



Francis Howard Forbes

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Francis Howard Fobes

ON a pleasant spring morning, Wednesday, 27 June 1900, Dr Cecil F. P. Bancroft, the Principal of Phillips (Andover) Academy, was presiding in the old stone chapel — now no longer standing — at the graduation exercises of the class of that year. After addresses by various members of the class the good doctor had repeatedly to summon a tall, lithe youth, modest yet determined in appearance, to hasten up the long main aisle and receive such first prizes as the school had to offer. This was my first sight of Francis Howard Fobes, born in Somerville, 1 August 1881, but then resident in Lexington; and soon afterward there began an intimate friendship interrupted only by his sudden death from heart attack on 17 September 1957.

In addition to various Andover prizes Fobes was the recipient of honors in Greek, Latin, and Physics — a foretaste of some of the chief interests of his adult life, in which the careful training in Greek under his revered Andover teacher Allen Rogers Benner (secretary of the Harvard Class of 1892) was to become the solid foundation of his intellectual activities, and a practical interest in things mechanical was to prove a refreshing avocation. (One is reminded of the distinguished scholar-philosopher-technologist, Hermann Diels of the University of Berlin.)

In four following years at Harvard (1900–04) Fobes won a *detur* and second-year honors in the classics, was elected to Φ B K, and graduated *summa cum laude*, delivering the Latin salutatory oration. At this point in his career he became a candidate for a Rhodes scholarship. The selection of such a scholar from Massachusetts rested with a small committee, in which some doubts were raised on the ground that though Fobes was undoubtedly the ranking scholar among those under consideration yet he had no athletic prowess to satisfy Cecil Rhodes's stipulation that the incumbents of his scholarships should be 'all-round' men. Here President Eliot's early morning bicycling about Cambridge with Mrs Eliot may have had a strange but beneficent result, for he told the other members of the committee of selection that he had that very morning seen Fobes riding horseback (the fact being that Mr

Fobes Senior was boarding a horse in Cambridge for summer use and had bidden Francis — who much disliked horses — take it out for daily exercise). So Fobes was chosen, if not by the hand of God at least by the hand of Eliot, to be the first Rhodes Scholar from Massachusetts, and after completing his course at Balliol as a student of *Literae Humaniores* received the degree of B.A. (1907) first class, a distinction that only two or three others of the forty or more United States scholars, chosen, like him, in 1903, attained.

The Harvard A.M. he had received *in absentia* (1905), on the basis of extra work completed during his four undergraduate years. After his return to Harvard in 1907 he spent five years, partly as instructor, first in Latin, then in Greek and Latin, and partly in work for the doctorate of philosophy, which he received in 1912, with a dissertation on some manuscripts of Suetonius.¹ In the summer of 1912 and the winter of 1913-14 Fobes visited various libraries in France, Italy, and Austria, collecting materials for a critical edition of Aristotle's *Meteorologica*. He was again instructor in Greek and Latin at Harvard 1912-13, and spent 1914-15 at home in work on this volume, which the Harvard University Press published in 1919, a work revealing to scholarship at large his thorough precision and balanced editorial judgment.

The years 1915-20 were spent as Assistant Professor at Union College, Schenectady, and were punctuated by war work at Plattsburg (1916), in which he rose to be a corporal, and by editorial work in the Bureau of War Trade Intelligence in Washington. From Union he moved in 1920 to Amherst College, where he was first Associate Professor and then Professor of Greek, till his retirement in 1947. Thus his life was divided, as he himself has pointed out, into three main periods, Harvard, Union, and Amherst.

At Amherst this bachelor professor occupied, until a very few weeks before his death, several rooms in Pratt Hall, in which all wall spaces were lined with books, one entire room being devoted to his favorite author, Aristotle. A photograph of about 1945, reproduced in Plate I, shows him among his books. In his fiftieth Harvard class report he writes: 'I have continued to live in the dormitory room into which I moved in 1921, and I flatter myself that my record of something over fifty years of dormitory life (solemn thought!) is one that few of my classmates can rival. I have been interested,' he continues, answering an

¹ Summarized in the *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XXIII (1912), 167.

inquiry as to his avocations, 'in clocks (I have actually made a couple, and one of them sometimes runs); in kites (I have made a great many, and they fly); in genealogy; * in printing (I have a press, the 'Snail's Pace Press,' which lives up to its name); and recently in travel (within the last six years, I have taken six or eight long automobile trips, three of them to the West, and all but one of them illustrated by Kodachrome). My only serious objection to life in retirement is that there seems to be less time for the extras.' His trip to Greece (about 1930) he does not here mention; trips in America were mostly with some Amherst College student to share the driving and furnish companionship. In one case, at least, a student who was specializing in chemistry was surprised to discover how intelligently Fobes could talk about chemistry for one who had studied it only as a freshman in a single course. Fobes finally confessed that at night, when the student was asleep, he had studied a highly technical volume and absorbed enough wisdom to puzzle his companion for some weeks!

In another class report, when twenty-five years out of college, Fobes describes his press in more detail: 'My chief recreation is printing. The College [Amherst] generously supplies me with an excellent composing and press room, in which I have installed an antiquated hand press, and from which there issue, at long intervals, pamphlets of a not-too-serious nature. Since my speed is not all that it might be, either at composing or at press work, most of the pamphlets have been short, but one was a magnum opus of no less than thirty-two pages.' Two views of the press, located in the basement of Pratt Hall, are shown in Plate II; the Snail's Pace device appears in Plate III. It seems pertinent here to record the items published by this little press, as completely as my own copies and additional information gleaned from his family and former colleagues permit, for they may be not unfairly classified as collectors' rarities.

Three pamphlets were written by colleagues at Union College and printed by Fobes on Italian handmade paper:

Abu Ben Aladdin: / A Just-So Night / Being a Paper Read before the
English Club of / Union College at Its Second Annual Banquet / Held
in the Rose Room of the Twentieth Cen- / tury Lunch in Schenectady,
New York, on the / Twentieth Day of December, M DCCCC XX / by /

* He made considerable collections bearing upon his family history, carrying that history back seven generations to Captain Miles Standish on his father's side and to the thirteenth-century bishop Robert Burnell in Shropshire on his mother's side.

John N. Vedder, M.A. / Associate Professor of Thermodynamics / in Union College / [floral device] / Amherst, Massachusetts / At the Snail's Pace Press / 1922

Pp. 11. 78 copies.

The / Poets at College / Read before the English Club of Union / College at Its Third Annual Banquet / Held at Sinker's Restaurant in Schen- / ectady, New York, on the Nineteenth / Day of December, M DCCCC XXI. / By / Harrison Cadwallader Coffin / Assistant Professor of Greek / in Union College / Amherst, Massachusetts / At the Snail's Pace Press / 1923

Pp. 13. 185 copies, on Fabriano paper.

Philip of Macedon : An / Impression: By John / Ira Bennett, Late / Professor of the / Greek Language & / Literature in Union / College. / [device of Snail's Pace Press] / Amherst / At the Snail's Pace Press / M. DCCCC. XXIII.

Pp. 29. 200 copies. Title-page reproduced in Plate IIIa (original 8½ by 5½ inches).

Probably the largest edition was of:

The Sultan & / the Dervish, a Tale from / The Thousand & One Days of Mukhlis, Trans- / lated from the French of Petis de la Croix by / William Wentworth Thayer, Sometime Presi- / dent of the Alhamdolillah Society. / There is No God but God, & Mohammed is His Prophet. / Amherst / At the Snail's Pace Press / A.H. 1344

Pp. 16. 230 copies, on Italian handmade paper.

I find it difficult to date this imprint, which purports to be of the Year of the Hegira 1344, since, according to common methods of dating, this year has not yet arrived.

The most famous of these pamphlets is:

[Two arabesque leaves] Fragment of a / Greek Tragedy by / A. E. Housman, Fellow of Trinity Col- / lege and Professor of Latin in Cambridge / University. / Now for the Second / Time Reprinted from the Cornhill Magazine of / April, 1901. / [device of Snail's Pace Press] / Amherst / At the Snail's Pace Press / 1925

Pp. 11. 92 copies, on English handmade paper. Title-page reproduced in Plate IIIb (original 7½ by 5 inches).

Also issuing from this press were ingeniously selected and rendered



PLATE I
FRANCIS HOWARD FOBES

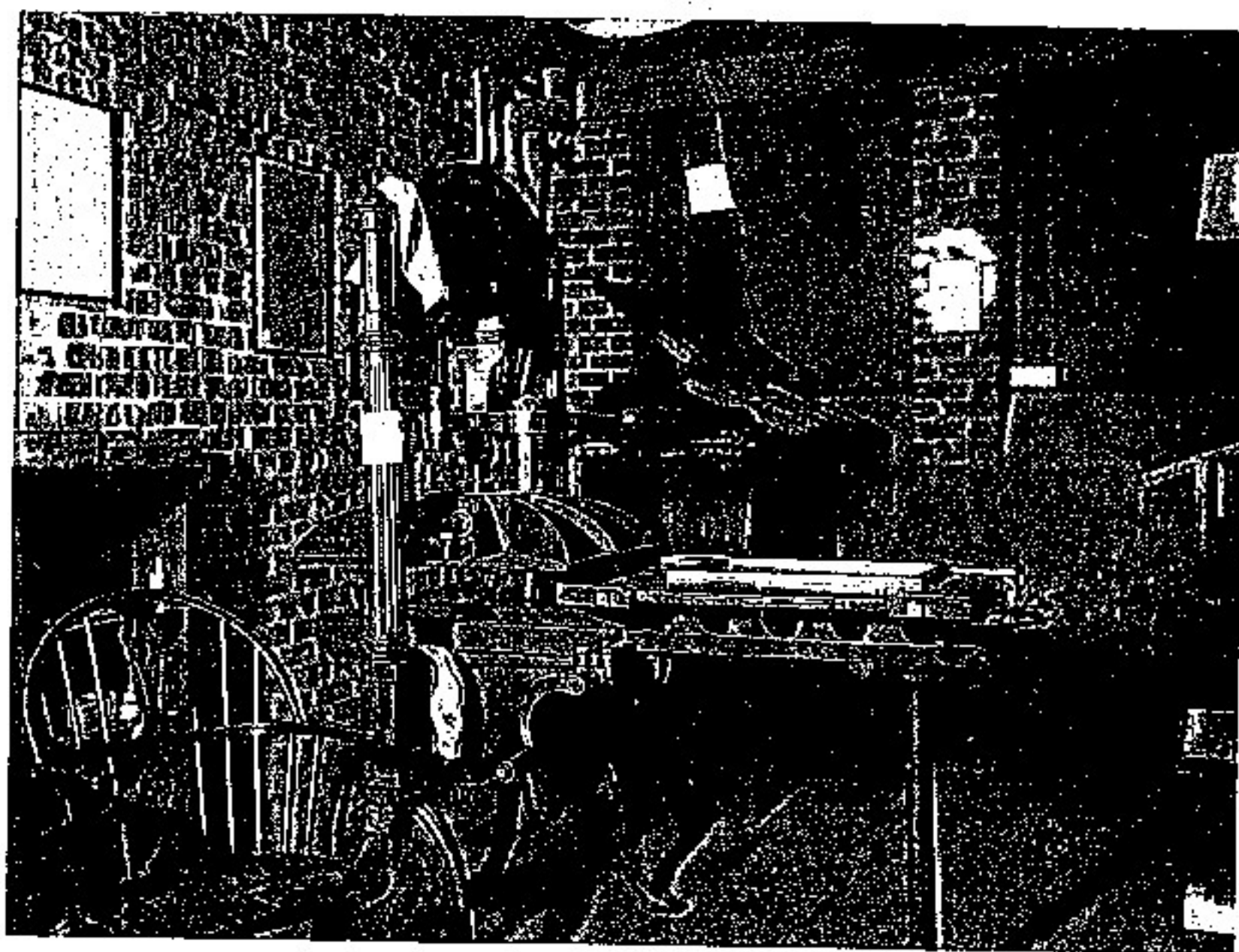
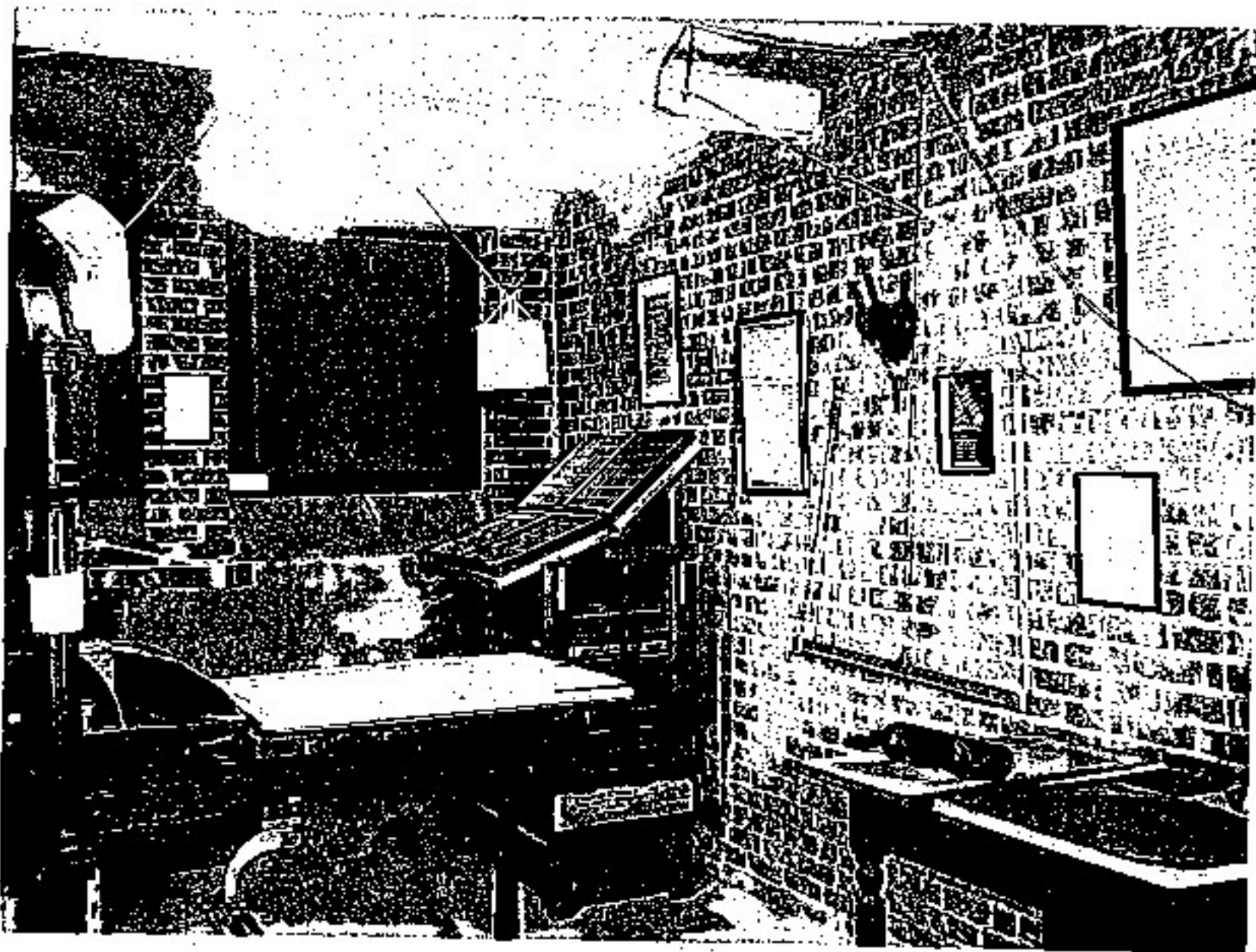


PLATE II

TWO VIEWS OF THE SNAIL'S PACE PRESS, PRATT HALL, AMHERST

PHILIP OF MACEDON: AN
IMPRESSION: BY JOHN
IRA BENNETT, LATE
PROFESSOR OF THE
GREEK LANGUAGE &
LITERATURE IN UNION
COLLEGE.



AMHERST
At The Snail's Pace Press
M. DCCC. XXIII.

FRAGMENT OF A
GREEK TRAGEDY BY
A. E. Housman, Fellow of Trinity Col-
lege and Professor of Latin in Cambridge
University.

NOW FOR THE SECOND
time reprinted from the Cornhill Magazine of
April, 1901.



AMHERST
At The Snail's Pace Press
1 9 2 3

PLATE III

PRODUCTS OF THE SNAIL'S PACE PRESS

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΛΜΝΞΟΠΡΡΞΤΥΦ

ΧΨΩΦϚϛΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΛΜΝΞ

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σ	Ὶ	Ί	῜	῝	῞	῟	ῠ	ῡ	ῢ	
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κ	ῠ	ῡ	ῢ	ΰ	ῤ	ῥ	ῗ	Ῐ	Ῑ	Ὶ

Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ, παραλαύσας τὴν
 βασιλείαν, καὶ παραχρῆμα τὰ κατὰ
 τοὺς Ἑλληνας διατιθεῖς, τρίτῃ τῆς
 βασιλείας ἔτι μετὰ δυνάμεισ ἀρ-
 κούσαις ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀσίας ἐστῆμιτο.
 ῥαδίως δὲ τοὺς ἀρτιστάρτας αὐτῷ
 σατραπείας ἐπέθηκεν ἐπ' αὐτῶν προ-
 ῆντι Δαρβίῳ, ἀριθμητῶν στρατῶν τοὺς
 ἐν Ἰσοῦ τόπους κατεβλήθη. συμ-
 πλοῦσεν δὲ τοῖς Πέρσαις εἰς χεῖρας
 καὶ τὸ πάσης ἐπέβλεψε νίσιππος
 τρώων στήσας Δαρβίον μετ' ἑτρε-
 τῶν εἰς φυγῆν, αὐτὸς δὲ <εἶχθητο>
 τῆς ἐπὶ Φοινίκην καὶ Συρίαν καὶ Πα-
 λαιστίνην ὁδοῦ. τὰ μὲν οὖν ἐν Τύρῳ
 καὶ Γάζῃ παραχρῆμα μαθητῶν ἔρυστιν

PLATE IV
 Benner Greek, 1932, PAGES 6 AND 11

Christmas cards: in 1929, two stanzas from George Herbert ('To this life things of sense / Make their pretence,' etc.); in 1931, the 'Quintetto' from Peacock's *Melincourt*; in 1932, two stanzas of a Latin poem (by F. H. F.):

Jubilemus Salvatori
Quem coelestes laudant chori
Concordi laetitia:
Pax de coelo nuntiatur;
Terra coelo foederatur,
Angelis Ecclesia:

Jesu, puer immortalis,
Tuus nobis hic natalis
Pacem det et gaudia;
Flos et fructus virginalis,
Cuius odor est vitalis,
Tibi laus et gloria!

In a different and playful mood is the card of 1936:

What if the Sole could fling the Ice aside,
And with me to some Area's haven glide —
Were't not a Shame, were't not a shame for it
In this Cold Prison crippled to abide?

Some for the Glories of the Sole, and Some
Mew for the proper Bowl of Milk to come.
Ah, take the Fish and let your Credit go,
And plead the rumble of an empty Tum.

One thing is certain: tho' this Stolen Bite
Should be my last and Wrath consume me quite,
One taste of It within the Area caught
Better than at the Table lost outright.

Indeed, indeed Repentance oft before
I swore, but was I hungry when I swore?
And then and then came Cook — with Hose in hand —
And drowned my glory in a sorry pour.

What without asking hither harried whence,
And without asking whither harried hence —
O, many a taste of that forbidden Sole
Must down the memory of that Insolence.

Heaven, but the vision of a flowing Bowl;
And Hell, the sizzle of a frying Sole
Heard in the hungry Darkness, where myself,
So rudely cast, must impotently roll.

The 1937 card is characteristic of his whimsical humor:

This little card operculate
It pleaseth us to dedicate
To that rampageous reprobate
The world at large.

And when we mark his stony phiz
And see him whirl and whoop and whiz,
We can but cry at last, why is
The world at large?

A Merry Christmas to You and Apologies to Carolyn Wells [or perhaps to Oliver Herford] from Francis H. Fobes!

In a special category should be listed his printing in Benner Greek, named for his teacher at Andover, Professor Allen Rogers Benner. The font is displayed in the following booklet:

Benner Greek / Designed by Francis H. Fobes; Cut and Cast (on the American Type / Founders Company's Art Line) by the Williams Engineering Com- / pany of London; Property of the Snail's Pace Press. / [device of Snail's Pace Press] / At the Snail's Pace Press / Amherst, Massachusetts / 1932

Pp. 12. No indication of size of edition.

An introductory note states that Benner Greek is the result 'of an attempt to reproduce in type the minuscule script of the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth . . . the most beautiful of the minuscule scripts'; and that it differs from manuscript forms only in admitting no ligatures. Indebtedness is acknowledged to British and American type founders; but the general design of the type was Fobes's own. The booklet exhibits a total of 261 characters in both 12- and 18-point, and includes 4 pages of sample texts. The alphabet and a portion of the sorts in 18-point are shown in Plate IVa; a sample of text in 18-point appears in Plate IVb (page size of original approximately 6¼ by 4⅛ inches).

Also in Benner Greek are:

ΟΛΥΜΠΙΟΔΩΡΟΥ [sic] / ΒΙΟΣ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΟΣ / Olympiodorus' Life of Plato / Reprinted from Westermann's *Biographoi* / [device of Snail's Pace Press] / At the Snail's Pace Press / Amherst, Massachusetts / M.DCCCC. XXXII

Pp. 10. No indication of size of edition.

Ἄρσενίου Ἀρχιεπισκόπου / Στίχοι / Εἰς Τὴν Λαμπρὰν Κυριακὴν / παρὰ τοῦ
Ματράγγα / ἀπογεγραμμένοι / ἐκ τυπογραφείου τοῦ τοῦ / Στρόμβου τοῦ
Ἐρπυστήρος / ἔτει ααδμζ

Pp. 14. 190 copies. In tiny format (3¼ by 2¼ inches).

Other examples of his workmanship include a folder, printed in Benner Greek, of an address in honor of Professor Benner delivered at a dinner on the occasion of his retirement 25 May 1938 (the text written by Fobes and approved by Professor Charles Burton Gulick), together with a bookplate in English and Benner Greek for a rare edition of Aristotle's *Poetics* presented to Professor Benner on the same occasion. A somewhat similar bookplate, in English and Greek, was included in a volume of Lycophron presented to Professor Harry de Forest Smith of Amherst in 1939. A large poster, entirely in English, dated 1941, announcing a Greek scholarship at Amherst in honor of Professor Smith, shows Fobes's practised hand; the scholarship itself was commonly believed to be in considerable measure the result of his generosity.

These scattered products of the Snail's Pace Press are cherished by Fobes's friends, who see in them the same precision that characterized his larger works. The Press itself, with its fonts of type and the original designs for Benner Greek, he gave to Dartmouth College in 1957, when he felt no longer able to perform the mechanical work necessary for operation.³

It will be recalled that he devoted the Press to 'not-too-serious' pamphlets, and this lighter side of his nature could be illustrated in many and unconventional forms, as in his joining with his colleague, Dr F. Stuart Crawford, in starting a glossary to the characters in the works of P. G. Wodehouse, or in his kite flying, in which one of the more powerful kites collided with a high-tension wire and robbed the town for a time of all its electric power. A youthful prank reported by his sister shows that the boy was father to the man. 'Our family,' she writes, 'once rented a house in Santa Barbara for a three months'

³ Professor Ray Nash, of the Department of Art and Archaeology, Dartmouth, writes that the donor's only direction (expressed to him in a letter) was, 'Of course I hope that there may be some one in Hanover who will care to play around with my Greek font.' Professor Nash looks forward to the production, through qualified students, of an occasional piece in Benner Greek bearing the Snail's Pace imprint. The press, a standard mid-nineteenth-century 'Washington' made by Hoe, together with the rest of the equipment now forms part of the resources of the Graphic Arts Workshop.

winter vacation. F. and I were usually up very early mornings and F. set me to helping him with a project that went on for several weeks. The inspiration, of course, was Francis's. We took the yellow insides out of calla lilies and stuck them in the lawn where they looked like a sort of mushroom growth. Just as F. foresaw, this crop of mushrooms increasing day by day caused many a long conference between our parents, the neighbors, our Chinese vegetable man, who feared that this "pest" would spread to his gardens, etc. On the train weeks later going to Colorado Francis out of a clear sky asked Dad what was his final conclusion about that much discussed mushroom, and confessed our labors in inserting fresh specimens and arranging them in the early morning hours of that Santa Barbara sojourn.⁴

I have lingered upon anecdotes and *jeux d'esprit* both because they are an essential part of the man himself and because they are less accessible than the greater works to be found on the shelves and in the catalogues of libraries, but it should be clearly understood that Fobes's serious scholarly work, especially in the field of Greek textual criticism, ranks with the best achieved by any scholars of Greek in America. His major publications include the following:

Aristotle, *Meteorologicorum libri quattuor*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1919. Pp. 254. Critical text edited by Fobes, with Latin introduction and index verborum. A work suggested and aided by W. D. Ross. It was this work that made Fobes generally known to the scholarly world.

John Christopherson, Bishop of Chichester, *Jephthah*, Newark, Del., University of Delaware Press, 1928. Pp. 165. Greek text edited and translated into English verse by Fobes, with introduction by Wilbur Owen Sypherd. First publication of the only extant sixteenth-century English university drama in Greek.

Theophrastus, *Metaphysics*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1929. Pp. 120. Text, English translation, part of introduction, and commentary by W. D. Ross; account of manuscripts, apparatus criticus, and indexes by Fobes.

Alciphron, Aelian, and Philostratus, *The Letters*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1949. Pp. 600. Loeb Classical Library, No. 383. Introduction, text, and English translation, begun by Allen Rogers Benner and completed after his death, 'as an act of piety,' by Fobes.

⁴Letter from Mrs. Henry O. Tilton, of Worcester, Massachusetts, who has furthered the preparation of this sketch at every turn, drawing with equal freedom upon memories and memorabilia.

Averroes, *Commentarium medium in Aristotelis De generatione et corruptione libros*, Cambridge, The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1956. Pp. 270. *Corpus commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem, versionum Latinarum volumen IV, 1.* Edited by Fobes, assisted by Samuel Kurland. The greater part of Fobes's scholarly activity from about 1930 on had gone into the great project, sponsored by the Mediaeval Academy, of editing and publishing the complete corpus of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle, in Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, and English. Fobes was one of the general editors of the *Corpus*, together with H. A. Wolfson and David Baneth, and was in charge of the Latin series, of which the Middle Commentary on the *De generatione et corruptione* was one of the first fruits. If one is not convinced in advance of the learning involved let him turn to the glossary at the end, with readings in Latin, Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek.

Last to be mentioned among Fobes's works is his *Philosophical Greek*, Chicago University Press, 1957; pp. 321. Completed copies of this aristocrat among Greek beginners' books reached him just forty-eight hours before his death. The result of long experience in teaching beginning Greek, the handsome volume is intended for those whose interest in Greek comes (perhaps rather late) through the fields of philosophy, psychology, and scientific terminology, and it is distinctly a book for the mature student, containing passages for translation drawn, not from Xenophon, but from Aristotle, with one from Plato's *Charmides* and some gnomic lines from Menander. Fobes's published work, then, from its Oxford beginnings (encouraged by Ross) to its Amherst ending, is focused upon Aristotle (and his pupil Theophrastus).

No account of Francis Fobes would be complete without mention of one other characteristic that he himself kept sedulously in the background, namely his great but quiet generosity. On an institutional scale this may be seen in his gifts to Harvard and Amherst. In 1927 he gave to the Amherst College Library a substantial fund for the purchase of Greek books, and in his will provided a further bequest of \$100,000, of which the income was to be used to promote instruction or research (or both) in the ancient Greek language and literature. Before his death, from his own classical library of perhaps four thousand volumes, he gave to Harvard a personal selection of about two hundred, largely editions of Aristotle. Of these about a hundred and fifty — chiefly sixteenth-century editions, with a few incunabula — are deposited in the Houghton Library, the rest, along with a very large collection of separates, being placed in Widener. In his will, after naming members

of his family and some intimate friends for the first choice among his books, he designated Harvard for the second choice and Amherst for the third. In accord with this provision, two of the staff of the Harvard College Library have selected about six hundred volumes, mostly of editions of classical authors and commentators thereon, of which about two hundred and twenty-five have been placed in the Houghton Library, the remainder in Widener. Amherst received before his death eighty-one volumes and after his death two hundred and ninety books, with pamphlets, letters, and miscellaneous materials.

His personal benefactions, especially to meritorious students in financial difficulties, were numerous, but so well concealed as to be impossible to record (which is precisely as he would have had it.) Nor were these generous acts limited to students in his own classical courses but extended to others known to him primarily from his dormitory, fraternity ($\Delta \Upsilon$), or boarding-place. He considered the College generous in allowing him after his retirement to continue to live in Pratt Hall, but the friendly personal contacts that his presence there made possible far outweighed any monetary considerations, and the affectionate respect felt for him by his own former students — even by those to whom he had unsparingly and impartially given low grades — was very widespread.

Of honorary degrees he was never avid, but Amherst College in 1923 made him an honorary Master of Arts, the University of Glasgow in 1954 honored him as Doctor of Laws, and the Association pour l'Encouragement des Etudes Grecques en France bestowed upon him a silver medal.

Such a life can never be adequately summarized, yet Francis Fobes may be truly described as a lover of books — in all stages from their inception, scholarly preparation, and physical manufacture, to their intelligent collection and use — who vivified his bookish activities by a keen and sympathetic interest in persons, finally tempering the whole mixture by a large infusion of Yankee ingenuity and kindly humor. A minute of the Amherst College faculty accurately describes him as 'unyielding in his stand for the principles he firmly believed in, yet always ready with good-humored banter among his fellows. He was an outstanding intellectual, though without an iota of intellectual arrogance.' The bright June morning on Andover Hill proved indeed the earnest of a life of joy and fruitfulness.

ARTHUR STANLEY PEASE

Honorary Degrees at Harvard: Corrigenda

IN the list of 'Honorary Degrees 1930-1958,' HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN, XII (1958), 348-353, the following corrections should be made:

1936

for Frederick Maurice Powicke, LL.D. *read* Frederick Maurice Powicke, Litt.D.

1942

delete: Ronold Wyeth Percival King, A.M.
George Widmer Thorn, A.M.
insert: Paul Joseph Sachs, Art.D.

1955

for Luis Mundz-Marin, LL.D. *read* Luis Muñoz-Marin, LL.D.

1958

for Neil Hasler McElroy, LL.D. *read* Neil Hosler McElroy, LL.D.
for William Adolf Visser 't Hooft, S.T.D. *read* Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft, S.T.D.

List of Contributors

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