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THE ENGLISH AND THE MANUFACTURE OF WRITING MATERIALS IN GENOA.

By R. LOPEZ.

A FEW years ago Robert Reynolds first called attention in this REVIEW to a small group of English merchants and craftsmen (*artigiani*) who were established in Genoa at the end of the twelfth century.¹ I propose to deal with another aspect of the same problem for a slightly later period, in the hope that this study, though it is a modest one, may help to draw attention to a technical problem of far-reaching interest: the manufacture of writing materials in Europe.

It is well known that paper was first manufactured long ago in China, and that the invention spread, by successive stages, throughout the continent of Asia, until it reached the Arabs, whose most important centres for the manufacture of paper in the early Middle Ages were at Baghdad, Damascus and Fez. We also owe to the Arabs, and to the Jews who came into contact with them, the oldest paper mills known in Europe, the mills of Xàtiva, near Valencia, which go back at least to the middle of the twelfth century. But the Mahometan States in Spain, at that period, were rather an offshoot of Africa than a part of Europe. Certain paper documents from the Norman kingdom of Sicily are in fact older (one of them, preserved in the Archives at Palermo, goes back to 1109); and the earliest cartularies of notarial acts are also older (the famous cartulary of Giovanni Scriba was written between 1154 and 1166). But there is no proof that the paper for these documents was manufactured locally; on the contrary it may be assumed that for a long time both Genoa and Sicily imported it from the Arab countries with which they were in close contact.² It is not until 1235 (when the use of paper had become general

¹ Reynolds, *Some English Settlers in Genoa in the late Twelfth Century*, in THE ECONOMIC HISTORY REVIEW, 1933. A passage in the *Honorantiae civitatis Papiae* (ed. Hofmeister, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, vol. XXX) shows moreover that English merchants were frequenting the "Regnum Italicum" from the beginning of the eleventh century (*cf.* Solmi, *L'amministrazione finanziaria del regno italico nell' alto Medioevo*, Pavia, 1931). "Essi erano favoriti da uno speciale trattamento doganale, che, a nostro parere, deve essere stato ottenuto da Edgardo, il quale ebbe stretti rapporti con Ottone I che riordinò il sistema doganale d'Italia."

² We only quote a few of the most important works: Hirth—*Die Erfindung des Papiers in China*, in *Toung Pao*, 1890; Karabacek—*Das arabische Papier*, Wien, 1887; Wiesner—*Die mikroskopische Untersuchung des Papiers*, Wien, 1887; Karabacek—*Neue Quellen zur Papiergeschichte* in "Mitth. aus der Sammlung der Papyrus Erzherzog Rainier," IV, Wien, 1888; Briquet—*Recherches sur les premiers papiers employés en Occident et en Orient du X^e au XIV^e siècle*, in "Mém. de la Société des Antiquaires de France," 1886, vol. XLVI; Briquet—*Les papiers des Archives de Gênes et leurs filigranes* in "Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria," 1888, vol. XIX, II part; Zonghi—*Le antiche carte fabrianesi*,

throughout Italy) that we find a document proving that paper had begun to be produced in a State which was European in the true sense of the term—that is in Genoa itself. We know of no relevant documents for Fabriano in the Marches, which was later to become the main centre for the manufacture and distribution of paper, earlier than 1283.¹

In short, it would be possible to retrace without difficulty the path followed by the new invention: China, Central Asia, Arabia, Spain, Genoa, Fabriano. There would be no lack of historical and geographical continuity. But there may be a missing link in the chain. Let us consider the document of 1235 which I have just mentioned. It tells us that on June 24th of that year, in Genoa, the *Englishman*, Walter, bound himself, for a fixed sum of money, to work for a year with Mensis, a native of *Lucca*, “*causa faciendi papirum*”; and also to work at any other trade with which he was acquainted, if Mensis required him to do so. Further provisions were made in case Walter should do any work by the day for Marchisio di Camogli.² In this case Marchisio was required to make a proportionate payment not to Walter but to Mensis. With this exception Walter pledged himself not to work for anyone but Mensis and not to teach or reveal the craft to anyone.³

Briquet, who published this document, drew from it a conclusion which I believe to be mistaken; that is that both Mensis and Marchisio were also paper makers, so that Walter would have been almost in the position

Fano, 1884; Blanchet—*Essai sur l'histoire du papier et de sa fabrication*, Paris, 1900; Gasparinetti—*Carta, cartiere e cartai fabrianesi* in “*Risorgimento Grafico*,” 1938.

¹ Zonghi dates the first certain document as far back as 1268, but Gasparinetti shows sound reasons for placing it as late as 1283 (p. 384-6.)

² Camogli is a small town of East Liguria.

³ The document was published by Briquet—*Les papiers des Archives de Gènes*, 300; but as the book is out of print and difficult to obtain it may be useful to publish it again here: “*In nomine Domini amen. Ego Gualterius englesius promito et convenio tibi Mensi de Lucha laborare tecum causa faciendi papirum et de omni misterio quod facere scivero et quod facere volueris, usque ad annum unum proximum completum: dictum itaque laborerium bona fide facere et sine fraude, et cum aliqua persona non laborare usque ad dictum terminum, nec alicui persone docere sive monstrare dictum misterium, usque ad dictum terminum. Et tu debes mihi dare pro mercede persone mee omni mense solidos viginti septem Januinorum. Predicta promito tibi attendere, sub pena librarum decem Januinorum et obligatione bonorum meorum, et ita juro attendere et contra non venire. Et ego Mensis predictus promito tibi dicto Gualterio dare tibi ad laborandum usque ad dictum terminum, et dare tibi omnia que necessaria erunt ad ipsum laborerium faciendum, et dare tibi omni mense solidos veginti septem, videlicet omni ebdomada pro eadem mercede, sub dicta pena et obligatione bonorum meorum. Et ego Marchisius de Camulio promito tibi dicto Mensi dare et solvere tibi, omni die quo Gualterius predictus mihi laborabit, denarios XII, sub dicta pena et obligatione bonorum. Acte Janue in domo mei Mathei (de Predono notarii) Testes Jacobus Capucius et Enricus magister de Predono (anno MCCXXXV) die XXIII (Junii) circa terciam.” (Archivio di Stato di Genova—*Cartulario di Gianuino de Predono e altri* I, fo. 304r.)*

of a workman or apprentice in their service. In fact, however, the whole text of the contract is entirely different from the usual form of contract for workmen and apprentices in Genoa and Tuscany, and also from the contracts of "societas" between craftsmen (*artigiani*). It seems clear that Mensis, as well as Marchisio, was a craftsman, working at some trade similar to paper-making (perhaps a fuller, since he promised Walter to provide him with the necessary tools, and the equipment of a fulling mill is very like that of a paper mill), and that he conceived the idea of supplementing the normal production of his own little business by the new industry of paper making, and of entrusting this additional work (*dipendenze*?) to an expert craftsman. But since he was not sure of being able to sell all he produced if Walter devoted himself entirely to paper making on his behalf, he safeguarded himself in two ways—by binding Walter not to refuse other types of work, and by reserving the right to transfer his services temporarily to Marchisio. This seems to be the only possible explanation of the apparent contradiction between the fact that Walter is forbidden to reveal the secrets of the trade, and the fact that Marchisio is allowed to avail himself of Walter's services in return for a payment made to Mensis who acts as a kind of agent (*impresario*?) for Walter.¹

It is true that the consumption of paper in Genoa was very considerable; but in view of the ease with which it could be imported from Arab countries it is certainly not unreasonable to assume that the local production of paper was looked on with distrust, in spite of the advantage of saving the cost of transport. This difficulty was soon overcome, for in 1253 we find in Genoa one Martino di Rivo-torbido "qui facit cartas," and two years later Michele Traverso of Milan and Giovanni of Sant' Olcese (a village in the neighbourhood of Genoa) entered into partnership (*contrassero società*) for the manufacture of paper.² But it was not

¹ Of course the difference between the contracts of work and apprenticeship (which in Genoa had been crystallised in four or five formulas constantly repeated) can only be proved by direct consultation. As limitations of space prevent the quotation of examples here, we suggest two works in which some dozens may be found: Mannucci—*Delle Società genovesi di arti e mestieri durante il secolo XIII*, in "Giornale storico e letterario della Liguria," 1905; Lopez—*Studi sull'economia genovese nel Medioevo*, Torino, 1936. The simple fact that Mensis does not promise Gualtiero to instruct him in the craft excludes the relationship of master to apprentice: moreover in such cases the general formula was: "Promitto laborare in *arte tua*" and not simply "*tecum*." This expression was often used when the master of a shop engaged a workman of a similar or auxiliary craft, for instance when a wool-worker engaged a raiser or a shearer or a wool beater. Another peculiarity is the promise of the workman to his master as worded in the document about Gualtiero: generally there were relatives or friends who almost guaranteed that the workman would not fail the terms of the agreement.

² Archivio di Stato di Genova, *Cartulario di Gianvino de Predono*, I, Parte I, fo. 36 r. (23 marzo 1253) and *Cartulario di Matteo de Predono*, I, Parte II, fo. 95 v. (18 maggio 1255).

until the end of the Middle Ages that Genoa became a flourishing centre of the paper industry.¹

There had also been considerable prejudice, from the beginning, against the paper manufactured by the Arabs, which was a more economical but less durable writing material than parchment.² Indeed we may say that there existed a hierarchy of materials used for writing, according to the importance of the words that were to be written on them. For inscriptions and solemn attestations stone was used; for ordinary administrative decrees and original legal documents (*atti notarili*), parchment; for records (*minute*) of legal documents which were kept by the lawyer (*notaio*), and for other private records, paper; for writings of little importance, which were not meant to be preserved, tablets coated with wax. The use of wax tablets, which was so common in the ancient world, continued in Genoa until at least the end of the thirteenth century, as is proved by a document of March 12th, 1286, in which two craftsmen enter into partnership (*due artigiani contraggono società*) for ten years for the manufacture of tablets, white and coated with wax, for writing on.³ In this case also we find that the craftsmen were not Genoese,

¹ The craft must have suffered something of a decline, because Briquet remarked that most of the registers of the first half of the fourteenth century kept in the Archives of Genoa show filigrees of Fabriano (297 and *seq.*).

² See two instances in the laws of the town of Padua (ed. Gloria) and in the *Constitutiones regni Siciliae* of Frederic II. At the end of the eleventh century privileges granted by the Chancery of this kingdom were written on paper, but about the middle of the next century, they had been copied out on parchment (Gasparinetti, 386-9).

³ Archivio di Stato di Genova—*Cartulario di Corrado di Capriata*, fo. 204 r. : "In nomine Domini amen. Poncius Emengaudus de Monte Pesulano et Constantinus Anglicus ad invicem inter se fecerunt et contraxerunt consorcium et societatem dante Domino usque ad annos decem proxime venturos duraturam de eorum labore et ministerio faciendi tabulletas blancas et de cera pro scribendo, renonciantes inter se vicisim exceptioni non facti consortii et societatis non contracte et omni iuri. Qui Poncius in presenti consorcio posuit libras tres mergorensium extimatorum in libris IIII januinarum. De quo labore promittunt inter se vicisim laborare usque ad dictum tempus et bona fide dare operam efficacem ad augendum lucrum dicte societatis. Et promiserunt inter se vicisim omni anno facere rationem de lucro quod Deus in ea dederit, et ea facta quilibet eorum habere debet dimidium lucris. Finito enim spatio dicti temporis predictus Poncius habere debet de dicta societate libras quatuor januinarum pro illis quas posuit in dicto consorcio, et hoc ante parte lucris quod tunc erit in eadem societate et consorcio, quam et quod promiserunt firmum et firmam habere et eam tenere usque ad dictum tempus et contra eam non venire nec contrafacere in aliquo de predictis (*in margine* : et promiserunt non recedere a servitio dicte societatis). Alioquin libras viginti quinque januinarum nomine pene inter se vicisim promiserunt, ratis manentibus predictis, pro qua pena et ad sic observandum omnia bona sua sibi ad invicem pignori obligaverunt, renonciantes privilegio. Et confitentur se esse maiores annis XVII, jurantes ut supra omnia observare. Et fecerunt hoc consilio testium infra dictorum quos suos propinco, vicinos et consiliarios eligunt et appellant. Actum Janue in Caneto, in angulo domus domini Nicolaj de Flisco. Testes Obertinus Thome corigiarius et

but that one was an Englishman, Constantinus, and the other a native of Provence, Pons Emengaud of Montpellier. The Englishman probably had the more expert knowledge of the trade, although the other may have known it or at any rate intended to learn it. In fact, while it was understood that the two partners should have an equal share in the profits, the whole of the capital of the partnership (*capitale sociale*) was provided by Emengaud; if we assume that both sides contributed equally to the partnership, we must conclude that the Englishman provided a greater degree of technical skill.

What conclusions should we draw from these two English names, appearing in the records of the earliest known business engaged in the manufacture of paper, and in those of the last business known to have manufactured wax tablets? Is this a pure coincidence, or an indication of far more widespread influences and relationships? It is not easy to reply, since after patient research I have been unable to find any other relevant documents. It is, however, difficult to believe that it was simply a matter of chance.¹ It is true, of course, that England in the thirteenth century was not a great cultural centre like Italy, and that she had few connections with the Arabs, who possessed the technical knowledge of paper manufacture. But Fabriano itself was, both culturally and commercially, one of the least important of Italian cities, and this did not prevent it from becoming in the last quarter of the thirteenth century and remaining for centuries the most important European centre for the manufacture of paper. And even if, in spite of the great differences between the technical methods of the Arabs and the Europeans, we exclude the possibility that the English may have learned to manufacture paper independently of the Arabs, we find that it was at this very time that the English were most frequently in contact with them. This did not happen only in the Iberian peninsula and in Italy. The Third Crusade attracted large numbers of British merchants to the Holy Land; at Acre there was still a "Viculus Anglorum" in 1255.² And if the English colonies in the Levant had never been as prosperous as the colonies founded by the Mediterranean cities, an English craftsman might feel for this very reason that he had a greater inducement to study the methods of manufacturing

Antonius Bertoni de Domoculta. M^o CC LXXXVJ Indictione XIII die XVIII Augusti, circa vespervas. Et plura instrumenta eiusdem tenoris me fieri voluerunt."

¹ We can occasionally observe that Mensis himself was from Lucca and that there was a large colony in England from that town, composed of both permanent and fluctuating members. Besides, many crafts had been introduced into Genoa by Lombards and other foreigners.

² Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen Age*, II, appendix and sources as quoted. As to the wax tablet maker, his name *Constantinus*, so unusual for an Englishman, suggests that he may have been a descendant of immigrants from the Byzantine empire: English mercenaries were a common experience in the army of the Comneni.

this paper, which it was so much more difficult to import into his own country than into the coast towns of Italy and Provence.¹

But the question cannot be solved until the origins of the art of paper making in England are better known. As far as I know researches on this subject have not gone back to an earlier period than the fifteenth century. The most extraordinary thing is that whilst it can be proved that a paper mill founded by John Tate existed in Hertfordshire before 1494,² a little poem written about a hundred years later ascribes the foundation of the first paper mill in England to a foreigner, the "learned man, Remigius by name" who, we are told, came to England about 1548. These early examples of paper manufacture, besides other attempts which were made between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century (as is well known Gresham himself attempted with very small resources to set up a paper mill) did not prevent a patent for the *invention* of paper from being granted in 1641; nor did they prevent a certain Eustace Burneby from boasting in 1678 that he had been the first Englishman to establish paper production in England.³ Evidently between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century the low purchasing power of the home market and the competition of imported paper made it impossible for the home industry to be firmly established, and in the intervals between one experiment and the next the very memory of earlier attempts was lost—or was said to have been lost so as to reflect more credit on the new enterprises. It is possible that something of the same kind had already happened in the thirteenth century, and that the difficulties of the English market had already induced a certain number of craftsmen (*artigiani*) to look for work in Genoa; but this cannot be affirmed without further proof. I have simply stated a problem in the hope that others may study it and find a solution.

¹ The very fact that at Genoa no paper factory was established, even later, which was large enough to compete with that of Fabriano, such a much smaller and poorer town, suggests that the competition of imported paper left so small a profit as to discourage capitalists and workmen from giving themselves up to this industry. It should be borne in mind, however, that Genoa was not supplied with clear running water and this was a drawback in comparison with Fabriano, which was more favourably placed.

² In one of the incunabula at the British Museum (Bartholomaeus—*De proprietatibus rerum*, Westminster, 1494) the following words can be read: "John Tate the yonger . . . late hath in Englande doo make this paper thynne, that now in our English this boke is printed inne." Tate was the son of the Lord Mayor of London, and his *paper mylne* was encouraged by Henry VII with gifts. But there is nothing to prove that others were not established before.

³ Joel-Munsell—*Chronology of the Origin of Paper and Paper-making*, Albany, 1876; Blanchet, 112-38 and sources quoted.