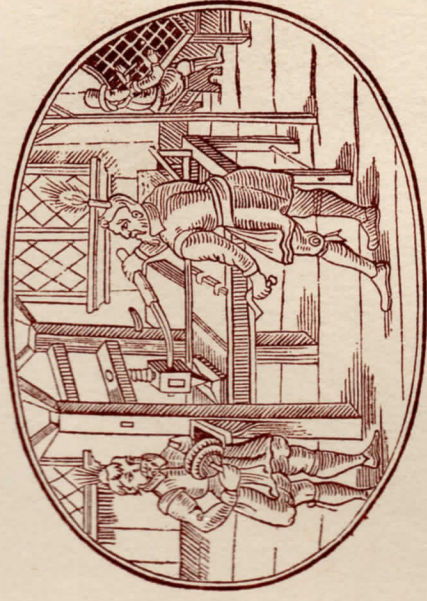
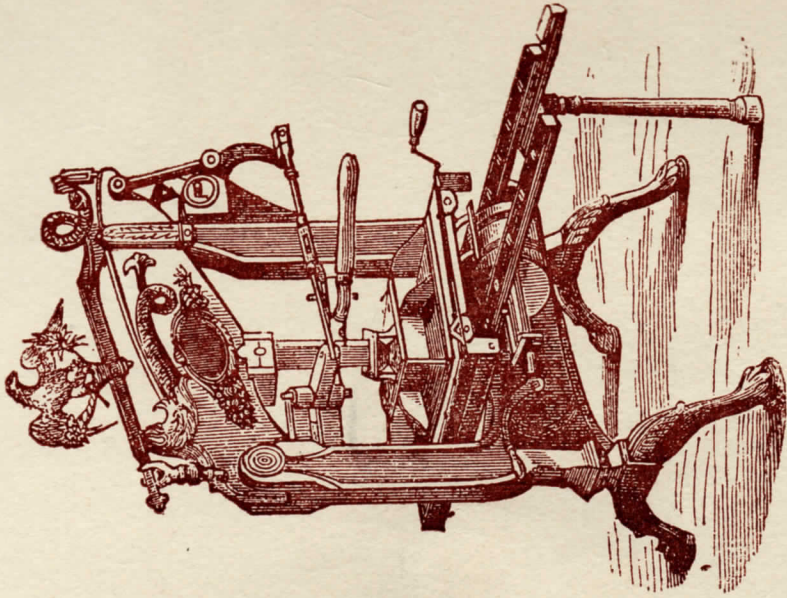


The Printing Press



James Moran

THE PRINTING PRESS



From Samuel Ampzing's *Description of Haarlem*, 1628

THE PRINTING PRESS

Essentially the wooden press remained unchanged for some 350 years but during that time minor alterations took place, but not necessarily universally. Unfortunately, one of the finest engravings of a printing office, while offering us much information about seventeenth-century practice, does not actually show the mechanism for bringing the forme under the platen. The engraving (dated 1676) is by Abraham von Werdt who worked in Nuremberg from about 1640 to 1680. Two pressmen work together. One lays on and takes off the sheets and pulls the bar; the other inks the type with his two inking balls. The spindle of the press is in a "box" hose (described later) which prevents slurring and the platen is obviously of metal instead of thick wood. The forme can be seen clearly as well as tympan on which the paper has been laid (together with a tympan rest) the frisket (not covered) and the cord against which the frisket rests. The press is a handsome piece of joinery but in essentials is the same as a rougher production of two centuries earlier.

There are early descriptions of the working of the wooden press, the earliest in Christopher Plantin's *Dialogues Francois* (MDLXVII) in which he gives a description of printing and answers questions. The reason for two pulls is explained by the fact that the platen cannot cover the whole forme. Joseph Moxon in *Mechanick Exercises* (1683) describes the parts of the press. Moxon praised the Blaeu or Dutch press as against the so-called "English" press. The difference concerned the "hose", a sleeve which enclosed the end of