SERIES No. 73

5½ POINT OLD STYLE No. 73 8 12-19

THE INVENTION OF PRINTING has always been recognized by educated men as a subject of importance: there is no mechanical art, nor are there any of the fine arts, about whose early history so many books have been written. The subject is as mysterious as it is inviting. There is an unusual degree of obscurity about the origin of the first printed books and the lives and works of the early printers. There are records and traditions which cannot be reconciled of *at least three distinct inventions* of printing. Its early history is entangled with a controversy about rival inventors which has lasted for more than three centuries, and is not yet fully determined. In the management of this controversy, a subject intrinsically attractive has been made repulsive. The history of the invention of printing has been written to please public pride. German authors assert the claims of Gutenberg, and discredit traditions about Coster. Dutch authors must insist on the priority of Coster, and charge Gutenberg with stealing the invention. Partisans on each side say that their opponents have perverted the records and suppressed the truth. The quarrel has spread. English and French authors, who had no national prejudice to gratify, and who should have considered the question without passion, have wrangled over the subject with all the bitterness of Germans and Hollanders. In this, as in other quarrels, there are

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