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THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE
PRIVATE LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

An Oscar Wilde Collection
Malcolm Pinhorn

Collecting Bookplates IV
Philip Beddingham

Recent Private Press Books

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Association Affairs

Membership, 1960

The benefits of membership of this Association in 1960 to the serious collector may be summarised as follows: He will obtain four issues of this journal with articles serving many minority interests; he will receive six Exchange Lists edited by David Lee, with the usual free offers, sale and exchange offers, wants, and notes and queries. He will probably co-operate with fellow-members, join visits to libraries and other places of interest, use the postal Loans Library run by David Chambers, and consult professional librarians within the Association.

All members may purchase official publications at a reduced rate, and there is an ambitious publications schedule for 1960, including the first edition of the world "Private Press Books", edited by Cave and Rae, and a reprint in pamphlet form of Philip Beddingham's "Concerning Bookplates" series, the last of which appears in this issue.

The comprehensive Central Collection of Book Jackets organised several years ago, is now being catalogued by Malcolm Pinhorn, who will stage a small exhibition at his Hatfield home this year. Mr. Pinhorn, a leading Wilde specialist, contributes in this capacity to the present number.

The Council has delayed a subscription increase for four years, and again undertakes these services for the minimum annual subscription of one guinea. Membership is worth much more, we believe, and we ask members to assist the expansion of the Association's work by a small donation.

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AN OSCAR WILDE COLLECTION

by Malcolm Pinhorn

FOR MORE YEARS than I care to remember I have been addicted to bibliomania. This is in no small part due to the fact that I enjoy surrounding myself with pleasurable companions, and books, I have discovered, can provide the most excellent company. In particular I have always enjoyed relaxing with the works of native authors and dramatists and, when I found myself collecting books, it was the financial limitations of a student that drove me from the broad avenue of English literature to the narrower path of the late nineteenth century. I think that my initial interest in this period was stimulated by my special period studies at school which concerned humour in Victorian England, and my attention was drawn, I remember, by Holbrook Jackson's *The Eighteen Nineties* to that curious fin-de-siècle atmosphere of the period. It was thus that I made the better acquaintance of Oscar Wilde, the artist who had done so much to create that atmosphere.

Wilde's *bon-mots* encouraged me to re-read some of his dramatic works, and, given my already existing interest in book-collecting, here, I thought, was a specialised author pursuit that might suit both my purse and my temperament. At first my progress was slow, spasmodic, and, above all, untutored. I blindly entered the book-collecting game unaware of many of the rules, only to meet numerous pitfalls and inevitable disappointments. But perhaps if I had been warned of the dangers my collection would have remained permanently in embryo. It was not until 1953 – my first year at Cambridge – that I acquired a copy of Mason's *Bibliography* and learnt something of the 'points' involved. Prior to that date my small collection had been gathered rather haphazardly, but I was constantly being encouraged by Mr Eric Barton (of the Baldur Bookshop at Richmond) who kept me informed of interesting items which came his way. I recall quite vividly the first item I purchased from him – not least because of the price! It was a privately printed copy of *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* (Mason 611). Since then I have made many purchases from him but I especially remember two. One was a purchase of a leaflet circulated by C. S. Millard (Stuart Mason) regarding the publication of *For Love of the King* by Methuen in 1920. With the leaflet is an interesting poster advertising the sale of the leaflet for one penny. Millard was of the opinion that the play was not the work of Oscar Wilde, but failed to convince the publishers. (For an account of the dispute see an article by Mr George Sims in the Autumn 1958 number of *The Book Collector*.) The second purchase, although not a book, greatly added to the interest of my collection. It was the visiting card of Wilde engraved with the name he used after his imprisonment – Sebastian Melmoth. According to the note attached to the card it was given to Mary Beatrice Gilbert by her husband Maurice Gilbert. It is said that Gilbert's mother, Madam Leontine Gilbert, laid out Wilde when he died at the Hotel d'Alsace in Paris. Maurice Gilbert was a friend of Wilde during this period.

Between 1949 (when I commenced my collection) and 1953 I acquired only one or two items and when, in the latter year, I was introduced at a Luncheon

organised by Mr Barton's wife to mark the centenary of Wilde's birth, to a fellow Wilde collector I naturally felt a little embarrassed. Nevertheless these were valuable years of apprenticeship. I learnt the wisdom of searching the sixpenny and shilling trays and I tried never to lose an opportunity of visiting the bookshops whenever I was on business in a new town. From the beginning I realised that the highly priced items were not for me and, therefore, that the possibility of acquiring important manuscript material was very remote, but I thought that within my self-imposed limitations I could still collect a worthwhile number of first editions supported by ephemeral items, 'ana', and association pieces. Thus, as my knowledge became fuller, so my collection grew, and I began to concentrate on three specialist interests – biographies and critical works concerning Wilde and his circle, articles and similar material published in periodicals, booklets and pamphlets, and thirdly, theatrical programmes and souvenirs of Wilde's plays or dramatised works.

To date I have managed to collect over forty programmes and I have nearly fifty biographies and critical works, but I have found that collecting periodicals and pamphlets has involved the most assiduous research. Although the desirability of acquiring work that was later published in book form in its first published state is by no means a modern development in book collecting, the trend towards collecting periodicals containing material which is only to be found therein, has, I think, only developed recently. The durability of a periodical or a pamphlet is obviously considerably less than a book, and this fact, allied to the penchant of many literary magazines to limit the number of copies of each issue, has resulted in some magazines containing items of Wilde interest becoming, in some cases, rarer than the first edition in book form. That the not-so-affluent collector has an increasingly high esteem for periodicals is borne out by the attitude of the book dealers. For not only do we find booksellers who specialise in modern first editions, but booksellers who, from time to time, issue catalogues solely devoted to 'little reviews', magazines and periodicals. On occasions the contents, or at least the highlights of the contents, of each publication are carefully set out. At other times, however, the collector, unless he knows exactly what he is after, must hazard a guess at the contents. I have, therefore, found it useful to compile my own bibliography of periodicals containing material of interest to me, to which I am continually adding. Not only is this an interesting task but it has saved me a number of fruitless enquiries. Obviously it would be impracticable to print a complete bibliography of (if I may use the term) Wilde magazineana, but, as an appendix to this article, I have listed some of the more interesting periodicals and paper-backed editions in my collection.

In conclusion I should like to refer briefly to some of my personal preferences among the 250 items which make up my Wilde collection. Unfortunately I have only one example of Wilde's handwriting – a large paper copy of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which is No. 209 of 250 copies signed by the author (Mason 329) – but I have manuscript material of Lord Alfred Douglas (the author's note on p. 160 of *The Autobiography of Lord Alfred Douglas*, 1929) and T. W. H. Crosland (the corrected proof sheets of *The Second Stone*, 1915). I also have several interesting letters written by Douglas and one written by

Jacob Epstein concerning the tombstone that he carved for Wilde's grave in Pere Lachaise cemetery, Paris.

A number of my books are association copies. One of my copies of *The Soul of Man under Socialism* is inscribed by Robert Ross, who was Wilde's literary executor, and my copy of R. Thurston Hopkins' book on Wilde was presented by the author to Stuart Mason. Later this book was purchased from Mason's literary executor by J. F. Jarchow, who was a well-known Wilde collector. My copy of Davray's *Oscar Wilde: La Tragedie Finale* was presented by the author to William Rothenstein. It was purchased from Rothenstein's library and has his bookplate tipped in. Robert Hitchens' book *The Green Carnation* was first published anonymously in September 1894 and my copy contains a letter tipped in explaining the reasons why the author would not allow his book to be republished. Another book in my collection containing a letter by its author is my copy of Frances Winwar's *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow Nineties* (Harper Bros., New York, 1940). The letter states that the book is liable to be withdrawn because of objections by Lord Alfred Douglas. In fact the book was withdrawn and re-issued with a Foreword by Douglas (Blue Ribbon Books, New York, 1941) but its publication in Great Britain has been prevented. Incidentally I found my copy in New York in a bookshop that the owner proudly announced had been frequented by Dylan Thomas.

Finally (from my 'ana' section) I would mention my three photographs of Lord Alfred Douglas which give added interest to the collection. Douglas frequently had favourite photographs re-copied to present to friends and it would therefore be difficult to say exactly when these were given. Two were presented to a close friend. Of these one is inscribed by Douglas 'Alfred Douglas (Bosie) at the age of 23½ July 1893' and the other is signed by Douglas and dated May 1932. The third photograph (copied by E.W. Pannell of Hove, Sussex) is inscribed by Douglas 'Alfred Douglas (aged 23) In opem me copia fecit'. This was given by Douglas to George Bernard Shaw.

It is now nearly ten years since I started my collection, and, having seen what can be achieved in a decade, I look forward to the next ten years with eager anticipation.

PERIODICAL AND PAPER BACK PUBLICATIONS

PAPER BACKS

Lord Alfred Douglas: *The Man and the Poet* by W. Sorley Brown, 31 August, 1918: John McQueen & Son, Galashiels. (Sorley Brown was a friend of Douglas and T. W. H. Crosland. He also wrote 'The Genius of Lord Alfred Douglas' (1913, 500 copies) and 'The Life and Genius of T. W. H. Crosland' (1928))
Oscar Wilde, by Ernst Bendz, Vienna, 1921

The Soul of Man under Socialism by Oscar Wilde, Porcupine Press, 1948
Oscar Wilde by James Laver, Longmans, Green & Co., 1954 (No. 53 of the series 'Writers and their Work' published for the British Council)

PERIODICALS

Waifs and Strays, Vol. I: 1879-1880 and Original Parts Nos. 1, 2 and 3 (Contains contributions by Wilde)

The Woman's World, The volume for 1888 (bound). (From June 1887 to October

1889 Wilde was Editor of this magazine and contributed a number of articles to it. Also in the Collection are a number of unbound copies of the magazine during this period)

English Illustrated Magazine. The volume for 1888/89 (bound). (Contains an article on 'London Models' by Wilde)

Lippincott's Magazine, July, 1890. (This is the American edition and contains the first printing of 'The Picture of Dorian Gray')

The Nineteenth Century, July & September, 1890. (Contains the first printing of 'On Criticism')

Fortnightly Review, February, 1891. (Contains the first printing of 'The Soul of Man under Socialism')

The Spirit Lamp, Vol. II, No. IV (1892) and Vol. III, No. II (1893). (Contain contributions by Wilde)

The English Review, January, 1911. (First printing of Shaw's 'The Dark Lady of the Sonnets'. Cf. 'A Portrait of Mr. W. H.' by Wilde)

Pegasus, November, 1915. (Contains two stories by Wilde (previously unpublished) and a review of a book on Wilde. The stories were reprinted in 'Son of Oscar Wilde' (1954))

Coterie, Winter, 1920/21. (Contains a poem by Wilde 'To M. B.-J.')

Two Worlds, June, 1926. Limited to 500 copies. (Contains 'New Preface to "The Life and Confessions of Oscar Wilde"' by Frank Harris and Lord Alfred Douglas, which was published in book form in 1925; the unpublished portion of 'De Profundis'; and 'A Peep into the Past' by Max Beerbohm)

The Dublin Review, July, 1938. (Contains 'Oscar Wilde' by Rt. Rev. Abbot Hunter Blair, O.S.B.)

Horizon, April and May, 1941. (Articles by A. J. A. Symons on Wilde at Oxford)

Adam, Nos. 241-243, 1954. (In the main devoted to Wilde)

The Adelphi, Second Quarter, 1954 (articles on Wilde in connection with the celebration of the centenary of Wilde's birth)

Bulletin of the New York Public Library, August, 1956 (My copy, inscribed by Dr Sarah Dickson of the Arents Collection, contains material relating to the publication of the complete text of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which was edited by Dr Dickson)

CONCERNING BOOKPLATES

by Philip Beddingham

FOR MY LAST article in this series I shall discuss some of the aspects of bookplates which have not already been mentioned and which may prove of interest to the reader.

I have been asked from time to time what the difference is between Bookplate and Ex Libris. A simple answer to this question is that the latter is the Latin equivalent of the former. In actual fact Ex Libris is hardly ever used in conversation, its use generally being confined to the actual inscription on the plate. However, it sometimes becomes necessary to differentiate between bookplates and illustrations which have been removed from books, especially with booksellers of the later generation, who are not familiar or particularly interested in one of the minor branches of book-lore. Fortunately for collectors, however, there are still a few shops where one can buy these plates.

A point which has been discussed from time to time is a name for bookplate collectors, as for instance stamp collectors are philatelists, cheese-box label collectors are fromologists, and so on. I think most collectors are content to plod along collecting and are not bothered about identification tags, and I doubt whether a grand title would make any difference to the prestige of collecting bookplates. The following extract from the BCN gives evidence of some serious thought on the matter:—

'The Greek word for lover is "Philos" and the well known Latin for bookplates being "ex libris", the answer becomes reasonably clear. There remained only the question of spelling and pronunciation. The "os" and "x" of Philos-ex-libris' sounded wrong and regretfully had to be discarded. It seemed better at least to keep the "e" of "ex" than to retain the whole of "libris", especially as "Phil-libris" could so easily be mistaken for lover of books (Bibliophile); so, with the addition of a final letter "t" or "m" the problem was solved in all its aspects and a new word is coined, "PHILEBRIST", meaning lover of bookplates — one who collects Ex libris; also "PHILEBRISM", meaning the science, art and hobby of bookplate collecting'.

Since the war there have been very few exhibitions of bookplates. In 1952 one was held at the N.B.L. headquarters in Albermarle Street. It included some old plates but also had a number of modern ones of interest to the general public. In 1957 a small private show of 16th and 17th century French plates was held at a collector's home. In 1958 a small exhibition of public and private library bookplates was held at Eastbourne Public Library, and later went to other municipal libraries. 1959 has seen two exhibitions in London. One at Chelsea and the other at the Austrian Institute at Rutland Gate, Knightsbridge. The Chelsea show was at the public library, and the 182 plates on display were drawn from the two bequest collections, totalling over 3,000 plates, held by the library. They ranged from the mid 17th century to the 1930's, covering all periods and styles of English bookplates up to that date. It captured the interest of a considerable number of people and had the distinction of half a column and a photograph in *The Times*. It also brought to light a number of hitherto

unknown collectors. The Austrian exhibition was of plates from that country, produced over the last 30 years. There were some very good examples of the current schools of engraving in Austria, as well as some from the pre-war schools. The skill with which most of the plates were engraved was very admirable; unfortunately some of the designs left a lot to be desired. There was a tremendous variety of subject matter in the pictorial plates, ranging from script lettering to complicated botanical studies. As most of the plates were modern the exhibition was not so interesting for us as it was for visitors from overseas, though most of the collectors who live in London paid a visit.

Up to now the bookplate has been discussed mainly in retrospect, but what sort of a future lies in store? One can only guess, but I am convinced that the halcyon days when a bookplate was essential to every literary minded person will never return. Indeed, I do not think anyone would wish to see again the mass production and misuse of bygone days. I think its use will be confined to the old established libraries, both public and private, who can afford to enhance their volumes with a handsome plate. Serious book-collectors will continue to have their books bound in leather by craftsmen of the old school, and will add their own individual touch by the insertion of a personal mark of ownership in the form of a bookplate which will project some of the personality of the owner into the book. Usually these bibliophiles have the taste and the means to commission only the best artists to design their plates, consequently the standard of bookplate art will remain high and there will always be an attraction for the collector. The family plate will do much to ensure the continuation of the practice. Most of the noble families and landed gentry of England have used bookplates in the various libraries of their estates and residences, and will continue to do so just as long as family traditions last.

Finally, a few words on the selection of a bookplate. Having decided upon a design the next step is to find an artist who is familiar with the various reproductive processes or, better still, is an engraver either on wood or copper. One good way of choosing an artist is to visit the exhibitions of graphic art or peruse some of the better illustrated books. When you have found one you like approach him with your idea and discuss it with him. He will then submit a few designs for you to choose from and your final choice will then be engraved onto copper or wood as the case may be. When all is finished you will receive the block and a few hand printed proofs. The artist may also recommend the printer whom he thinks is the most suitable for the job, alternatively you may have to find a printer yourself but this is not a problem as there are many printing firms who like the opportunity of doing a special job. If your bookplate is to be armorial then it is merely a question of choosing the engraver. A private artist will naturally be more expensive than a stationer and will usually produce a better job. The stationer's work is very competent but rather stereotyped and lacks the individual touch. Designing your own plate can be fun but unless one is a trained artist there are many pitfalls. Plates produced in this way ought not to detract from the appearance of a beautifully bound and illustrated book but should be confined to paper backs and the cheapest type of cased books.

RECENT PRIVATE PRESS BOOKS

'Christmas Books' are a difficult genre to write or publish and a few of those issued by private presses have avoided the dangers of Ye Olde Englyshe Christmase and succeeded in being a genuine contribution to the occasion. One which does succeed beyond a doubt, however, is William Kean Seymour's *The First Childermas* of which the Signet Press recently issued 350 copies at 7/6d each. This dramatic presentation of the rumours of Christ's birth, and their effect on Herod the Great, accords very well with what we know of the latter, and deserves a considerable success on the stage.

American private presses seem to have been active recently, notably the group known as the New York Chappel, whose first book *All in favor of printing* appeared recently. I have not yet been able to see a complete copy of this, and I am told that the book (of which each chappel-member has printed one gathering) will not be for sale, but judging from the contributions of the Herity and Serendipity presses it will be a collectors' piece.

In our last notes we mentioned Theo Jung's delightful *Once around the sun* issued by the Karuba Press. It is interesting to compare this with Vincent Torre's *Haiku* of which five copies have been issued by his Ink-well Press, as both are the results of successful experiments with Japanese materials and techniques - the latter to the degree of opening concertinawise. Much more austere, but in my opinion even more successful is the Zaubenberg Press's volume of the collected poems of Joseph Stanley Pennell, *Darksome House*. Thirty copies have been printed in Bulmer type on Rives paper, and at \$5.00 each the twelve copies which are for sale are very cheap.

For those interested in the little presses for themselves as well as their books, the magazine issued (by Frederick B. Macmahon of the Wayside Press, Route 2, Rockville, Connecticut) under the title of *Ink Daubings* will be of value. At \$1.00 for six issues this 'homespun journal devoted to the interests of the hobby printer and private press . . . issued every now and then' is extremely good value.

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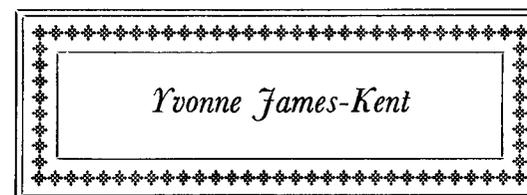
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