

The Doves Press: some letters of Cobden-Sanderson to St John Hornby, 1906-1917

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The Library's purchase in 1948 of a set of all the books printed at the Doves Press was announced in the *Dominion*,¹ and was celebrated by their exhibition in the Library for several weeks thereafter. C. R. H. Taylor commented further on this important extension of the Library's collection of finely printed books in the *Turnbull Library Record*,² where he summarises T. J. Cobden-Sanderson's objectives in founding the Doves Press. Taylor identifies the collector of this set of Doves Press books as C. H. St John Hornby of the Ashendene Press, of the trinity, with Kelmscott Press and Doves Press, which strongly influenced English printing style early this century. The contents of the volumes, which carry St John Hornby's bookplate, include seven letters in the Doves Press founder's hand.

Of these seven letters here transcribed from Cobden-Sanderson's handwriting, six are affectionately addressed to his friend Hornby and cover ten of the sixteen years of the Doves Press's operation. They are bound in a carefully collated volume the spine of which is labelled 'Doves Press: notices, etc, 1901-1916', with lists of books printed or in preparation at the Doves Press, the 1908 and 1913 *Catalogues Raisonnés*, notices to subscribers of forthcoming books, as well as seven pamphlets printed at the Press for which Cobden-Sanderson also wrote the text. Bound with the Press's final *Catalogue Raisonné of Books Printed & Published at the Doves Press, 1900-1916* is the seventh letter which is Cobden-Sanderson's reply to the *Times Literary Supplement* review of the *Catalogue*.³ It is addressed mistakenly to a Mr Richmond, when C. H. St John Hornby had in fact written the review.

While these letters offer no new facts about Cobden-Sanderson's life and work at the Doves Press, they endorse the many published expressions of his guiding philosophy and refer fleetingly to changes at the Press and bindery. They give no details of Cobden-Sanderson's relationship with Emery Walker, his partner at the Press from its founding in 1900 to 1909, but the first presents a casual confirmation of the efforts of Cobden-Sanderson's friends to keep this unlikely pair working together. Two private press books,