

**AN ESSAY ON  
COLOPHONS, WITH  
SPECIMENS AND  
TRANSLATIONS**

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An essay on colophons, with specimens and translations by Alfred W. Pollard & Richard Garnett

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**ALFRED W. POLLARD & RICHARD GARNETT**

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COLOPHONS

AN  
ESSAY ON COLOPHONS

WITH SPECIMENS  
AND TRANSLATIONS

BY  
ALFRED W. POLLARD

AND AN INTRODUCTION BY  
RICHARD GARNETT



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## CONTENTS AND LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	ix
I. THE COLOPHON'S REASON FOR EXISTENCE . . . . .	3
Homer. Florence: [B. Libri,] 1488 . . . . .	5
Breslau Missal. Mainz: P. Schoeffer, 1483 . . . . .	8
II. COLOPHONS AT MAINZ . . . . .	9
Latin Bible. Mainz: Fust and Schoeffer, 1462 . . . . .	10
Balbus. Catholicon. Mainz: [J. Gutenberg,] 1460 . . . . .	14
Cicero. De Officiis. Mainz: Fust and Schoeffer, 1465 . . . . .	18
S. Jerome's Epistles. Mainz: P. Schoeffer, 1470 . . . . .	20
Tritheim. Chronicarum opus. Mainz: Joh. Schoeffer, 1515 . . . . .	27
III. COLOPHONS AT VENICE . . . . .	30
Cicero. Epistolae ad Familiares. Venice: John of Speier, 1469 . . . . .	32
Cicero. Epistolae ad Familiares. Second Edition. Venice: John of Speier, 1469 . . . . .	33
Pliny. Historia Naturalis. Venice: John of Speier, 1469 . . . . .	35
Dante. Divina Commedia. Venice: Wendelin of Speier, 1476 . . . . .	40
Cicero. Rhetorica. Venice: N. Jenson, 1470 . . . . .	42
Decor Puellarum. Venice: N. Jenson, 1461 for 1471 . . . . .	45
Cicero. De Oratore. Venice: C. Valdarfer, 1470 . . . . .	49
Cicero. Orationes. Venice: C. Valdarfer, 1471 . . . . .	50
Caracciolus. Quadragesimalc (and several other books). Venice: Bartolommeo of Cremona, 1472 . . . . .	52



	PAGE
IV. PRINTERS' COLOPHONS IN OTHER TOWNS . . . . .	57
Meissen Missal. Freiberg: C. Kachelofen, 1495 . . . . .	66
Bononia illustrata. Bologna: Plato de Benedictis, 1494 . . . . .	73
Guido de Baysio. Super Decretis. Venice: John of Cologne and Nicolas Jenson, 1481 . . . . .	78
Boniface VIII. Decretals. Basel: M. Wenssler, 1477 . . . . .	82
Fasciculus Temporum. Louvain: Veldener, 1476 . . . . .	84
Ioh. Faber. Breuiarium super codice. Louvain: John of Westphalia, c. 1475 . . . . .	84
S. Cyprian. Epistulae. Rome: Sweynheim and Pannartz, 1471 (and in many other of their books) . . . . .	87
Cicero. Orationes Philippicae. Rome: Ulrich Han [1470] (and in several other of Han's books) . . . . .	88
V. PUBLISHERS' COLOPHONS . . . . .	91
Latin Bible. Vicenza: Leonardus Achates, 1476 . . . . .	94
Laurentius Valla. Elegantiae. Rome: Arnold Pannartz, 1475 . . . . .	96
Gasparo Visconti. Rithmi. Milan: Ant. Zarotus, 1493 . . . . .	103
Journal Spirituel. Paris: Vêrard, 1505 . . . . .	105
Statius. Achilleis. Parma: Steph. Corallus, 1473 . . . . .	109
Franciscus Curtius. Consilia. Milan: U. Scinzenzeler, 1496 . . . . .	116
VI. COLOPHONS OF AUTHIORS AND EDITORS . . . . .	123
Georgius Natta. Repetitiones. Pavia: C. de Canibus, 1492 . . . . .	126
Henricus Bruno. Super Institutionibus. Louvain: Aeg. van der Heerstraten [1488?] . . . . .	128
Petrus de Ancharano. Repetitio. Bologna: Jo. Jac. de Benedictis for Benedictus Hectoris, 1493 . . . . .	141
Roman Missal. Venice: G. Arriuabenus and P. de Paganinis, 1484 . . . . .	147
Cicero. Epistolae Familiares. Milan: Lauagna, 1472 . . . . .	150
Homiliae. Basel: N. Kessler, 1498 . . . . .	155
VII. REPETITIONS, THEFTS, AND ADAPTATIONS . . . . .	159
VIII. DATES IN COLOPHONS . . . . .	170
INDEXES . . . . .	185



## INTRODUCTION

**L**EAVING the Colophon in its bibliographical aspects to the able hand by which these are about to be treated, it may not be amiss to preface Mr. Pollard's researches by a brief inquiry into the origin and significance of the term itself, and the reason why the colophon for so long performed the office of the title-page.

*Colophon* originally meant the head or summit of anything. It is clearly cognate with *κορυφή*, but is a word of far less importance, for while thirteen derivatives from *κορυφή* are given in Liddell and Scott's Dictionary, *κολοφών* has not one. The former word is continually used by Homer; the latter is first met with in Plato, and then and afterwards only in a figurative sense. Yet it is clear that the word must from the first have borne the signification of "summit" or "crest," for such is the po-

sition of the city of Colophon, which must have derived its name from its elevation, just as a modern house may be called "Hilltop." Names of this kind, if not given at the first, are rarely given at all; we must suppose, then, that *colophon* was a recognized Greek word for "summit" when the city was founded about the tenth century B.C., according to Strabo by a Pylian colony, though this seems difficult to reconcile with the fact of Colophon being an Ionian city. In any case, the word has long survived the place.

According to the information supplied by the New English Dictionary, *colophon* made a brief appearance in English, in the first half of the seventeenth century, in its secondary classical sense of a "finishing stroke" or "crowning touch," being used thus in Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," and again in 1635 by John Swan, who writes in his "Speculum Mundi" of how God "comes to the Creation of Man and makes him the colophon or conclusion of all things else." Of the use of the word *colophon* in the particular significance elucidated in this essay—the end or ultimate paragraph of a book or manuscript—the earliest example quoted in the New English Dictionary is from Warton's "History of English Poetry," published in 1774. A quarter of a century before this it is found as a term needing no explanation in the first edition of the "Typographical Antiquities" of Joseph Ames, published in 1749. How much older it is than this cannot lightly be determined. The bibliographical use appears to be unknown to the Greek and Latin lexicographers, medieval as well as classical. Pending fur-