

LAZARUS SEAMAN AND HIS BEQUEST TO JAMES HULBERT

BUT FOR A POSTHUMOUS EVENT which has established his name securely in the annals of bibliophily, Lazarus Seaman, D.D., would be remembered today probably only as a minor actor in the religio-political affairs of England in the mid-seventeenth century. In April 1644, when already a member of the Westminster Assembly, he was intruded as Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge in the place of the ejected future Bishop of Durham, John Cosin. Subsequent offices were to include the presidency of Sion College (1651-3) and the vice-chancellorship of the University (1653). With the restoration of Charles to the crown and Cosin to the mastership in 1660 and with the application of the Act of Uniformity in 1662 Seaman withdrew from the political stage. Henceforth, as a nonconformist clergyman, he was confined to ministering to a congregation of former parishioners — from 1672 publicly at a chapel in Meeting-house Yard, Silver Street, Wood Street, Holborn. The posthumous event which established his name was the dispersal of his library by means of the first sale of books by auction to be conducted in Britain. Seaman had died 3 September 1675; the sale of his books — at his house in Warwick Court, Warwick Lane — began 31 October 1676.

The selling of books by auction appears to have originated with the Dutch, the first recorded instance being in Leiden in 1593, though the earliest catalogue to survive dates from 1599, also in Leiden.¹ Hobson (p.x) has attributed the delay in introducing the practice into Britain to the hostility of the booksellers. Why it was introduced for the sale of Seaman's library is probably to be accounted for by the advice tendered to his executors by Joseph Hill, a fellow nonconformist minister normally resident in Holland but, as a result of publishing a pamphlet offensive to the Dutch government, resident in England 1673-8.² Whatever the circumstances, it is clear that the Seaman sale was a novelty, such that the procedures of auctioning — so familiar today — required explanation in the address 'To the Reader' prefaced to the printed catalogue:

READER, IT hath not been usual here in *England* to make Sale of BOOKS by way of *Auction*, or *who will give most for them*: But it having been practised in other Countreys to the Advantage both of Buyers and Sellers; It was therefore conceived (for the Encouragement of Learning,) to publish the Sale of these Books this manner of way; and it is hoped that this will not be unacceptable to Schollers; and therefore we thought it convenient to give an Advertisement concerning the manner of proceeding therein.

First, That having this Catalogue of the Books, and their Editions under their several Heads and Numbers, it will be more easie for any Person of Quality, Gentlemen, or others, to Depute any one to Buy such Books for them as they shall desire, if their occasions will not permit them to be present at the *Auction* themselves.

Secondly, That those which bid most are the Buyers; And if any manifest Differences should arise, that then the same Book or Books shall be forthwith exposed again to Sale, and the highest bidder to have the same.

Thirdly, That all the Books according to the Catalogue are (for so much as we know) perfect, and sold as such; But if any of them appear to be otherwise before they are taken away, the Buyer shall have his choice of taking or leaving the same.

Fourthly, That the Mony for the Books bought, be paid at the Delivery of them, within one Months time after the *Auction* is ended.

Fifthly, That the *Auction* will begin the 31st of *October* at the Deceased D^r's House in *Warwick Court* in *Warwick lane* punctually at Nine of the Clock in the Morning, and Two in the Afternoon, and this to continue daily until all the Books be Sold; Wherefore it is desired, that the Gentlemen, or those Deputed by them, may be there precisely at the Hours appointed, lest they should miss the opportunity of Buying those Books, which either themselves or their Friends desire.

Significant though it may be historically, the Seaman Catalogue is otherwise unremarkable. As an example of bookmaking it is no better than the common run of late-seventeenth-century English books:³ its presswork is poor, and it also exhibits the signs of an apparent disruption in its progress through the printing-house — it collates π^4 A-H⁴ h⁴ I-2B² 2C⁴ (pp.[8] 1-64 57-64 65-112 109-128 131-137 [1]).⁴ In its organization the catalogue is conventional: the primary arrangement is by format (in conformity with seventeenth-century usage a mixture of bibliographical format and size), folios being followed successively by quartos, octavos and duodecimos;⁵ the secondary arrangement is by subject — among the folios, *Patres Graeci; Patres Latini; Bibliae Variarum; Rabbini, &c.; Philologi Graeci; Philologi Latini; Libri Theologici; Theologi Scholastici; Scriptorum in Scripturam; English Divinity; Philologists, &c.*; and within subjects items are listed apparently randomly. The entries themselves take up one line (occasionally two), fifty lines to a full page; the information given — often highly abbreviated and truncated — comprises author, title, place and date, a paucity of information which has led commentators to regard the catalogue as bibliographically unimportant.

By the standards of any period Seaman's library was considerable. There are 5439 entries in the catalogue, some of them for multi-volume works, others for binder's volumes comprising up to 25 items, so that the total of bibliographically distinct volumes is probably over 6000. As the headings suggest and as might have been expected from a knowledge of their owner, most of the books in Seaman's collection were of a generally 'theological' nature, the bulk of them in Latin. But there were English books, among them various non-theological, many included in the 'Philologists/Philologie, &c.' sections. The '&c.' embraces titles of a more general nature, ranging from Civil War pamphlets to 'standard' works, such as Stow's *Annals*, Wither's *Emblems*, Raleigh's *History*, Bacon's *Natural History*, Parey's *Chyrurgery*, and so on. From Narcissus Luttrell's marked-up copy, now in the British Library, Pollard calculates that the collection fetched over £700 in all, with many of the individual lots fetching more than they would have 300 years later.

But not all of Seaman's books went under the hammer. On the front paste-down in a copy of the 1668 quarto Cambridge bible now in the Reed Collection of the Dunedin Public Library is a hand-written label, in what I presume to be Seaman's hand, bequeathing the volume to James Hulbert (see Plate 1). The bequest reads:

3. To M^r James Hulbert
 Be much in the meditation of Our Lords Second
 comeing. Live up to this principle y^e you
 may Live and dye comfortably in this world
 and Live eternally with the father Sone and
 holy Ghost. The Lord give you this grace and
 continue to bless you, your aged
 Mother and other deare relations. Through
 Jesus Ch.^l So prayes

I^r
 y^e true and antient freind
 and your Fathers freind.

Lazarus Seaman.

July. 13. 1675./

The number '3' implies that at least a further two volumes were similarly assigned to specific recipients only two months before Seaman's death, no doubt during his last illness. The numbering might also imply that Seaman's bequests once formed a continuous text, which was then cut up to create labels. The extent of the bequest and the identity of the other volumes await the discovery of similar labels. It is probably significant, however, that there are no English bibles in the sale catalogue, implying perhaps that shortly before his death Seaman made bequests of his most personal volumes — English bibles — to various friends.

It would have been gratifying to be able to identify James Hulbert, but I have not been able to do so from readily-available sources. One may reasonably assume, I think — given the tone of the inscription — that James Hulbert was a member of Lazarus Seaman's Silver Street congregation.

B.J. McMullin,
 Monash University.

NOTES

1. Anthony Hobson, 'Foreword' to A.N.L. Munby and Lenore Coral, *British Book Sale Catalogues 1676-1800; a Union List* (London: Mansell, 1977), pp.ix-x, citing Graham Pollard and Albert Ehrman, *The Distribution of Books by Catalogue* (Cambridge: privately printed for the Roxburghe Club, 1965), ch.xi.
2. Alfred W. Pollard, 'English book-sales. 1676-1680', *Bibliographica* 1(1895): 373-84 (p.373). For a more extended survey, see John Lawler, *Book Auctions in England in the Seventeenth Century (1676-1700); with a Chronological List of the Book Auctions of the Period* (London: Elliot Stock, 1898).
3. The complete item (= Wing S2173) is available on reel 1294 in the Wing-period microfilm project being produced by University Microfilms. The title-page is also reproduced as plate 3 (after p.504) illustrating James E. Walsh, 'The Librarian's library': the William A. Jackson bibliographical collection', *The Book Collector* 14(1965): 499-510.
4. That is, a total of 147 pages of text, not 137, as is reported in, for example, the *Dictionary of National Biography*.
5. 'Bibliae', however, are so arranged that folios, quartos and octavos are in three consecutive sequences (pp.3-4); there are no duodecimo bibles in the catalogue.

To Mr James Stubbart.
 So much in the meditation of Our Lords second
 coming. Live up to this principle you
 may live and dye comfortably in this world
 and eternally with the father son and
 holy Ghost. The Lord give you this grace and
 to continue to bless you, your aged
 Mother and other dear relations through
 Jesus Ch. So prays
 your true and ancient friend
 and your Fathers friend
 Lazarus Seaman.
 July. 13. 1695.

Ex Libris



A. H. REED

SIMMONS & WATERS
 Book and Print Dealers
 10, Spencer Street,
 Leamington Spa.

Plate 1

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