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The Private Library

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE
PRIVATE LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

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Vol. 3 : No. 5

January 1961

The Private Libraries Association
28 Parkfield Crescent, North Harrow, Middlesex

President: D. J. FOSKETT, M.A., F.L.A.

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The Private Library

Quarterly Journal of the Private Libraries Association

Hon. Editor: Philip Ward, 28 Parkfield Crescent, North Harrow, Middlesex

Vol. 3 No. 5 January 1961

Association Affairs

Annual General Meeting and Annual Lecture

This year's Annual General Meeting will take place in the rooms of Sotheby and Co., 34 and 35 New Bond Street, London, W.1. The short business meeting dealing chiefly with the election of officers for 1961 will be followed by a talk given by a director of Sotheby's, Mr A. R. A. Hobson. Mr Hobson, well-known to students of binding, will give an outline of the history of Sotheby's, and has promised that attending members will have the opportunity of examining fine books and manuscripts that have passed through Sotheby's hands during the firm's history. Members are asked to note the date: Wednesday, 26 April, at 6.30 p.m. Visitors are also welcome, though they will not be permitted to vote.

Foreign Classics Committee

The Council has appointed a Foreign Classics Committee "to advise British publishers of foreign classics likely to be purchased in translation by English-speaking readers". Parallel texts are advocated by the Committee, which commends the Greek and Latin series of the Loeb classical library distributed in Britain by Heinemann, and the model "Poetry of the Netherlands in its European context" by Theodoor Weevers, published last year by the Athlone Press. Professor Weevers prefaces the long parallel anthology with an equally valuable historical account of Dutch poetry. Negotiations are in hand with Penguin Books for the publication in their "Classics" series of translations from the Indian drama, and Oxford University Press inform us that Ibsen's collected plays will eventually appear over their imprint. Requests have also been received for translations of works by Beaumarchais, Petrarch, and Angelus Silesius. Any suggestions from members on this subject will be collated by the Committee at their next meeting.

Private Press Books

We are privileged to introduce to our reviewing columns the owner of the Miniature Press and editor of the "Miniature folio of private presses", Mr John Ryder. Mr Ryder will share the onus of reviewing private press books with Thomas Rae, the subject of this issue's leading article, and Roderick Cave, its author.

Following the immediate success of the annual "Private Press Books", the

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Association has authorised a second issue, which will contain new introductory essays and, of course, a completely new text. This second volume will appear in April if possible, and may be ordered from the Publications Secretary, David Chambers, 41 Cuckoo Hill Road, Pinner, Middlesex. Its cost is 7/6d to members, and 10/6d to others.

THE SIGNET PRESS

by Roderick Cave

PRIVATE PRINTING has had an honourable history in Scotland, and two presses operating in the early years of the nineteenth century – the Auchinleck Press owned by Sir Alexander Boswell, the son of Johnson's biographer, and Peter Buchan's Auchwedden Press – certainly do not deserve to be forgotten. Buchan's work, though very little known, is of considerable interest to the student of printing as, if the *Dictionary of National Biography* can be believed, he printed his books on a press of his own design which could be operated with the feet, and which handled type, copperplates and lithographic stones equally well. But despite this early activity, printing for pleasure languished, and although the example of William Morris at the Kelmscott Press encouraged a good many imitators in England there was very little more private printing north of the border until a few years ago.

The Signet Press, which is run by Thomas Rae from his home in Greenock, is probably the most important of the modern Scottish presses. As a partner in an old-established family printing business it is surprising that he should find a sparetime interest in playing with type, but in the preparation of books and pamphlets which interest him he finds opportunities for self-expression which are denied the ordinary jobbing printer.

The first book to be issued with the Signet Press imprint appeared in 1956, but before this Rae had experimented a little with book design. A Dickens enthusiast, he says that he became so aware of the appalling quality of his own copy of *Pickwick Papers* that he decided to try to produce part of the text in a more attractive and readable form. The result was a little booklet on Alfred Jingle, of which he produced about twenty copies. Though he says this pamphlet has many failings – the titlepage weak; the marginal proportions all wrong, and so on – he is fond of the eldest child of his press and treasures the one tattered copy he still has. Having embarked on a printing career he decided that he must have a name for his press, and so the Signet Press was born. Its first publication was a booklet on *Thomas Bewick, Wood Engraver*, which he produced in aid of an appeal for donations to the St. Bride Printing Library Fund. The pamphlet was very well reviewed and the edition of 500 copies sold out quickly, so that within a few weeks Rae was able to present the fund with a cheque for nearly £40. Inspired by this success, he soon prepared a second book, a selection from the poems written by Wordsworth as a result of his visit to Scotland in 1803. *Wordsworth in Scotland* appeared in 1957, but was not a success. Attracted by a leaf border-unit designed by Will Carter, Rae used

it extensively in this book, with lamentable results: the border and text clash on almost every page. 'However, it's an ill wind . . . for the unsuccessful Wordsworth did a great deal to reduce my head back to normal size!' Rae remarks.

The next book was also a disappointment to him in many ways. The first books to appear with a Scottish imprint had been published in 1508 by Andrew Myllar and Walter Chepman at Edinburgh. In order to mark their 450th anniversary, Rae did a considerable amount of research into their history, which was presented to the public in a charmingly printed monograph of some 20 pages in 1958. Technically this was his best piece of work (it is still my favourite among his books) but unfortunately *Andrew Myllar, Scotland's First Printer* was severely criticised in *The Scottish Historical Review* and its author says that it is his last as well as his first essay into the realms of scholarship.

Towards the end of 1958 appeared what has become the best-known and most successful Signet Press book, *The Book of the Private Press*, which was compiled by Rae and Geoffrey Handley-Taylor. This directory of printers for pleasure at work in the English speaking world was conceived in a chance remark by W. Turner Berry (then St. Bride's Librarian) that there was very little available information on the contemporary private press. Compiling it was a formidable task, and preparation took so long that it was decided to set the type mechanically (using Monotype Baskerville) instead of hand setting in Caslon Old Face, the practice in the earlier books. The Directory was very well received, by the public as well as the press, and Rae could probably have sold the 750 copies he printed twice over. Naturally the volume did not contain records of all the presses at work in the English speaking world, but succeeded so far that a recent writer called it one of 'the standard books of record in the private press field'. At present the compilers have no plans for issuing revised editions, but everyone interested in the little presses must hope that they will change their minds.

The autumn of 1959 saw the publication of a nativity play by William Kean Seymour, *The First Childermas*, an attractive edition of a play which deserves to become well known. For this Rae made very effective use of a redrawn woodcut in an early printed book, repeating his practice in the books on Bewick and Myllar. At the time of writing this is the last of the Signet Press books which the present writer has seen, though the next book, *The Death of Mary Queen of Scots* 'writ by an eye-witness, by Secretary Cecil's command' should have appeared before the end of 1960. It is set throughout in Victor Hammer's beautiful uncial type, and has a wood-engraved portrait of the Queen by David Chambers, who needs no introduction to members of PLA.

Plans for the future? Mr Rae is pleasantly vague about this, though he intends to continue printing texts of Scottish interest. Only one book is certain – a reprint from Holinshed's *Chronicles of The Historie of Makbeth*, which should appear towards the end of 1961 – though Rae has hopes of reprinting Watson's Preface to *The History of Printing, 1713*, as it contains much of value to the student of Scottish printing. Some day, too, there may be a new edition of *Sketches by Boz* issued from Greenock. But as the Press exists only to print what interests its owner, an outsider can only predict of its future books that they will be interesting examples of carefully planned printing.

"LOVE AND HORROR"

by Anne Renier

READERS OF Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* are familiar with her satirical mention of the Gothic novels so popular with the circulating library borrowers of her day. The seven titles she gives, apart from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, were long thought to have been inventions of her own, but Michael Sadleir succeeded in tracing copies of all of them, to find that they fell into well-defined categories of the Gothic Novel.

There were two main schools of the Gothic novel, the one deriving from the indigenous *Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and *The Old English Baron* by Clara Reeve, the other from the German movement led by Goethe, Schiller and Bürger. Both schools were in revolt against the supremacy of classicism in literature and were seeking freedom of imagination and the mystery of the unknown. The word Gothic, hitherto used as a term of reproach and contempt to mean barbarous, tramontane and antique, was applied to this new type of fiction to denote the mystery of the past, the unknown quantity of the stranger.

Both schools, roughly to be distinguished as the sentimental-Gothic and the terror-Gothic, used fear in various forms as the predominant emotion but differed in the causes that gave it rise. Mrs Radcliffe and her followers tended to put sensibility first and the macabre second, whereas the followers of the German romantics led by Monk Lewis used romance largely as a vehicle for horror.

The English school made popular by Mrs Radcliffe kept the supernatural under control. Horace Walpole might have neglected any explanation of the untoward incidents in his story, but Clara Reeve laboured to make those in hers credible. Mrs Radcliffe, while evoking an atmosphere charged with suspense and psychic dread, contrived to reduce the supernatural to an illusion at the last. The mysterious and marvellous were shown to have simple and natural causes.

Once the plight of the Gothic heroine, a persecuted girl of mysterious birth, immured by some crime-stained monk or needy and unscrupulous nobleman in a half-ruined abbey sunk in the depths of some wild forest, has been accepted (a plight terrifying enough in itself), her fears can easily be shown as roused by the fluttering of tapestries in a draught, the flickering of shadows cast by firelight, the shimmer of moonlight in a dim corridor. The trappings of the Gothic setting themselves provide the horror: the ruined tower, subterranean passages, dank dungeons, trapdoors opening on flights of steps descending into darkness, howling wind, rolling thunder and flashing lightning, sliding panels, mildewed manuscripts revealing some dread secret but torn off at the cogent phrase, the apparently animated portrait - all evoke an indefinable menace, a malignant presence.

These same trappings were used by the German terror-Gothic school, but became more sinister by being made to serve as the background for the corpses and spectres which circulated as freely as the living characters. Bleeding nuns, shadowy figures with lank hair streaming with water, hollow groans and heart-

piercing shrieks were, from the heroine's point of view, more justifiably agitating than the imaginary malevolence of a rustling curtain.

Yet, driven by a relentless curiosity, the heroines, though they might swoon from time to time, courted danger at every turn. They defied brigands, monks, madmen, spectres and the noble villains who had incarcerated them in such ghastly surroundings. They glided about, swathed in veils, encouraging the elegant hero in his desperate pursuit of the miscreants, mortal or supernatural, who were threatening the peace of mind of these damsels in distress.

In 1917, when Montague Summers gave a lecture on Mrs Radcliffe to the Royal Society of Literature, he records that the subject was considered something quite new. During the next few years, he writes, "the Gothic Romance fast came into vogue among the inner circles of the advanced and elect." Today, the major Gothic novels have many readers, though copies of them are rare enough, and minor examples are even harder to find. But though *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and some of its companions on the shelf can no longer be termed forgotten books, the contemporary satires on the Gothic school have sunk into oblivion, and not always deservedly so.

Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine or Adventures of Cherubina*, first published in 1813, has been reprinted in this century. In it, he satirized the influence of the sensational novel on the impressionable reader in the person of his heroine, Cherry Wilkinson, who, an avid reader of Gothic novels, conceives herself a heroine of romance. She finds a lease which she mistakenly thinks is a document proving her to be a child of noble birth instead of the daughter of a country squire. Styling herself Cherubina de Willoughby, she sets forth to find her true parents and to reinstate herself in her rightful rank. Seeking romantic adventures, she merely becomes involved in a series of trivial incidents; no dead hands clutch at her gown when she takes refuge from a storm in a ramshackle barn, nor, to her sad disappointment, do flaming eyeballs glare at her through crevices. Her shrewd commonsense enables her to evade the various traps laid to ensnare her virtue and she finally returns to rationality with the aid of the young man chosen by her father as her future husband, who advises her to read *Don Quixote* and the *Vicar of Wakefield* instead of the heady romances of Samuel Richardson and the Gothic school.

Similar examples of contemporary satire survive only in rare copies: Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers*, for instance, and Edward Dubois' *St Godwin: a Tale of the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries*, a satire on Godwin's *St Leon*. Yet another, which recently came into my possession, is *Love and Horror; an Imitation of the Present, and a Model for all Future Romances*, by Ircastrensis, published by Stockdale in 1815, a witty attack on all aspects of Gothicism, its devices, trappings, characters and phraseology.

Love and Horror records the adventures of Thomas, son of Jeremiah Bailey, a butcher, and Annabella, daughter of Abraham Tit, a greengrocer. Following the usual Gothic preoccupation with high life, neither Thomas nor Annabella is satisfied with this lowly lot. The first discovers that one of his ancestors was scullion to the Duke of Normandy, and that he is therefore of noble descent, since the menials of royalty are invariably noble. Annabella, while loitering in a churchyard, finds a gravestone engraved with the words Nicholas Tit, Lord

— After assiduous search, she finds another bit of stone engraved Muckfield, and concludes therefrom that she is descended from Lord Muckfield.

The story opens with the visit of Thomas to a theatre, described in the high-flown style beloved by the Gothic novelists: "The storm was beating tempestuously, and the lightning glaring around the playhouse at E—, when Mr Thomas Bailey was walking along in deep meditation by the door. The lights, the company, the noise, and the crowd, at last aroused him from his torpor; and throwing down the stipulated price with a contemptuous smile at the sordid avarice of his fellow-creatures," he enters. "Those who stood round the entrance of the pit, observing his melancholy and frenzied aspect, in silent respect to his feelings made way for his gliding form, which soon insinuated itself into the middle of a nearly empty pit."

After a while, his attention is arrested by a muffled female form close at his elbow, weeping, sighing and uttering stifled groans in unison with Thomas. He addresses her and they exchange graceful whispers as he confides to her that his heart is widowed. She asks him how long he has lost his love. "Two hundred years ago, mysteriously," sighs Thomas.

For he had recently bought a portrait of a lady at an auction sale, the eyes of which seemed to survey him with such languishing sweetness that he concluded that the original of this picture was the person to whom the fates intended to unite the frame of Thomas. But on examining his prize at home, he had discovered written on the back the name Ethelinda, joined to a date above two hundred years old. He had fallen back senseless in his chair, been resuscitated by a female menial and put to bed by his family to sleep off a draught of a warmed spirituous cordial. On awaking, he had glanced toward the portrait, to find it gone. His family, not realizing its importance to Thomas, had carried it off and sold it to an Armenian merchant at the door and used the proceeds to pay Thomas's boot bill.

A mysterious Armenian had first appeared in the Gothic cast in Schiller's *Der Geisterseher*, which had been translated into English in 1795 and in 1800 as *The Armenian, or the Ghost-Seer*. His mysterious comings and goings, his strange disguises and weird prophecies had a powerful influence on the English Gothic writers, especially on Monk Lewis, and in the introduction to an 1831 edition of *The Ghost-Seer*, a critic demanded: "Who can look without awe at the inscrutable Armenian, or contemplate, unless with a heart-thrill, the terrific agony which his cunning and his science, are able to evoke." Ircastrensis apparently could, for in *Love and Horror*, the mysterious Armenian, baffled in his schemes to kidnap Annabella and murder Thomas, turns out to be the town mayor disguised in Armenian mask and turban, who, having tired of his elderly wife, wishes to unite himself to Annabella.

To return to Thomas, bereft of his portrait. He had immediately started up from his bed, dressed and set off in pursuit of the Armenian. "With a slow and majestic step, he left the house. He had advanced as far as the great wall of the cathedral when he beheld two Armenians passing on in slow procession with the picture of the lost Ethelinda. He immediately felled one of them to the earth; and was approaching to attack the other, when the Armenian touched a brass spring, and the wall of the cathedral opened. He leaped immediately

with the picture, dragging after him the body of his companion, and the wall closed on the astonished Thomas. An officer of the cathedral passing by at this moment, he questioned him about the mystery of the wall; but the officer, thinking the intellects of the son of Jeremiah disordered, left him abruptly, asking him with a bitter sneer, how he thought it possible for the wall of the cathedral to open by a brass spring. Thomas remained for a long time searching for the spring, but his search was in vain, for the Armenian had carried it with him. The fact is, that being an ingenious as well as a nefarious character, he had contrived this spring, so that he could open and instantly close any wall; by which means he often escaped the punishment due to his crimes."

The brass spring, introduced by Ircastrensis as a jibe against the chance possession of useful gadgets in times of crisis so popular with the Gothic novelist, turns up several times in the story. Thomas stamps on it while frequenting a favourite ruin and suddenly sinks into profound darkness, the darkness of a subterranean passage where a masked ruffian attacks him. Flying from him and his approaching companions, Thomas hits his head against a spring and passes through a wall which closes behind him. Annabella, immured in an underground chamber, brushes the spring with her garments, and two doors open, giving passage to a long cavern, from which blows a current of cold air.

Soon after Thomas's fruitless encounter with the Armenian, the storm drove him into the theatre and to his meeting with the veiled unknown. The two leave the theatre and glide through several streets. At the corner of one of them, "the mysterious female, overcome by her sensations, threw her arms round his neck, and bestowed a burning kiss on the cheek of Thomas. With sympathetic fervour he withdrew her veil; when, to his infinite astonishment, by the glare of a neighbouring lamp, he discovered the face of Ethelinda!" It is, of course, Annabella, who happens to be a lineal descendant of Ethelinda. Thomas promptly transfers his allegiance to her.

The villainous machinations of the Armenian now come into play. Annabella is kidnapped and orders are given for the murder of Thomas. An attempt is made to drown him, a fate he escapes because he happens to have in his pocket another useful gadget: a breathing device. "It happened, however, fortunately for Mr Thomas Bailey, that he was an acute philosopher; and, like many other modern philosophers, fond of breathing gas through a tube. For this purpose, he was never without a bladder in his pocket filled with vital air, and accommodated with a brass pipe, and a stop cock . . . As soon as the son of Jeremiah found himself at the bottom of the pool, he seated himself on the weight; and drawing the bladder from his pocket, began to suck the tube with infinite contentment."

He escapes efforts to hang, stab and shoot him, to annihilate him in the furnace of a glass manufactory, and survives to be thrown into the sea. But as he happens to be in a peculiar kind of bag, he floats across the Channel, is captured as a mermaid, and taken before Napoleon. From France, he travels to Spain, to which country Annabella is on her way in the perfidious custody of the Armenian.

The kidnapped Annabella has also been undergoing adventures. Low bursts of music being a favourite effect in the Gothic novel, Annabella "naturally

possessed a thorough knowledge of music. To rise to perfection she confined herself to one instrument. It was an instrument, from the form and construction of which, being extremely simple, was probably of high antiquity . . . it gives ample scope for the expression, susceptibility, feeling, in fact, every power of the performer's mind. Its name betrays its eastern origin, it being called by the northern nations the Jews' harp." With this instrument, Annabella has been winning all hearts, soothing and reforming robbers, eliciting the life story of Peter Pholy, a toad she has encountered while incarcerated in a dungeon, and softening the hearts of the Spanish Inquisitors into whose hands she has contrived to fall.

At last, after sundry adventures in Spanish castles and dungeons, Thomas and Annabella are reunited, "the hand of Thomas was joined to the sweet hand of Annabella and the gentlest of breezes wafted their ship to the shores of England."

By the time Ircastrensis wrote his satire on the Gothic medley, its heyday was past. For some twenty years it had flourished, springing into popularity overnight in 1794 with the publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, to end in 1820 with Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, which attained the high standard of the earlier examples of the type. But many of the novels published in the years between plunged into the vapid depths of melodramatic sensationalism and feeble bathos. And the absurdity of these was the target of Ircastrensis's satire, though he has a fling at the more sober writers by making his explanations more absurd than the incidents explained. By 1820, the Gothic fire had dwindled to embers, to shoot up one more flame in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, and then to smoulder in the bloods and dreadfuls of G. W. M. Reynolds, Thomas Prest and James Rymer.

CLASSIFICATION FOR PRIVATE LIBRARIES IV

by D. J. Foskett

FROM TIME to time in these articles I have referred to abridged editions of the large general schemes, designed to suit the smaller library with a stock of books covering more or less the whole field of knowledge but without a large number in any one particular class. The advantages of these abbreviations are that they usually come in inexpensive editions, they do not provide masses of unwanted detail and consequently their notational symbols are quite short. Owners of private libraries might well find that an edition of this kind would suit their needs, at least for those parts of the field of knowledge on which they have some books, but which do not represent their special interests. Where an extensive collection has to be classified in some detail in order to bring out its full content of information, it is unlikely that an outline system will suffice, but some of them are certainly worth examination.

Among modern system-makers, the practice of publishing an "authorised" abridgment probably began with Cutter; the first of the seven versions of his Expansive Classification was designed for small libraries. Dewey himself, of

course, provides three summary versions of his tables, listing the terms equivalent to the first three numbers of the notation. Unlike Cutter, Dewey retains the same meaning for the numbers in the final full version. A much more important short version of the DC, however, was the 15th edition, the "Standard", which was designed to meet the demands of small American public libraries. The reputation of classification is very low in the U.S.A.; the "dictionary" catalogue is almost universal, and what Bliss called "the subject index illusion" prevails. ("It doesn't matter where the book is placed on the shelves, so long as it is indexed in the subject catalogue"). The 15th edition of DC has had a very unfavourable reception in this country; many useful headings are omitted ("Cricket"!, "Pubs"!!), and because of its original purpose the American bias shows more strongly than ever.

The abridged edition of UDC, published by the B.S.I., is in English, French and German, and so functions as a sort of multi-lingual dictionary also. It is most fully expanded in the science and technology sections, and of course suffers from its original basis on the DC, which is now so far out of date as to make difficult problems for most modern subjects. This might not be such a drawback in the humanities, though even there the arrangement of some of the classes, such as Philosophy, does not particularly inspire enthusiasm.

Both Bliss' Bibliographic Classification and the Colon Classification have been published in one-volume editions, which offer a more up-to-date and scientific approach. Either of these offers a reasonable selection to the private collector who has to cover the whole field of knowledge, but of course the Colon system does require that the user should understand the original mode of its construction.

A short scheme of a different kind is the Cheltenham Classification by Miss Ethel Fegan and Miss Monica Cant, of which a second edition was published in 1958. This was originally designed for the library of Cheltenham Ladies' College, and after many years of use there was first published in 1937. It is particularly intended for school libraries, and so reflects accurately the traditional curriculum. It is not very detailed in subdivision, but the layout and explanatory notes are clear and easy to follow, while the alphabetical index is deliberately made in great detail to facilitate classifying. Individual authors, for example, are often indexed though their names do not appear in the tables themselves. The humanistic bias is light but very real: the index includes Gammer Gurton, S. H. O'Grady, and Rutebeuf, but not Newton or Einstein.

* * * *

There are doubtless other schemes which would commend themselves for private libraries, for one reason or another, but those I have described have won for themselves a secure place in professional library practice. I have not described the Regensburger Decimal Classification devised by the President, since this was the subject of a separate article by Philip Ward in January 1959. It has several original features and will certainly be interesting to study in full.

There is another possibility that we should not overlook. This is to use one of the well-known schemes, perhaps in an abridged version, for the field of knowledge in general, but to turn to a more fully developed specialist scheme for one's special interests. There are many hundreds of such systems, some of

which are described or mentioned in the chapters on classification in the *Aslib Handbook of Special Librarianship* and the *Five Years' Work in Librarianship*. Perhaps the best known special systems in Great Britain are the British Catalogue of Music, an outstanding result of modern classification research, and the Barnard Classification for medical libraries, originally devised for the London School of Hygiene, but quite widely used all over the world. The section of the Bliss Scheme for medicine was modelled on Barnard's system, of which a second edition was published in 1955.

A variant of this possibility is, of course, to undertake the absorbing task of making one's own system. In my final article, I hope to explain one method of setting about this sometimes exasperating but always rewarding labour.

REPRINTING BY XEROGRAPHY: some notes by Philip Ward

WHEN a book goes out of print, the methods of obtaining a copy for private possession have hitherto been limited to two. One may either try to persuade a publisher to reprint the work, a lengthy and usually futile method; or advertise in the book trade for a second-hand copy, subject to market fluctuations, and sometimes equally lengthy. Now another method has been used successfully: it is by xerographic reproduction. The enterprising firm offering this service is University Microfilms Limited, 44 Great Queen Street, London, W.C.2.

Subject to a copy being available for photographing, University Microfilms undertake to make full-size reproductions of any book, providing that an agreement can be made with the original publisher if the book is still in copyright.

The process of reproduction is by a combination of microfilming and electrostatic printing. Ordinary book paper is used, and letterpress, line drawings, maps and diagrams are reproduced without any great loss of clarity.

The single-copy order is the basis of the firm's output, and as a result they have in stock a very wide and specialised stock of microfilm copies, though they possess no xerographic books in stock. The current stock list includes the *Orkneyinga Saga* of 1887 (£7.10.0d), the *Biographical Memoirs* of William Ged, published in 1781 (£1.9.0d) and the important 1550 edition of Giorgio Vasari's "Vite dei . . . pittori . . ." (£14.10.0d) and some four hundred other volumes of varying importance and scarcity. It is surprising, however, that a library should have difficulty in obtaining second-hand the "World list of abbreviations" by Buttress (Leonard Hill, 1954), especially as it was superseded in 1955 by Schwartz' "Complete dictionary of abbreviations", published by Harrap; nor can one sympathise with a librarian paying £13.5.0d for a xerographic copy of H. F. Tozer's "English commentary on Dante's 'Divina Commedia'" (Oxford U.P., 1901) at a time when at least half a dozen copies are reposing on well-known London dealers' shelves. Many of these items could, in fact, have been

purchased more quickly and cheaply through normal trade channels, but as many of the listed books are quite unobtainable in this way, the xerographic method must be considered important.

The first of the three component charges is for *photography* in a case where the book in question has not previously been microfilmed. This cost is 5/- for each forty pages or fraction of forty pages. The second is for *printing* the same number of pages, or fraction of the number, and is based on the original format, ranging from 10/- for a size up to 8"×5" to 30/- per forty pages for a size up to 11"×12". The third cost is that for *binding*, and is 10/- for perfect binding, and proportionately more for more elaborate work. To work out costs for two actual examples: an out-of-print book of a hundred pages 11"×8" never before microfilmed would cost £5-30/- for photography, 60/- for printing, and 10/- for perfect binding, while a 240-page work previously microfilmed of 11"×6" format, again perfect-bound, would also cost £5.

An example of xerographic reproduction in front of me now is M. V. Hay's booklet "Winston Churchill and James II of England" published by Harding and More in 1934. When first published, this work cost 2/6d in paper covers and 4/- cloth-bound. Now, by xerography, the cost is £2. The appearance is not attractive, but the book is serviceable. An expensive microfilm reader is not required: nor is valuable time spent in visiting a national library to study the item. The letterpress is clear.

The various advantages and disadvantages of this form of reprinting will by now be obvious. The relatively high cost is outweighed by the great asset of possessing facsimiles of, say, fine or early printing, or important literary MSS. But illustrations are badly served by the process, nor does the finished article have the familiar tactile quality of a book.

Bookmen should in any case be glad of the advent of another form of publication.

TITLES IN TRANSLATION by Alice Taylor

WHAT SORT of play is *La Vieille Maman*? I asked, turning from the poster outside the Comédie Française to the lady behind the box-office window. 'C'est une pièce anglaise, madame,' she replied, 'de Cyr Barri'. After which I had no trouble in identifying *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*. French and German versions of English titles range from the downright mistranslation (*Mr Britling y Voit Clair* for *Mr Britling Sees it Through*) through the missed opportunity (the German version of *Arms and the Man* is called *Die Helden* (i.e. *The Heroes*) instead of *Arma Virumque*) to the flash of genius (*Il Importe d'être Constant* for *The Importance of Being Earnest*). The brilliance of this one dazzled me when I first heard it, nevertheless for quiet, lasting satisfaction my favourite translated title is *Sophie Canetang* for *Jemima Puddleduck*. Not only is *Canetang* a pretty accurate translation (cane = female

duck, étang = pond) but it does, like *Puddleduck*, sound like a human surname. And Sophie? Ah, Sophie; whoever picked that substitute for Jemima not only comprehends the French and English languages with his mind. He comprehends Beatrix Potter's tiny world with his imagination.

The French title of *Wuthering Heights* is of course *Les Hauts de Hurlevent*, which prompted a French literary critic, confronted with a pretentious novel of the kind which Stella Gibbons mocks in her *Cold Comfort Farm*, to invent the magnificent insult *Les Bas de Hurlevent*, in other words *Wuthering Depths*.

Most translated titles, however, like most of us who read them, are compact of virtues and vices. *Der Kaiser von Amerika*, for instance, is a simple, musical and easily remembered title for a play. I much prefer it to *The Apple-Cart*; but it has the drawback that it tends to give away Shaw's surprise ending. Whoever translated Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* into French must have been unaware that these words come from Robert Burns's 'To a Mouse'. Instead of calling the book *Espérances Déçues* or some such title which would translate the implied reference to schemes which gang a-gley, he calls it *Des Souris et des Hommes*. A Frenchman who here takes 'souris', as I dare say many of them do, in its slang sense of 'woman', therefore gets the same impression from this phrase as we get from the phrase *Guys and Dolls*. Having read the book he will still not realise his mistake, for this phrase is a superficially accurate comment on the story. A woman is indeed the immediate cause of Lennie's destruction; but Steinbeck's title, properly understood, makes it clear that the point of this story is not that women spell trouble. Its point is that all George's energy, intelligence and loving vigilance cannot save his friend, who is doomed from the start.

Alexander Reid recently published a "near-English" version of two of his Scots plays, in the hope that both amateur and professional companies South of the Border may be tempted to act them. Should he have changed the title of *The World's Wonder*? Spoken in a slow whisper, in almost any type of Scottish accent, 'The Warrald's Wonder' really does call back before the mind's eye the warlock's ship steering between the planets, Jock and Jeannie's moonlit kisses in the market place and Duncan Macrae on the Lyceum stage dripping magic from every finger-tip. 'The Weuld's Wondah', at least to my un-English ears, calls up nothing at all. Would it have been better to rename the English version of this play simply *Michael Scott* or *The Magic Mirror*, two titles which at least are accurate and unpretentious?

RESTORING LEATHER BINDINGS

by Charles A. Toase

COLLECTORS and librarians are familiar with the crumbling spine of the leather-bound book, deteriorating as it absorbs sulphur dioxide from the atmosphere. The root trouble can be cured only by the use of leathers suitably treated *before* binding, but most people are concerned with effecting some improvement after the damage has been done. The British Museum formula for a leather dressing has been in use since before the war; it is a lanolin lubricant with some wax that keeps the leather supple and helps to slow the surface decay.

The manufacturers of several forms of this dressing (Arthur Rich and Partners Ltd., 42 Mount Pleasant Drive, Belper, Derbyshire) have submitted three products for practical tests, and I have used them on half-leather bindings in various stages of decay. Pliantine (16/- a pint) is the basic preserver and dressing, applied with a soft cloth, left to dry, and then polished. Pliancreme (4/9 for 4 ounces) is basically the same but with the addition of a fungicide, and in a cream form instead of liquid; it is the only one of the three that is not inflammable. Pliancote (14/- a pint) is a liquid plastic, applied by brush; it reinforces and seals all types of binding.

We are so used nowadays to modern packs designed for easy application that I was rather surprised that these dressings come in old-fashioned bottles, and are rather messy to apply. Pliancreme is the easiest to use, and on my volumes seemed the most effective.

Those who want to take this further may like to read chapter 1 of Dr Plenderleith's *Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art* (Oxford University Press, 1956), and his *Preservation of Leather Bookbindings* (British Museum, 1946), although they should be warned that some of the information on suppliers is out-of-date. The British Museum formula is available from Boots, or of course as Pliantine from Messrs. Rich.

REVIEWS

The English Library before 1700: studies in its history edited by FRANCIS WORMALD and CYRIL ERNEST WRIGHT. 273 pp. University of London, 35/-.

Although this journal unaccountably failed to review this important book when it appeared just over a year ago, its contribution to the history of English libraries is so profound that a brief discussion, however late, may perhaps bring the book to the notice of those scholars and collectors who have not yet acquired it.

The editors modestly disclaim "to offer a comprehensive treatment of the whole history of the earlier growth of the English Library"; yet the lectures here printed certainly provide a fascinating framework for such a history, and the well-chosen illustrations and reliable index form an admirable complement

to the scholarly lectures. Professor Wormald's "The monastic library" and Professor Weiss' "The private collector and the revival of Greek learning" both collect data previously scattered in a most interesting way, while none of the other eight articles lacks either learning or style . . . M. D. Knowles' brilliant "The preservation of the classics" should be required reading for all arts undergraduates. If the achievement of "The English library before 1700" were only that of reminding us of the complex history of our collections, the compilation would be worth the reading. But it is far more than this, giving the lay reader an insight into one of the most significant motive forces in English civilization.

P.W.

RECENT PRIVATE PRESS BOOKS

Among the latest productions of the American presses are two first books from entirely new presses. The Rustam Press of New York, which has been set up "to present the work of contemporary poets in editions as distinguished as those usually reserved for the classics" has started its series of books (which are to be limited to 100 copies in each case) with William Seltzer's *Poems*. A pleasant book, printed in Centaur and Arrighi types on Japanese mulberry paper, it costs \$7.50. A facsimile edition on ordinary paper (and in soft covers) has been issued simultaneously by Voyages Press at \$2.50 a copy, and it seems that trade editions of most of the Rustam Press books will be issued in this way. The Centaur Press set up at Continental, Ohio, has no such high ideals: its owner, Dwight Agner, is purely a printer for pleasure, and intends to use his press as the whim takes him. His first book is a pleasantly produced essay on *William Maxwell, Ohio's First Printer*, of which 75 copies are available at \$2.00 each, and we must hope the whim takes him often.

Art Laboratory Impressions is the title of a 32-page booklet issued by Wesleyan University discussing the work in the graphic arts produced at the Art Laboratory Press by students over the past 17 years. It makes really frustrating reading - so much of what is shown is desirable for one's own shelves, and so few copies of most of the books were produced: sometimes less than half a dozen. Rather more copies (75, in fact) of the Grace Hoper Press's third *Commonplace Book* have been issued, but it is an equally desirable collectors' item. Each page has been set in a different style to suit the mood of the quotation: some severe, some frivolous, but nearly all successful. This sort of book is not to everyone's taste - the constant display of virtuosity becomes too dazzling - but this is a remarkably successful example of a difficult species.

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