

THE UNSCRUPULOUS SCHOLAR

The recent acquisition of three rare volumes by John Payne Collier makes an occasion to examine the Library's holdings of the writings of this enigmatic scholar. These are "An old man's diary, 1832 and 1833", published in 1871-2, and "Trilogy: on the emendations of Shakespeare's Text" 1874. These volumes were privately produced in editions of only 25 copies, and they are important to any study of the literary records, some laudable and valuable, some dishonourable and untrustworthy, of their author.

Collier was a most industrious student and scholar all his life (1789-1883) and published and edited many valuable texts rescued from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In producing an edition of Shakespeare, however, he forged into a 1632 Shakespeare Folio such emendations as he wished to validate in his texts, attributing these to an ancient authority. He fabricated or falsified other texts in other publications, so that much of his work is untrustworthy. It was exposed by literary authorities of the time, and he was discredited, but he never retreated from his position, or admitted any malpractice, even to his advanced old age.

It may be that because Collier edited two notable texts from Dulwich College, which Alexander Turnbull attended 1881-3, the Library's founder gathered a good deal of his writings, including a volume of manuscripts on the old dramatists. The following is thus a list of brief titles in the Library catalogue:

1. A bibliographical and critical account of the rarest books in the English language. 2 vols. 1865
2. A few odds and ends for cheerful friends. 1870
3. The history of English dramatic poetry to the time of Shakespeare, and annals of the stage. 3 vols. 1831
4. Illustrations to early English literature. 3 vols. 1867-70
5. Illustrations to early English poetry. 5 vols. 1866-70
6. Illustrations of early English popular literature. 2 vols. 1863-4
7. Illustrations of Old English literature. 3 vols. 1866
8. Memoire of Edward Alleyn, founder of Dulwich College. 1841