

# PLA QUARTERLY

VOLUME ONE

1957

NUMBER TWO

---

## CONTENTS

### Editorial

#### Association Affairs

- Bookselling — and the outsider *Martyn Goff*  
A small collection of Roxburghe Club Books *B. S. Cron*  
Some current aspects of publishing in France *J. Rodolphe-Rousseau*

---

## PRIVATE LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

*President: Dr. R. Regensburger*

*Hon. Secretary:*

Philip Ward, 28 Parkfield Crescent, North Harrow, Middlesex

*Hon. Editor:*

Roderick Cave, 12 Roundwood Way, Banstead, Surrey

*Five Shillings per annum*

© Copyright 1977 by the Private Libraries Association  
Ravelston, South View Road, Pinner, Middlesex, England.  
Printed in Great Britain by Wm. Clowes & Sons Ltd.,  
London, Colchester and Beccles.

Cables : ALBIBOOKS, OXFORD

Telephone : OXFORD 3093

## A. ROSENTHAL LTD.

ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLERS

5 TURL STREET - OXFORD

### LIST OF CURRENT ILLUSTRATED BOOK CATALOGUES

Cat. No.

23	HISTORY OF HUMAN THOUGHT (Philosophy, Religion, etc.)	901 items
28	SOCIAL SCIENCES—Sociology, Political Science, Economics, Law, Commerce, etc. (With 5 illustrations)	2500 items
29	INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, rare and original editions (16th-19th centuries), chiefly Chamber Music. (With 11 illustrations)	880 items
34	SPAIN IN EUROPE AND OVERSEAS, Language, Literature, Religion, History, Art, Exploration in Africa, Asia and America. (With 18 illustrations)	1159 items
36	FRENCH PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE	259 items
37	FRENCH HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY	362 items
38	FRENCH LITERATURE, from Middle Ages to 20th century	819 items
39	BOOKS ON ART	882 items
40	THE ART OF THE ILLUSTRATED BOOK. (15th-20th centuries). (With numerous illustrations)	623 items
42	SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE TRAVEL AND DISCOVERY OVERSEAS	300 items
43	RARE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE BOOKS (Literature, History, Law, etc.) (Profusely illustrated)	169 items
44	BIBLIOGRAPHY	645 items
45	VARIA. Books on many subjects	1005 items
46	EARLY SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE MEDICINE AND SCIENCE	198 items
47	HISTORY OF THE JEWS. (Illustrated)	1548 items
48	JUDAICA AND HEBRAICA. OLD TESTAMENT AND RABBINIC STUDIES, ETC. (Illustrated)	2317 items

Please write to A. Rosenthal Ltd., Oxford, for any of these Catalogues, and send your list of wants

### EDITORIAL

As the first number of the *P.L.A. Quarterly* has been received with some congratulatory letters and notices, we ought to be feeling very confident. But of course there is always the fear of falling away, although the articles in this issue indicate otherwise. Of our contributors, B. S. Cron is a member of the Association and its Council; Martyn Goff is a well known bookseller, author and lecturer — his first novel, *The Plaster Fabric*, is being published this month. Our third contributor, M. Jacques Rodolphe-Rousseau, is President of the *Syndicat National des Éditeurs*; in view of the present discussion in this country of the "Net Book Agreement" his article has considerable interest.

### ASSOCIATION AFFAIRS

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the P.L.A. Council Meeting held in London on 30th January, it was decided that the first A.G.M. should be held on Wednesday, 22nd May, at St. Ermin's Hotel, adjoining S. James' Park Station, London, S.W.1. Tea and biscuits will be served at 6 p.m., and the meeting will begin at 6.30 p.m. After the formal business has been completed, Mr. Roger Powell will give a lecture on "The hand-binder and his craft today," which will be illustrated by a demonstration of hand-binding from sheets to tooling. It is hoped that all members living in the London area, and as many others as may find it convenient, will be present.

#### ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the P.L.A. is now open to booksellers, publishers, and others in the trade, whose subscription of three guineas covers most of the privileges of ordinary membership. The co-operation of booksellers will greatly improve the effectiveness of section 2 of the exchange scheme.

On payment of a small affiliation fee, institutional libraries and other bodies are also entitled to receive this journal.

#### LIBRARY VISITS

During the summer months, the P.L.A. plans to organise visits to members' libraries. In the event of sufficient interest being aroused in the south-eastern region of England, the P.L.A. is prepared to publish a "London News'etter" between May and September, informing local members of private library "open days." Any member interested in participating — either as host or guest — is asked to send the Honorary Secretary three or four alternative dates at least a month ahead. He would also welcome brief accounts of visits, or descriptions of members' own collections.

## BOOKSELLING — and the outsider

by MARTYN GOFF

"I'd love to work in a bookshop" is a phrase that most sellers of new books hear two or three times a week. It conjures up — in the mind of the speaker — a vista of days spent browsing through recently published books, with an occasional interruption to discuss Henry with Grahame Greene or sell ten pounds of *Skira* books to a wealthy, local resident. Most professions and jobs look more attractive from the outside, it is true, but the retail book trade is perhaps the most deceptive of all; for apart from the inevitable routine that the outsider fails to notice, he believes, gullible fellow, that it is a way of making a living.

A bookseller, to be efficient, must be cultured, knowledgeable, gifted with the capacity of taking endless pains over small detail and a man of business and the world to boot. He must be able to predict just how many copies of J. B. Priestley's next novel he will sell, although in fact the manuscript has probably not yet arrived at the publisher. Three, four of five months before publication, he must face the publishers' representatives, each of whom is sincerely convinced that *his* book on climbing up and down Everest is the *only* one that will sell in the forthcoming season. He must do this while all around him are hundreds of books that were last season's certainties and are this year's overdraft. For nearly every book that the bookseller blindly "subscribes" (i.e. orders before publication) is bought firmly and must often be paid for long before it is sold. Without reading more than the publisher's over-enthusiastic blurb, he must prophecy not only the public's taste but the reviewer's reactions. And if his judgement fails in too many instances, then his inevitable bankruptcy will be immeasurably hastened.

Our bookseller, whom outsiders (not, I hasten to add, Mr. Colin Wilson's variety) so envy has not only to judge the public's taste in advance, he has to face that public hourly. Far from demanding *Skira* Art books by the ten pounds worth, most members of the public require an H.M. Stationery Office pamphlet for 8d. The bookseller's profit on this is theoretically 2d., but of this generous sum he will have spent 2d. on sending the order to H.M.S.O. and 3d. in receiving back the pamphlet. He might even consider himself lucky to escape with a net loss of 3d., for often the customer will return several times for the pamphlet, and failing its early arrival demand that the bookseller invests further pennies in a telephone call to H.M.S.O. to expedite its despatch. This, of course, is a hypothetical case in which the member of the public knew which pamphlet was wanted and who published it. Much more often the title of a review of it in one of the Sunday papers is quoted, and a careless "I just can't remember who wrote or published it" tacked on. A respectful reminder that *Whitaker's* yearly list will show more than 19,000 new titles published in one year will bring a sniff of incredulity combined with the loss of a customer. It is cheaper to add to the 3d. loss by having an assistant wade through all the Sunday papers for the actual title,

and then through the catalogues to trace publisher and author. Besides, it fulfils our condition of taking endless pains over a matter of detail.

Far from whiling away the odd half an hour talking to Graham Greene or F. R. Leavis, our bookseller will more likely find himself discussing compost heaps with the man who wanted a two shilling book on the subject; hamburger steaks with the woman who needs a one and sixpenny cookery brochure; and Enid Blyton with a charming mite dripping ice-cream over Phaidon Art books. He is expected to know that Mrs. Jones has one son in the Merchant Navy and Mrs. Brown another just born; he will be expected not to confuse the two and recommend a cheeky birthday card for the wrong one. And he will soon learn to agree with twenty or thirty different interpretations of the weather that will be thrown at him daily.

Our envied bookseller will also, at least once a year, have to face his accountants, and, unless he is extraordinarily clever at self-concealment, at much more frequent intervals his Bank Manager. He will have to explain to the former that IF he orders a book BEFORE publication or in quantity after publication he will be given a third discount from the selling price; but that from his third will have to be deducted the cost of getting the book from the publisher to himself. He will have to continue his explanation by adding that school and many other text books will only yield half that profit, and that, as with our pamphlet obtained to special order, this will often be swallowed by the postage or carriage.

When the accountant, to whom "books" mean something else, proposes that he follows the practice of other trades and deals with a different, more favourable publisher, our bookseller will sigh, take a grip on himself and quietly explain that each book is only published by one publisher, that it has never occurred to that publisher to allow the bookseller a reasonable profit in his costing, and that publishers in any case regard booksellers as almost unnecessary obstacles in the direct line from them to their public. The publisher is a Magnificent Monopoly all to himself; the bookseller must grin, buy from him and hope to stave off final bankruptcy until his children are old enough to support him.

If the foregoing represented all of the bookseller's burden, then might our outsider's envy be accountable, if a little overdone. But we have only begun to touch on his problems. If he places his shop in a side street, then the world goes by on the main one unaware of it. If, on the other hand, he puts it next to Messrs. Sainsbury's or Lipton's or Woolworth's on the main one, he is painfully made aware that *his* rent is computed on their thriving concerns. Even if he starts with an enormous capital, the end is in sight before the door is first opened in the latter case; better far to remain almost totally undiscovered on the side street, and pay a rent his private income can meet.

Then there are his assistants. They, too, must be civil, charming, dynamic but discreet sales people; they, too, must be cultured, knowledgeable, politically aware but uncommitted, followers of most religious organisations though not actual

adherents, and be willing to work for less than half the wage that the lowliest minion in a chain grocery store will reap. They must look smart and tidy, work lavish unpaid overtime, and affect not to know that their opposite numbers in New York earn nearly five times their wages. Finally, remaining always unruffled, they will affect not to notice when a customer confuses Richmal Crompton with G. M. Trevelyan when ordering *William the Fourth*; but just smile politely and climb a ladder to cover their client's confusion.

I am — I suppose that I ought to have declared myself before this — a bookseller, and my reader must be beginning to wonder why it is, after all I have written, I remain one, and hope to do so for the rest of my days. He or she must be starting to wonder why it is that someone with the sense and knowledge that I regard as a *sine qua non* to operate in the trade, I continue to fight the publisher, the public, the Bank and the inevitable bankruptcy, that waits for me towards the end of the road, just in fact before my children can support me. Since this account is factual and impartial we must turn the coin, only hoping that we have already turned the outsider's envy to gall, and sent her or him to open a grocery or hardware store — or to join a publisher. In the latter case he or she will become my friend, for one of the curious and delectable aspects of bookselling is that the bookseller loves the publisher who is destroying him, and the two of them often lunch and dine together (mostly at the latter's expense).

There are, though, other rewards apart from two or three free (and excellent) lunches per annum. Most of us at some time or other have a strong enthusiasm for a book, a play or a film, but the most that we can do is to communicate this to a few friends. The position of the bookseller who really cares about books and comes across a new and outstanding novel or biography is very different. Merely by displaying in his window and shop a pile of copies he can increase the sale of the title greatly. And if he intensifies this by talking to all his customers likely to be interested in enthusiastic terms, he can achieve quite a large sale. Some years ago I chanced upon Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli* while in Italy. When it was later translated and then published by Cassell's, my small provincial bookshop sold nearly fifty copies of a book that normally would have sold one or two at the most; and this was entirely due to personal enthusiasm. This, however, is but a start.

In a limited district (by which I mean an area where the shop serves the *same* people all the time, as against one that serves mainly casual passers-by) a good and intelligent bookseller can affect local reading taste quite considerably. He can lead both young and old to better books, help them back to the classics or forward to modern poetry. He can make his shop a definite local centre of culture where the people who care about books and their contents can meet and talk, seek his or each other's advice. The more positive and ideal his conception of a good bookshop, the greater and more beneficial can be his influence. And in time — Bank Manager and creditors permitting — he will have customers coming back whose reading over the years he has shaped and whose level will often surpass his own.

It is at such moments that our bookseller, heedless of rates, rent, publishers, carriage delays, grumbling assistants, "dead" stock and soaring overdraft, will smile at the person who envies his job; and will feel, modestly and humbly, that the envy is indeed deserved.

## A SMALL COLLECTION OF ROXBURGHE CLUB BOOKS

by B. S. CRON

The Roxburghe Club was founded in 1812. It is the oldest existing society of book-lovers in this country. The membership never exceeds forty and generally has been drawn from three classes: those who have inherited libraries, those who have collected them and those who control them. Books are either printed by the Club, or printed at the expense of members of the Club, for presentation to fellow members. In either case, the number of copies printed of each book published must not exceed one hundred, and books are never re-printed. They are all, therefore, rare and in most cases very hard to come by. Bernard Quaritch and Maggs are the principal London dealers who are likely to have any stock of these fine books. They are greatly in demand by the big libraries of this country and America, and, no doubt, of other countries with libraries specialising in ancient and historical manuscripts, illumination, or rare and important early printed books. To date over two hundred and twenty books have been published, and I propose in this article to describe a few that are in my possession.

When Dr. M. R. James was working on the famous bestiary manuscripts of the Middle Ages, he had occasion to read, not for the first time, the *Marvels of the East*. This remarkable work has survived in only three copies, one of about the year 1000, the second of the eleventh century and the third of the twelfth. The first of these is contained in that famous composite volume amongst the Cottonian manuscripts in the British Museum known as *Vitellius A XV*, that also contains the unique copy of *Beowulf*. The second is contained in another composite Cottonian book, *Tiberius B V*, and the third is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, being *Ms. Bodley 614*. In 1929, John Johnson at the University Press, Oxford, printed for the Club Dr. James' introduction and notes to the *Marvels* together with a full reproduction of the three known copies and the texts printed in part for the first time. The *Marvels* is primarily an early English picture book. It starts by pretending to be a methodical itinerary that describes the strange monsters and marvels that a traveller is likely to meet in the East. But this pretence is soon abandoned and the book becomes a mere treatise on the monstrous people and animals that so delighted the Middle Ages. It would be impossible to give here any idea of the interest of this work or of the fascinating problems of its antecedents.

Among the early pictured lives of famous saints of England, that of St. Guthlac of Crowland, in Lincolnshire, as represented in Harley Roll Y.6 in the British Museum (commonly known as *The Guthlac Roll*), has always held a prominent place. Unlike the

majority of these lives, however, the drawings on this roll do not serve as illustrations to an accompanying text. In fact their exact purpose is not known. They are outline drawings, with slight ink-wash and occasional tinting, on a long vellum roll within a series of touching medallions, each six inches in diameter. They could well be designs for stained glass windows, for wall paintings or for the panels of a ceiling. They date from the end of the twelfth century. Sir George Warner, who was a former Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, wrote an introduction to the roll which, together with a complete reproduction of the drawings, was printed by the Oxford University Press in 1928. This book was presented to the members of the Club by Sir George Warner. The roll is imperfect at the beginning, and the surviving drawings deal with episodes from the Saint's life after his renunciation of the world. Each drawing has a Latin inscription on it summarising the episode in question. Artistically they are of high quality and admirably portray with a simple directness the torments and trials of the Saint and the good works and miracles he performed.

In the thirteenth century lived one of the very few English book illuminators who signed his work. His name was W. de Brailes. In 1930, Sir Sydney C. Cockerell presented to members of the Club a volume entitled *The Work of W. de Brailes*. This consisted of an introduction and full descriptions of all the manuscripts then known to him as containing work by this artist. His book was printed at the University Press, Cambridge, and the plates illustrating all the more important miniatures mentioned in the text are in collotype and photogravure. Sir Sydney describes six manuscripts; they are: (i) a Psalter at New College, Oxford (Ms. 322); (ii) another Psalter in the possession of Sir Sydney; (iii) six leaves from a Psalter then belonging to Sir Chester Beatty (Ms. 38 in the Catalogue [1927] of his Western Manuscripts by Dr. Eric G. Millar), now Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum Ms. 330; (iv) a Book of Hours belonging to Mr. Dyson Perrins of Malvern (Ms. 4); (v) a small Bible, also belonging to Mr. Dyson Perrins (Ms. 5); and (vi) "Richard Smartford's" Bible, which was known to Sir Sydney in 1930 only from a description in a catalogue of manuscripts offered for sale by J. and J. Leighton (then of 40 Brewer Street, London) and issued in 1912. This Bible has now been identified and is in the Perth Museum. The main characteristics of his work are, the distinctive facial types of his figures, his unusual choice of subjects for illustration, his tendency to write inscriptions on scrolls and his partiality for a species of winged dragon in association with his large initials. In the illustration of the Last Judgement in the Fitzwilliam Museum, de Brailes has portrayed himself as a naked tonsured man being rescued or withheld by St. Michael from the flames of hell. On a scroll is the inscription "W. DE BRAIL' ME F[E]CIT." Since Sir Sydney Cockerell's monograph, another manuscript containing de Brailes' work has been identified. This manuscript is divided between the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore (Ms. 500), and the collection of M. Georges Wildenstein, in Paris. It is a series of Bible pictures, twenty-seven full page miniatures being in Baltimore and seven similar miniatures in the Paris collection.

In 1906, Sir Sydney Cockerell reproduced in the Burlington Magazine for December of that year, as an illustration to an article on the thirteenth century Parisian miniaturist, Honoré, a single leaf in the Fitzwilliam Museum from a hitherto unknown manuscript of *La Somme le Roy* which he stated was "manifestly by Honoré's own hand" (subject to a correct attribution concerning a famous Breviary at Paris). He added that he did not despair of the whole book (which must have been a singularly beautiful one) being found at some future date. In 1934, Sir Sydney acquired from a continental dealer a second detached leaf from the same manuscript. Then in 1938, Dr. Eric G. Millar was fortunate enough to find the manuscript itself, with the text complete and with eleven out of the original fifteen miniatures remaining in the volume. It is now in Dr. Millar's own library. In 1953, Charles Batey at the University Press, Oxford, printed for the Club Dr. Millar's introduction and description of this and associated manuscripts. The volume is supplied with reproductions of all the miniatures in his manuscript and of the two at Cambridge together with some supplementary plates of comparative material. This lovely manuscript was executed before 1295. The work is a treatise on the vices and the virtues and was compiled in 1279 by the Dominican Frère Laurent for Philippe III, King of France. The presentation copy does not appear to have survived. It was a very popular work at the end of the thirteenth century, being translated into Provençal, Flemish, Catalan, Spanish and Italian. It was printed by Vêrard in 1485(?). It was translated into English in the fourteenth century under the title of the "Ayenbite of Inwyt," and again in the fifteenth century, while Caxton translated it afresh and printed it in 1486 under the title "The Book Ryal or the Book for a King." The pictures illustrate the text generally but are independent of it as regards details. Whereas the work was very popular, yet illustrated copies are rare. Dr. Millar only knows of four, including his own, prior in date to 1300, and all these are of French origin.

From the end of the thirteenth century to the time of the Black Death (1348-9), flourished the highly distinctive East Anglian School of manuscript illumination. In the surviving manuscripts may be seen the main characteristics of the School, namely rich decoration, narrative illustration and a combination of the natural and the fantastic in the profuse details of the more decorative pages. The Bodleian Library is the home of two manuscripts of this School. They are the Ormesby Psalter (Ms. Douce 366) and the Bromholm Psalter (Ms. Ashmole 1523). The former is the finer of the two and is in some ways one of the finest representatives of the group. In 1926, the University Press, Oxford, printed for the Club a superlative volume entitled *Two East Anglian Psalters*, the Ormesby book being described by Sir Sydney Cockerell, and the Bromholm Psalter by Dr. M. R. James. The book, too, contains a magnificent series of plates in colour and monochrome. The Douce Manuscript was given to Norwich Cathedral Priory between 1320 and 1330 by Robert of Ormesby. The Ashmole Manuscript has been sadly mutilated but is still a

fine member of the group. In this case the Kalendar shows that it was the property of the Cluniac Priory of St. Andrew at Bromholm on the Norfolk coast. There are several problems in the make-up of the Ormesby Psalter which need only be mentioned here, as the artistic excellence of the decoration and the vigour of invention in the delineation of the natural and grotesque figures, animals and scenes that crowd the borders are what immediately strike the eye. On one page may be seen a man on a bear fighting another on a lion, an owl on a hare being pursued by a monkey (wearing gloves, with a wallet round his waist and swinging a lure) riding on a hound, while a semi-naked man, beetles, dragons and naturalistic birds, etc., swarm the borders. Another border on another leaf shows a man with a bundle of green food over his shoulder leading a wolf and a lamb towards a boat. This is the old puzzle of how to get all across without leaving the lamb with the green food or the wolf with the lamb. On another margin of the same page a fox in a hood and on a crutch approaches a hare, while dragons, human heads, recognisable plants and a woodpecker fill up the remainder of the border. On each of the pages whose borders I have roughly described is a superlative historiated initial. But this only gives a slight indication of the remarkable beauty and richness of this magnificent Psalter. Other superb manuscripts from this group are the Duke of Rutland's Psalter, the Peterborough Psalter at Brussels, the Windmill Psalter in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, Queen Mary's Psalter and the two Psalters combined in Ms. Arundel 83 at the British Museum, the Gorleston Psalter belonging to Mr. Dyson Perrins at Malvern, and the St. Omer Psalter now in the British Museum. But such a list is invidious for some of those unmentioned are equally fine.

The Apocalypse seems to have exercised a remarkable fascination for the artists, scholars and commentators of the entire Middle Ages. Illustrated Apocalypses appeared in Italy from perhaps as early as the fifth century. Spain furnishes the illustrated commentary of Beatus of Liebana (eighth century) of which the earliest copy known is dated 894. But it is not until the early part of the 13th century that an Apocalypse may be found illustrated from start to finish as a separate book. From then until nearly 1500 a large number were produced, of which the English and French copies are by far the best artistically. Dr. M. R. James made a particular study of these manuscripts and concluded that the origin of the group lay in Anglo-Norman circles, probably in England just before or after 1200, though no copy quite as old as that year has been found. To the early part of the fourteenth century, and possibly by the same artist as the Bromholm Psalter, belongs *The Dublin Apocalypse*. It belongs to Trinity College, Dublin, and its pressmark is K.4.31. Attention was first drawn to this manuscript in 1927 by Dr. James. Then in 1932, the Cambridge University Press printed for the Club Dr. James's full description and notes, together with a complete facsimile of the manuscript. The book is outstanding for the format and setting of the pictures, which is possibly unique, and for the absence of any gloss. The artist had several peculiarities. His faces are nearly always beardless, the representations of thunder as demoniac

heads are of huge size and he introduces at least ten times in the manuscript in the centre of the top of a picture the lower part of a quatrefoil containing a bust of the Deity or of Christ. Another curious feature is of two harpers enclosed in the sounding-boards of their own harps.

Probably owing to the ravages of the Black Death the output of English manuscripts came to a sudden stop shortly after 1340. At least there is a gap in the surviving series of English manuscripts until we come to a small group of Psalters or Books of Hours or both that appear to be the earliest examples of the revival or survival of the art of illumination in this country. All these books were executed for Humphrey de Bohun, 7th Earl of Hereford (died 1373) or for members of his family. This group of *The Bohun Manuscripts* was described by Dr. M. R. James in a monograph he had prepared for the Club, but owing to his death it had to be seen through the press by Dr. Eric G. Millar, who added an introductory note. This handsome volume was printed by John Johnson at the University Press, Oxford, and was issued to members of the Club in 1936. There are sixty-eight fine plates depicting the decoration and miniatures of the five manuscripts described. These manuscripts are: (i) Oxford, Exeter College, Ms. 47; (ii) Oxford, Bodleian Ms. Auct. D.4.4; (iii) Vienna, National Library, Cod. 1826\*; (iv) Copenhagen, Royal Library, Thotts Saml. 547; (v) Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Ms. 38 — 1950 (which belonged to Mr. T. H. Riches of Shenley, Herts., at the time Dr. James wrote his monograph). To these may be added (vi) Edinburgh National Library, Ms. Adv. 18.6.5, which was not included, and (vii) British Museum, Egerton Ms. 3277, which was discovered too late for inclusion in the monograph. It is generally agreed that the style of these manuscripts derives from the East Anglian School to which has been added an Italian influence already perceptible in some of the earlier East Anglian manuscripts. The characteristics of the style are black eyes, hair and beards, and white faces and shaded draperies of many figures together with elaborate decoration of the large historiated initials, to which a good deal of architecture is introduced, and which are often divided into compartments having gold grounds against which the figures stand out with a brilliant and very sumptuous effect. These manuscripts being produced when they were and in such a distinctive style are therefore documents of the first importance to the historian of manuscript illumination in this country.

## SOME CURRENT ASPECTS OF PUBLISHING IN FRANCE

by M. JACQUES RODOLPHE-ROUSSEAU

President of the *Syndicat National des Editeurs*

The first thing that will be noticed about the publishing industry in France is the remarkable steadiness of its yearly output of new titles, as may be seen from the statistics of the *Régie du Dépôt Légal*, by whom 11,793 new titles were registered in 1955 compared with 12,179 and 11,351 in 1954 and 1953 respectively.

Total sales of books on the other hand have shown a constant increase year by year, as also have exports, which in 1955 had the

best figure for ten years. These results are satisfactory and encouraging, although naturally we feel there is room for improvement. The French publishing industry does, nevertheless, face real difficulties of which two may well be examined in some detail as they are not peculiar to France and are causing equal concern to some of our foreign colleagues.

The first arises from certain legal limitations on retail prices and the second from the prohibition of retail price maintenance. Price limitations stem from the laudable anxiety of governments to keep down the cost-of-living so as to prevent inflation. Whilst such methods may be practicable and desirable where ordinary manufactured goods are concerned, they cannot be applied to books without serious cultural consequences.

The system of price limitation adopted in France has been to freeze prices at their level on a given date, viz. 17th February, 1954. The price of any book then in print must apply to any subsequent reprinting of that book at its upper price limit. Works affected are those integrally reprinted without textual modifications and which cannot be considered as new works.

Now this method, applied to goods in regular constant manufacture for the replacements of stocks in the constant process of depletion, and where prices may be constantly adjusted to manufacturing costs, will not lead to a large differentiation immediately the freeze is applied. Such is not the case with books, for some of the works in print on the appointed day of the freeze will in fact have been produced long before. This is notably so in the case of works which are the staple of the national literary heritage, and of certain basic scientific works of which the rate of sale is normally relatively slow. So we have the situation that when stocks become exhausted reprinting cannot be contemplated because of the considerable increases in the cost of book production that have accrued over the lengthy periods involved, a deplorable and, from the cultural point of view, a disastrous state of affairs.

The publishers' organisation, *le Syndicat National des Editeurs*, has unremittingly drawn the attention of those responsible for these economic measures to the undesirable consequences of the system, but it has not yet succeeded in obtaining the desired relaxation. We believe that other countries besides France are in a similar situation.

The other difficulty that French books face today concerns more particularly their distribution. This is the prohibition of the enforcement of retail price maintenance. All of our colleagues who have followed the labours of the Congress of the International Union of Publishers (*Le Congrès de l'Union Internationale des Editeurs*), held in Florence last June, will know how grave this problem is and what earnest consideration was given to it during the course of those sessions.

Here again if one believes that it is, in general, advantageous to a country's economy to prohibit retail price maintenance, one must admit that it is quite incompatible with a sane and healthy system of book distribution, because of the predominantly intellectual characteristics of books.

The relationship of author and publisher is based on a retail price for the book in question, and this desirably should be precisely determined, invariable, and honoured by all concerned. How can an author's contractual rights be accurately defined as a proportion of the retail price to the public if this price offers no guarantee of stability?

A further consideration which makes a fixed retail price desirable is the safeguarding of the prestige and intellectual reputation of the author. To allow a retail bookseller to give discounts or rebates will presuppose in the minds of the purchasers that the rebate derives from the lack of success or worth in the book concerned. A sale subject to rebate has always a pejorative aspect, and may hint of the "remainder."

The relationship of publisher and book-seller also demands regularity and security. We must not forget that it is the publisher who morally and contractually assumes, in respect of an author, responsibility for the distribution of the work he has undertaken to publish. He must therefore be able to entrust distribution to a stably organised distribution network whose stability will depend on the financial and economic stability of the individual retailer.

To give the retail bookseller authority to give rebates on the retail price fixed by the publisher is to open the door to local competition and the first rebate granted will entail others by the fatal process of the Dutch auction. The profit margin left to the bookseller by the discounts given him will not permit sacrifices of this kind, sacrifices always growing by reason of the very fact of competition at this level. Sooner or later the bookseller, drawn into this impossible cycle, will be led to demand an increase of discount given by his publisher, and the publisher, if he must accept this new charge, will be obliged in turn to increase the marked price. Thus under the fallacious and illusory pretension of permitting a fall in retail prices their inevitable rise will be provoked. If the publisher is denied the right to grant an increase of his discount the retail bookseller, to keep his business on an even keel will be compelled to join to his fundamental business of bookselling other retail business, or to increase the scope of the latter. This can only be detrimental, and the more competent and qualified the bookseller may be, the higher will be his overheads (bibliographical "tools," experienced assistants, maintenance of a permanent stock of basic works, etc.) and so it will be the best class of booksellers who being most vulnerable will be worst hit. And it cannot be totally excluded that their numbers will not reduce ultimately to the point of extinction.

This disruption, with its obviously serious consequences for the future of intellectual pursuits, must at all costs be avoided, and it will be the more compelling when it is recalled that publishers of all nationalities, without a single dissentient voice, voted at Florence a resolution to this effect.

I hope I may be pardoned if in dealing with current aspects of French publishing I have trespassed on the international field of the subject, but I have been led to do this to emphasise with greater force the danger facing my colleagues.



**ALAN G. THOMAS**

*Antiquarian Bookseller*

CATALOGUE No. 1 ON REQUEST

Manuscripts, Incunabula, Colour Plates, Private Presses, Golden Cockerel, Four Gospels on vellum, Kelmscotts with Morris's original designs, Early Science and Herbals, Picasso sketch, Literature, Hardy's corrected proofs, Bibliography, Art and Architecture, Fine Bindings, A.L.S., Etchings by Rembrandt, Whistler and Queen Victoria, etc., etc.

7A WIMBORNE ROAD - BOURNEMOUTH  
*Personal callers (by appointment) welcome*

**CENTRAL COLLECTION  
OF  
BOOK JACKETS**

Our grateful thanks are expressed to the following donors of book jackets :

The World's Work (1913) Ltd.

Andre Deutsch Ltd.

Jonathan Cape Ltd.

Cassell & Co. Ltd.

Burke Publishing Co.

Museum Press Ltd.

St. Andrew's University Library

**HOWES BOOKSHOP  
LIMITED**

*Antiquarian Booksellers*

3 TRINITY STREET  
HASTINGS

\*  
Fine, Rare and Scholastic Books, Books on Kent and Sussex. Books Published from 1470 to 1770

\*  
*Libraries Purchased Anywhere*

\*  
Catalogues Issued Free

Send for:  
Catalogue 134: Early Printed Books, Sets, General Literature, etc.  
Monthly Lists of Inexpensive Books

\*  
Phone: HASTINGS 3437 A.B.A.

*If you are interested in  
BUILDING, BUILDING LAW AND  
ARCHITECTURE, you need*

**THE ARCHITECT AND  
THE LAW**

by Richard Body, M.P.  
*Barrister-at-Law*

8s. 6d.

\*  
*From*

THE INSTITUTE OF REGISTERED  
ARCHITECTS

47 VICTORIA STREET  
LONDON, S.W.1

*or any Bookseller*

**K. J. BREDON'S  
BOOKSHOP**

*Second-hand and Antiquarian  
Department*

A reasonably priced selection of old and modern books on many subjects always in stock, with emphasis on Literature, History, Thought and the Arts. Also old Prints and Maps

Catalogues Issued — No. 12  
(over 1,000 items) now ready

22 PRINCE ALBERT STREET  
(between The Lanes and the Sea)  
BRIGHTON 1 - SUSSEX  
(Telephone: 20557)

**HEFFER'S**



**A CAMBRIDGE  
BOOKSHOP  
THAT IS KNOWN  
IN ALL PARTS  
OF THE WORLD**

W. HEFFER & SONS LTD  
Petty Cury, Cambridge

Telephone: EAST 3450, 3650

**Weldex Productions  
LIMITED**

**APEX WORKS - LONDON, E14**

FULLY ADJUSTABLE LIBRARY SHELVING  
COMPONENT MANUFACTURERS

*Made to measure, if necessary, from best quality sheet  
steel, enamelled in large range of standard colours  
Special shades matched if required*

*'Amedeo VI e Amedeo VII  
di Savoia'*



*Says Bob the Binder:*

"Here's a lovely book from our friends Mondadori in Italy. Real connoisseurs they are. Written by the wife of the ex-King Umberto, too, about the Savoia family — one of the oldest in Europe. Italians have a tradition for fine books, from Petrarch, Aldus and Canevarius until the present day. This is in light blue Fabroleen with charming gilt border. Reckon fine bookbinding's still very much alive in Italy. They know a good material, too, Linson and Fabroleen, they now cover the world."

**Grange Fibre Co., Ltd., Leicester**  
*Makers of Linson and Fabroleen*

Printed by The Stanley Press Ltd., 27, Bradford Road, Dewsbury.

© Copyright 1977 by the Private Libraries Association  
Ravelston, South View Road, Pinner, Middlesex, England.  
Printed in Great Britain by Wm. Clowes & Sons Ltd.,  
London, Colchester and Beccles.