



The Library Chronicle

Volume 3 | Number 3

Article 3

10-1-1935

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THE SINGER COPY OF SIR CHARLES GRANDISON

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The bibliographical "state" of two volumes of Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* in the Godfrey F. Singer collection of the University Library is of exceptional—perhaps unique—importance in determining the original version of a passage of the text. The condition of these volumes was the result of a piece of carelessness when the book was being prepared for binding and publication in November, 1753, but through this mistake an unresolved problem in the bibliographical and textual approach to the book finds its solution.

In Letter 37 of Volume II (misnumbered Letter 36 in the first edition, pp. 345-54) Dr. Bartlett sends to Miss Byron a long account of his experiences abroad as governor for a young man of quality named Lorimer. This young man was in every respect the antithesis of the impeccable Sir Charles Grandison, and Dr. Bartlett constantly cited Sir Charles's virtues in reproof of the misconduct of Lorimer. On one occasion, when Lorimer had practised a piece of trickery on his father and was about to receive a doubled allowance as a result, Dr. Bartlett exposed Lorimer to his father and won the son's bitter enmity. Lorimer, in connivance with a courtesan "infamous for ruining many young travellers by her subtle and dangerous contrivances," planned revenge on Dr. Bartlett. At this point in the story, Richardson decided to cancel a leaf (pp. 349-50) in the first edition, so that the text of the cancellans should read in part as follows: "Several projects they fell upon: One, in particular, was, to suborn a spy, who went to the Inquisitors of State, and accused the Doctor of having held a free discourse upon the nature of the Venetian Government; a crime, which in that watchful Republic is never overlooked. It is well known, that the city of Venice swarms with these spies: Who are employed by the government, in order to give it the earliest information of

liberties taken either by natives or strangers, on subjects that are thought too high for the discussion of private men; and this, as is supposed, no less for the sake of the safety of individuals, than for its own.

“One of the three Inquisitors of State, who make a dreadful Tribunal in that Republic, it was supposed, got better information of the Doctor’s innocence, and had him warned of his danger.”

All copies of this volume of the first edition which I have examined here or in England, with the exception of the Singer copy, contain this text on a cancellans. It seemed, therefore, that the cancellandum containing the original version would never be found. This cancellandum, however, may be found in the Singer copy. But before describing it, I should like to follow the text of this passage through the second, third and fourth editions. In the second edition of this volume, published in octavo simultaneously with the first edition in duodecimo, Richardson also cancelled a leaf at this point in the story (Volume II, pp. 247-48), so that the text here reads as it does in the first edition. But in the third edition, published four months after the appearance of the first and second editions, the text at this point varies from that of the earlier editions. For reasons which will soon become apparent I give the text from the third edition: “Several projects they fell upon: One, in particular, was, to accuse him, by a third hand, as concerning himself with affairs of state in Venice: A crime, which in that jealous republic, is never overlooked, and generally ends fatally for the accused; who, if seized, is hardly ever heard of afterwards. From this danger he narrowly escaped, by means of his general good character, and remarkable inoffensiveness, and the profligateness of his accusers: Nor knew he his danger till many months afterwards. The Doctor believes, that he fared the better for being an Englishman, and a governor to the son of a British nobleman, who made so considerable a figure in England; because the Italians in general reap so much advantage from the travellers of this nation, that they are ready to favour and encourage

them above those of any other." The fourth edition, published in 1762, a year after Richardson's death, has the text of the third edition.

With this data at hand and without consulting the Singer copy, the only reasonable hypothesis would rest on the predication of three versions of the text: (1) the original version, lost by cancellation; (2) the version on the cancellans of the first and second editions; and (3) a further revised text to be found in the third and fourth editions. My hesitancy in accepting this hypothesis derived from two sources. In the first place, the text of the passage in the first edition seems a better one than that of the later editions. In the second place, the conditions under which the third edition was published make it unlikely that this revision would have been made.

The version of the first edition is more moderate in its statements, more circumstantial in its information, less bigoted in its point of view. The second version is touched with a melodramatic quality, and seems based on the kind of knowledge which a restricted mind like that of Richardson's might have received through rumour and cherished through provinciality. We know that Richardson was aware of his limitations in describing foreign countries, and sought assistance from the informed in sketching the Italian scenes and incidents in this novel. It does not seem likely that he would have changed his text in the direction which the passages indicate.

Furthermore, the difficulty which Richardson encountered from Dublin book pirates, forced him to send seven hundred and fifty copies of his first edition to Ireland, thus reducing the supply for English booksellers and accelerating the demand for a new edition. (The second edition did not meet this general demand. It was a small one, published in octavo and selling at a considerably higher price.) Less than a month after the publication of the first edition of this volume, Richardson was preparing a second edition in duodecimo—the third edition of the novel. His own press was extraordinarily busy with a contract for the House of Commons, and he was forced to secure the assistance of seven other printers

for his third edition. The texts of the other cancellans in the first edition are reproduced in the third edition, and there is apparently no such significant revision at any other point in the volume except in this letter of Dr. Bartlett.

This evidence is, of course, purely circumstantial: Richardson might have changed his text for the worse, and he might have made a single revision between the two editions, no matter how much difficulty was involved. But an examination of the Singer copy seems to resolve the problem in more likely fashion. In this copy, which is a first edition, there is no cancelled leaf at pp. 349-50 of the second volume. Consequently, we have here the cancellandum, with the text as originally projected. But instead of a third version, we find here the inferior version which appeared in the third and fourth editions. The reason for the cancellandum's appearance in this set of *Grandison* appears when we turn to the corresponding leaf of the third volume in the Singer copy. Through an error, the leaf was cancelled at this point in Volume III instead of in Volume II, and we find the cancellans which should have been in the second volume appearing in the third volume. It is impossible to estimate in how many copies this mistake occurred. The only instance I have found is that of the Singer copy. I think we may assume, however, that a copy of the second volume in this condition was used for setting the third edition. With the third edition in the hands of eight printers, including Richardson, the mistake could easily have been overlooked.