
James McConica

Professor Beatrice Corrigan of the Department of Italian and Hispanic Studies, University of Toronto, is compiling a list of all EMBLEM BOOKS in Toronto, to be published in a future issue of this bulletin. Please send her information on emblem books in private collections in Toronto.

MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE MANUSCRIPTS IN THE DRAKE COLLECTION

A recent issue of the bulletin (RR, 1,3) included a description of rare books on pediatrics and children in the Drake Collection at the Toronto Academy of Medicine. Since that time I have learned that the Collection includes a group of manuscripts and unbound printed materials. Most of the latter are French edicts on foundling hospitals and child-welfare, a few of them dating before 1700, but especially numerous for the period of the French Revolution and after.

Most of the manuscripts also date from after 1700 (e.g., the accounts of a student pensionnaire at the Jesuit College in Lyons in the mid 17th century; all kinds of reports on foundlings), but there are five manuscripts from before 1700. None of them is described in Ricci and Wilson, Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the U.S. and Canada or in the recent Supplement to it prepared by Faye and Bond. Dr. Drake collected these manuscripts because each had some reference to children or wet-nurses, but their interest goes beyond these subjects. All of them were purchased from French dealers in the late 1930's.

1. Alexander de Villadei: Doctrinale Puerorum, fragment.
   Vellum, 3 ff., 20 x 14 cm., first half of the 13th century, red and blue illustrated initials with glosses in later hands.
   16th century signature: Lessar.

2. Louis de Merles: Book of personal and business accounts, 1464-1480, mostly in Latin with a few promissory notes in Provencal.
   Paper, 45 ff., 30 x 11 cm., written in southern France, 1464-1480 in several hands.
   Encased in vellum with a notarized act on it.

Louis de Merles seems to have been a lawyer with numerous business dealings, especially small loans. The accounts are organized chronologically with some effort to separate the credits from the debits. Many entries have lines through them, as though this were a memorandum book from which data was being drawn for a more systematic account book. Yet sophisticated accounting methods are unlikely for a man who worked only with Roman numerals. Rather he usually crossed items out when a payment had finally been made.

Louis de Merles is the father of François de Merles, whose memoirs and accounts (1480-1520) are in the possession of the University of Pennsylvania Library (Faye and Bond, Supplement, p. 493). Rudolf Hirsch, Associate Director of Libraries at the University of Pennsylvania, has written me that according to the genealogy in the Pennsylvania manuscript, Louis married Aigilte Pelegrine in 1459 and François de Merles was born in 1464. A family named de Merles was prominent in the town of Courthezon, near Avignon, in the 16th century.