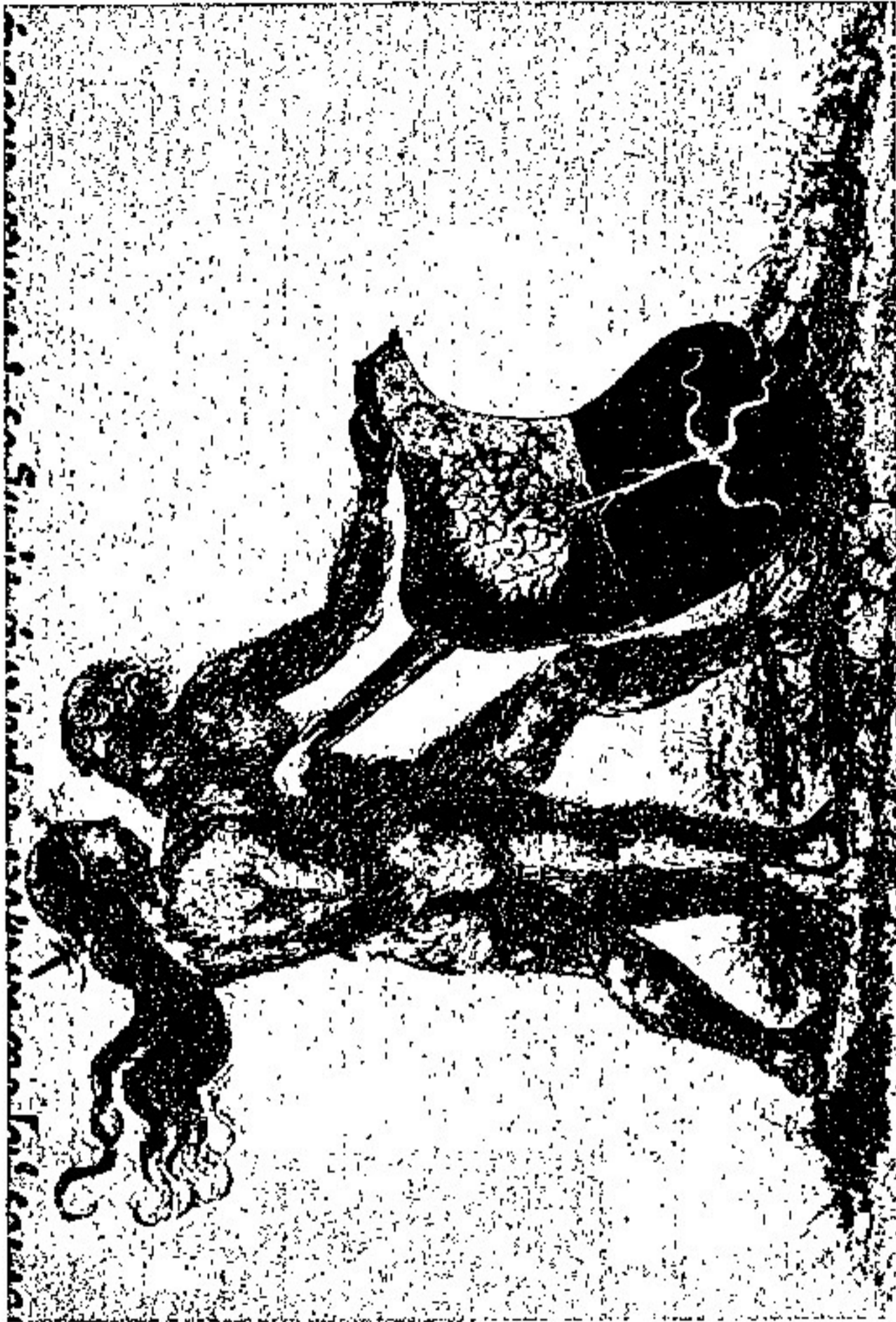


PLATE V



Heretofore only three books from Imhof's list have been traced to present-day collections. Mr Goldschmidt's discovery of the Graeco-Latin Aesop makes a fourth — which out of fourteen is a sadly small proportion.

From circumstantial one must now move to stylistic evidence, which unfortunately is more complex. Albrecht Dürer had so great an influence and produced so much in his relatively short life (he died at fifty-eight) that one can naturally find some elements common to the Aesop miniature (reproduced in Plate I) and to accepted examples of his work. That is, if we agree the arms are contemporary German work, of which there seems no doubt. The coloring is certainly of the period and country, although it may seem unusual to modern eyes. The wild man and woman are painted a very striking yellow-green, with an intricate overlay of brown hairs, which denote their savage state. Only the faces, feet, hands, elbows, knees, and the like, are bare. The flesh tints contain white lead and have partially oxidized. The skin of the man is much browner than the woman's — a customary artistic convention. His hair and beard are gray while her hair is brown with greenish overtones. A wreath on her head is green and is touched with gold. The shield is gold in its upper half and scarlet in the lower. Pirckheimer's emblem, a tree, is gray and white. Most of the ground on which the wild pair stand is gray or a pale green in which flowers and long blades of grass are picked out in gold. But certain details are surprising. The wild man does not have the usual club. The shield seems to be held by straps or ribbons edged with gold and painted dark blue, which are not well differentiated. Neither the man's right, nor the woman's left arm is indicated — a curious omission, unlike Dürer, although not immediately noticeable. Yet all other details in this miniature show care in drawing and an inspiration far above the ability of any ordinary craftsman.

The wild man actually is a favorite subject of Dürer's. It is particularly applicable to Pirckheimer since, as Professor Edgar Wind pointed out to the writer, it signifies crude strength and courage,<sup>7</sup> for which his friend was noted, and in one of Dürer's letters from Venice (28 August 1506) he reminds Pirckheimer that he is wild in appearance.<sup>8</sup> A number of Dürer drawings,<sup>9</sup> the Krell shutters, which will be mentioned

<sup>7</sup> See also Jacobo Gelli, *Divise-Motti e Imprese* (Milan, 1928), pp. 322-323, #1171 and #1172.

<sup>8</sup> 'Ir secht awch wild,' quoted by Panofsky, *op. cit.*, I, 109.

<sup>9</sup> At Munich (in Maximilian's 'Prayer Book'), at Dresden, etc., as well as Warsaw;

later, and a very important (signed) engraving, the 'Coat of Arms with the Skull,'<sup>10</sup> also feature wild men. In all but one of these cases they are drawn in connection with heraldic emblems, and in several instances the pose is distinctly similar. Professor Wind suggested to the writer that the wild man's features in the Aesop miniature under discussion might be those of Pirckheimer, since they are rather heavy and flat, unlike the notably sharp features in all other renderings of wild men by Dürer.<sup>11</sup> The formal engraved portrait which Dürer made for Pirckheimer and which the latter used as a bookplate (see reproduction, Plate IIIb) shows definite similarities in feature. The gray hair of the miniature could also be significant. Might not the miniature, therefore, be a joke, in the spirit of the times? Might it not represent Pirckheimer, derisively, as a 'wild old man,' and the woman as one of his 'lady friends' to whom Dürer jokingly makes such pointed allusions in his letters from Venice in 1506?

There is also a very close relationship, from all points of view, with a Dürer drawing in Warsaw<sup>12</sup> (before 1939) which is reproduced in Plate IIIa so that the reader may make his own comparison. This drawing is an elaborate and very delicately drawn design in ink for Pirckheimer's bookplate which must be earlier in date (*ca.* 1503) than the Aesop miniature, since it contains in addition to Pirckheimer's own, the arms of his wife, Crescentia, who died on 17 May 1504, in childbirth.

If Dürer was the artist of the Aesop miniature he must have had this Warsaw drawing for Pirckheimer's ex-libris in mind. The miniature is in no sense a copy of the drawing (which would be an argument against Dürer's authorship, as a great artist rarely 'repeats' exactly). But it has certain very notable features in common. First of all, there is the pose of the woman in both scenes. Her hair is flying, her face turned one-quarter to the front, body quite naked seen from almost full rear, and a wreath around her head. The position of both legs is even more strikingly analogous. For Dürer in 1506 was less concerned with anatomical truth than with compositional relationships. His interest in anatomical truth came later — an interest which led him to write his book on

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see Lippmann, *op. cit.*, and Charles Narrey, *Albrecht Dürer* (Paris, 1866), p. 57, reproducing a fine drawing destroyed in the Tuileries fire (1871).

<sup>10</sup> Bartsch 101; J. Meder, *Dürer-Katalog* (Vienna, 1932), #98.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the reproduction in Plate VIb.

<sup>12</sup> F. Winkler, *Die Zeichnungen Albrecht Dürer* (Berlin, 1937), Vol. II, plate 329; F. Lippmann, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, plate 901.

human proportions (first published in 1528). The pose is not simply awkward, it is purposely mannered and individual, as is that of Adam and Eve in the first two woodcuts of Dürer's 'Little Passion.' Such a feature as this is the handwriting of an individual artist. Since the Warsaw drawing is quite generally accepted as the work of the master, despite the false signature and date (1503), the Aesop miniature must have at least a close relationship with him. The delicacy of the two drawings is another affinity, and the fact that they are both for Pirckheimer.

The wild woman's curious profile and hair suggest Eve's in Dürer's famous engraving of 'The Fall of Man' (dated 1504).<sup>18</sup> The wild woman's profile is also strikingly like the foreshortening in the engraving of Mary and St Anne<sup>14</sup> (reproduced in Plate IIa). In respect to pose, her figure recalls several Dürer drawings, notably that of a naked woman<sup>15</sup> at Donaueschingen, and the flat-footed stance of Adam and Eve in a drawing at Vienna<sup>16</sup> for the first 'Little Passion' woodcut (a portion of which is reproduced in Plate IVa).

Other instances may be multiplied. The Aesop wild man has a relationship, as Professor Panofsky has pointed out in correspondence, to the wild man in the dexter Krell shutter painting at Munich (reproduced in Plate VIb). The posture in both cases has an agitation not really called for by the weight of the shield alone. Equally, as Professor Wind suggests, the mannered posture of the wild woman's hand holding the ribbons or straps in the Aesop miniature closely resembles Eve's hand in the drawings<sup>17</sup> at the Albertina and the British Museum for the famous engraving of the 'Fall of Man' previously mentioned.

All in all, therefore, the writer feels that the weight of evidence favors Dürer's hand in some important phase of the miniature's execution — possibly solely in the under drawing, although the coloring is finely done. Technically speaking, against the drawing being Dürer's own, only the carelessness in omitting arms and club, and the lack of definition in the straps or ribbons holding the shield can be brought to bear. Otherwise, the analogies are too numerous and too close to be dismissed.

<sup>18</sup> Bartsch 1; Meder 1.

<sup>14</sup> Bartsch 29.

<sup>15</sup> H. Tietze, *Kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke Albrecht Dürers* (Basle, 1927), Vol. II, Pt. 2, #561, and reproduction on p. 244.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, #404, and reproduction on p. 204.

<sup>17</sup> Winkler, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, plates 423, 424, 426, and 427.

The logical date for the drawing (1506) seems right — during or just after Dürer's trip to Venice. It fits in with the Dürer drawings and prints mentioned, as well as others less striking. And there are the suggestive references in his 1506 letters. Last but not least, the Aesop miniature can bear enlargement. Indeed, when it is so treated, as in the reproduction in Plate V, the feeling of power is enhanced. This is a notable characteristic of good drawing. The work of a copyist would not be likely to pass such a test, although admittedly at this point personal aesthetic judgment comes strongly into play.

A note of caution in making claims, however, is furnished by a plaque in the Metropolitan Museum of Art which Professor Wind called to the writer's attention. This sculpture combines several Dürer elements, related to the Aesop miniature, but is considered by him and by Professor Panofsky<sup>18</sup> more likely to have been executed in his entourage by an artist with access to his drawings. The plaque is also related to a sixteenth-century drawing in Dessau<sup>19</sup> where the nude female figure is combined with a wild man to make a composition decidedly interesting in comparison with the miniature under discussion. It is therefore reproduced in Plate IVb. Here again Dürer's own hand is doubtful. As a result, one sees that copies *after* Dürer, or containing Dürer elements, were made in or shortly after Dürer's lifetime, and one hesitates to claim too much for any work that cannot be thoroughly authenticated.

When, in this same critical spirit, we consider the initial letters, one of which H. H. Imhof had also indicated in his 'Geheimbuchlein' was painted by Dürer's hand, we are less happy with an enlargement. The owl is quaint indeed and undoubtedly contemporary, but it is a far cry from the lively pen sketch (*ca.* 1505) in the British Museum.<sup>20</sup> The Aesop owl may derive from the study for the small owl in the Vienna 'Maria mit den vielen Tieren,'<sup>21</sup> but the Aesop owl is more awkward. It is not even so fine as a watercolor drawing in the Albertina at Vienna once attributed to Dürer which, despite its signature and date (1508), has been generally rejected. Only the coloring of the Aesop owl seems to resemble the miniature containing Pirckheimer's arms. There are the same little touches of gold in the grass beneath the owl's feet as in the painted arms on the same page. The dark blue of the Greek capital

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, #1733.

<sup>19</sup> Illustrated in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, I (1932), 361.

<sup>20</sup> Lippmann, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, plate 746.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. V, plate 460.

letter is repeated in the straps of the shield in the Pirckheimer arms. As for the other initial, on the left-hand page, it is still more routine and carries no conviction at all as being by a master's hand, although the coloring is of the same general scheme and execution.

Before concluding, the Aesop painting deserves to be compared with the miniature in the Greek edition of Theocritus, also from Pirckheimer's library, formerly in the Yates-Thompson Collection, and now in the London Library (reproduced in Plate VIa). This book is mentioned by H. H. Imhof (No. XII) in his list of fourteen books sold to van Overbeke. It is also a Greek classic, also printed by Aldus in Venice, and is the most celebrated if not the finest of those illuminated books from Pirckheimer's library which have survived. The date of illumination of the Theocritus must be somewhat earlier than the Aesop; for, like the Warsaw drawing, it contains Pirckheimer's wife's arms, as well as his own, which he never used after her death in 1504. The delicacy of drawing is the same in both cases. From Dr Rosenthal's description<sup>22</sup> the coloring is of equal individuality and brilliance, and also contains spots which have oxidized. But it is more elaborate. Dr Rosenthal accepts the exquisite landscape without reserve as Dürer's work, and bases many of his arguments in favor of eight other volumes, most of which had been sold in 1925 from the Royal Society Library, on similarities with this illumination.

Professor Panofsky, on the other hand, is more cautious. He says, 'The manual authenticity of this kind of work is as difficult to determine as the exact dates.' The Theocritus illumination is one of five which he believes may be by Dürer, although he adds, 'even here the participation of a professional illuminator is not excluded.'<sup>23</sup> In addition, the miniature in Aristotle's *Organon*, Venice, 1495-97, and a somewhat similar miniature in a copy of Simplicius' Greek commentary on Aristotle, Venice, 1499, in the Royal Library at Copenhagen, seem to him possibly by the master hand. Both, be it noted, are also contained in H. H. Imhof's list of fourteen books, as is the Aesop. But this may be a coincidence. For stylistic and technical reasons the writer agrees with Professor Panofsky's opinion in so far as can be judged from reproductions of the other illuminations attributed to Dürer. It seems to him that it is the color scheme, and painting technique,

<sup>22</sup> *Jahrbuch der Preuss. Kunstsammlungen*, XLIX, Beiheft, Teil I (Berlin, 1928), 6-14.

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, II, 161, under #1712.

rather than the drawing which is the common denominator between all the painted Pirckheimer arms. One must admit a common colorist, or school of illumination, in order to reconcile the strong similarities, at the same time that one tries to distinguish the master's hand from a copyist working with elements from Dürer's designs, in the *under drawing* of the various miniatures.

In sum, then, the color and the design of the initials argue against the theory of Dürer's authorship. But they do not conflict with the writer's theory that Dürer drew the shield and its supporters, leaving the initials and all the coloring to an assistant, or more likely still, to a local Nuremberg illuminator who may have worked for Pirckheimer, so many of whose books bear painted coats of arms. Whoever the colorists were (if more than one hand was engaged in these Aesop illuminations), they were German and not Italian. It is more than likely that they resided in Nuremberg; for otherwise the illuminations in the books which Pirckheimer bought in many parts of Europe could not have so much in common as regards their coloring. The fact that there was a thriving school in the city at this time makes their employment the more natural since locally available.

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A final word as to the more recent provenance of the Aesop. From Matthijs van Overbeke (1634) on till the early nineteenth century, the trail is lost. Van Overbeke, merchant, scholar and patron of the arts, died in 1638, his widow in 1649, his son in 1674. There is apparently no clue where and when his books were sold. In the middle of the eighteenth century the Aesop was evidently in France; for it was then bound (*ca.* 1750-70) in fairly plain but fine French red levant morocco, in the style of Derome, with marbled end papers, by a superior French workshop.

Probably between 1824 and 1831 it came into the hands of Sir John Hayford Thorold, one of the best collectors of his day in England, who greatly added to the famous Syston Park Library which his father, Sir John Thorold, had commenced toward the end of the previous century. Seymour de Ricci notes the younger Thorold's habit of penciling on the flyleaf the name of the dealer from whom he had acquired the book.<sup>24</sup> In this case we find the name of the bookseller Payne. But a careful perusal of Payne's own files of his catalogues, which Robert

\* *English Collectors of Books and Manuscripts*, p. 160, n. 1.



Hoe gave to the Grolier Club in New York, reveals, according to Mr George L. McKay, the Secretary, no evidence of Thorold's purchase. The book is not Sir Mark Masterman Sykes' copy, which was also quite evidently a fine one, having fetched all of £20 in 1824, because that was bound in olive morocco by Lewis (a later and an English binder). Possibly it is Meerman's copy, later owned by A. A. Renouard,<sup>25</sup> but of this there is no proof.

Besides his bookplate and note of the bookseller Payne, Thorold customarily put one other — and sometimes less happy — mark of ownership upon his books. He had what Michael Kerney enjoyed calling a 'hideous anchor in gold, a frightful caricature of the Aldine emblem,'<sup>26</sup> stamped on the two covers by Messrs Storr and Ridge, bookbinders at Grantham. Actually the anchors (in this case at least) are not too large, or even ugly, and do not seem seriously out of place.

The next mention we have of this Aesop is in the Syston Park Sale Catalogue (Sotheby's, London, 12–19 December 1884) where under #40 it was sold for £20 10s. without mention of the Pirckheimer provenance or of the painted illumination but only as a 'very fine copy in red morocco, g.e. [gilt edges] by Derome.' The purchaser is not noted in the Harvard Library copy of this catalogue. Very possibly he was the Right Honorable William Henry Smith (1825–1891), First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons in the second ministry of Lord Salisbury, since Smith's armorial label is pasted opposite the Syston Park plate on the inner fly leaf.

From this able Englishman, whose name is carried by the famous chain of W. H. Smith & Sons bookstores all over the British Isles, the volume undoubtedly passed direct to his son, Viscount Hambleden, in whose sale Mr E. P. Goldschmidt purchased it (Sotheby's, 16 July 1945, #160). Here at last mention of the illumination is made, but no reference to Pirckheimer, nor to the possible authorship of Dürer.

PHILIP HOFER

<sup>25</sup> A. A. Renouard, *Annales de l'Imprimerie des Alde* (3rd ed., Paris, 1834), p. 50.

<sup>26</sup> Article on 'Sir John Thorold,' in *Contributions towards a Dictionary of English Book-Collectors*, Pt. II (September 1892).

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