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The Private Library

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE
PRIVATE LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

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Vol. 4 : No. 7

July 1963

The Private Libraries Association

65 Hillway, London N.6

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The Private Libraries Association is a society of people interested in books from the amateur or professional point of view. Membership is open to all who pay one guinea on January 1st each year regardless of the date of enrolment.

Founded in 1936, the Association immediately organised the Exchange Scheme as a means of co-operation among collectors and students: *The Exchange List* is published four times a year.

The Private Library, begun in January 1957, has printed contributions from members and experts outside the society on a variety of subjects concerned with the world of books and the organisation of libraries at home.

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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. 4 No. 7 July 1963

Association Affairs

Presidential Address and Annual General Meeting

Dr Desmond Flower gave the first Presidential Address (and seventh Annual Lecture) of the Private Libraries Association on April 2nd. The first part of his 'How I Became a Book Collector' is printed in this number, and the conclusion will appear in the next *Private Library*. The Council expresses its thanks to the speaker and to the administrative staff of the National Book League, whose premises were so kindly made available for the occasion.

In the course of the Annual General Meeting, attended by a record number of members, all the officers and members of Council prepared to stand again were re-elected.

The Publications Programme

Private Press Books 1962 is now published, covering the major part of last year's private press output throughout the world. Though the number of illustrations is increased to six, the price remains at 7s 6d (\$1.25) or 10s 6d (\$1.75) to non-members.

Concerning Booklabels, previously announced as *Calligraphic Booklabels*, is sent free of charge with this issue; since there is almost nothing else published on booklabels, the Council anticipates a heavy demand from non-members, to whom the price is 5s, and members are advised that extra copies may be ordered for their friends at 3s 6d per copy.

A printed supplement to the *Private Libraries Association Members' Handbook* (3rd ed., 1962) is enclosed; it supersedes the duplicated supplements issued so far with *The Exchange List*.

HOW I BECAME A BOOK COLLECTOR

Desmond Flower

Private Libraries Association, Presidential Address, April 1963

ONE can become a collector of books for a number of reasons. I suppose that the most common are environment and upbringing. If collecting is in the air when one is at the right impressionable age, there is more than an even chance that one will begin some form of imitation. This certainly was true in my case.

Shortly after the first World War my father began to form his collection of the music of Handel which is now the most important in private hands in the world. (He has one great rival whose printed

editions are splendid, but in manuscripts my father is unequalled.) Thus as a schoolboy I saw these parcels of books arriving, shared the excitement of unpacking and examining them, and used to accompany my father to those few antiquarian booksellers who then specialized in music. I shared his sorrows when the ship bringing from Germany a superb portrait of Handel by Hudson was sunk, and, after the cargo had been recovered, for years his anxiety when with every change of weather the picture sweated a crust of salt. The cruellest cut was that he had to pay his share of the cost of the ship—since the law in those days said that the owner of cargo was proportionally responsible for the bottom in which it was carried.

In this atmosphere emulation was probable. My interest was undoubtedly stimulated by the fact that my first purchase—a volume of Sheridan's plays—turned out to be the first collected edition and a rather scarce book. Two further factors led to my downfall. At Lancing, where I went to school, I became head librarian with some 20,000 volumes under my charge. I was advised and helped in my task by a distinguished O.L., Arundell Esdaile, Secretary of the British Museum, who broke the rules by giving me a ticket to the Reading Room long before I was 21. At Sevenoaks, where I lived, there was an antiquarian bookseller named Walker—a gentle man who lived up to the finest traditions of his profession. He owned a tall house in the London Road which, apart from the shop on the ground floor, was completely filled with books not only on shelves around the walls but in piles on the floors, making access to each room an exercise in mountaineering. How the structure stood up to the terrific weight I do not know. I ingratiated myself with him and before long he gave me the run of the house. There can be few factors more calculated to turn a willing adolescent into a hopeless bibliophile than the pleasures of the chase. Sneezing from the dust up my nose, so filthy that I would need a bath when I got home, I burrowed for hours, finding one volume of a Bronte novel on one floor and searching feverishly to find the others before it was time to go home. I was hooked.

It was at this time that a sharp attack was made upon my virtue. I had begun to receive booksellers' catalogues and there was something which I wanted from Craddock & Barnard. Most of you probably know them as eminent dealers in prints now to be found across the road from the British Museum. But in those days their shop was in Tunbridge Wells and they dealt in books as well as prints and drawings. I drove over—I should mention that this was during a trial period

when the age at which one could have a licence to drive a motor car was reduced to sixteen. Owing to the consequent presence of people like myself upon the road the Government quickly gave up the idea. Anyway, I drove over to the shop, where I found only old Mr Barnard at the receipt of custom. He was rather like Mr Pastry: he had a purple face, a grizzled moustache stained with nicotine, and he looked at one over the top of his glasses. In a kindly way he asked me what I wanted and I told him. He looked at me over those glasses again and said: 'My boy, let me give you a word of advice. Do not collect books. Buy instead drawings of the old masters; they will cost you little and you will never regret it.' I gazed back with a patronizing smile and said: 'Thank you, sir; I will bear that in mind. Now might I have No. 156?' He sighed and found it for me. Of course he was right; if I had taken his advice I would today be a wealthy man.

At this time I met someone else who was to become a lifetime friend, a man for whom I have the deepest respect. I became Captain of Athletics at Lancing and took my team to Eton for our annual match against the College. We arrived for lunch and the Eton captain who looked after us with charm and grace was a very good hurdler named Ian Fleming. Our budding friendship very nearly came to grief because my team won the match handsomely; however, better feelings prevailed. He is today one of the proprietors of *The Book Collector*, also, of course, of James Bond, and he has a wonderful library.

Next I went up to Cambridge, and found myself at King's College with John Carter. By then, in 1926, he was already an authority. To any bibliographical question I might ask of anyone, I always received the same answer: 'You will have to ask John Carter.' His companion and fellow collector in the college was John Hayward, equally known to us all for many reasons, and today as the editor of *The Book Collector*. They were both a year senior to me, and a year at that time of life makes a power of difference. In their presence therefore, I felt a tyro, as indeed I was. John Carter had already formed a collection of early editions of the classics, which I think he still possesses, and he was beginning on Sir Thomas Browne. John Hayward's collection of St Evremond was in an advanced stage and already top of its class—while I was still swivelling indeterminately between Edith Sitwell, Eric Gill, Tennyson and Browning like a yacht tacking in light weather before the start of a race. That they treated me with condescension was quite proper; but as gentlemen, they tempered their condescension with sympathy and kindness, so that I learned from them to such an

extent that when I once found my collecting *métier* I was able to get on with it without further backing and filling. And I am happy and proud to acknowledge my debt to two such good friends.

One of the hazards at Cambridge in those days, if one was a book collector, was the weekly gallop to David's stall at nine o'clock on Saturday morning. Old David—with his long Jewish nose pitted with blackheads hanging over the yellowed stub of a long dead home-made cigarette, an ensemble topped by an Anthony Eden hat of such age that it shone with grease—was a genius. He loved books as a lioness loves her cubs, and could round on intruders with equal ferocity. He bought in the sale rooms during the week and the fruits of his endeavour were offered for sale on Saturday mornings. One had to be there absolutely on the hour when business began; and since his stall was only two minutes' walk from King's, I usually went in my pyjamas and bedroom slippers. It was important to arrive on time because the University Library had an automatic lien on anything not already on their shelves and in the free-for-all which ensued I found myself barging Creswick, then the assistant to Schofield and now University Librarian, in an endeavour to get our hands on to an interesting-looking book. If we had been playing for Spurs we would have been sent off. But as a result of this good-natured fighting, we got to know one another and I must say that through all the years which have elapsed he has been a real friend to me. I respect him and salute him.

To counteract the University Library's prestige, I had to have some sort of edge. David himself was sweet. Ferocious as he might be, if you were in—you were in. For some reason, he accepted me; and looking over mid-off's head like an Australian umpire rejecting an appeal for l.b.w., he would say: 'Nothing there; look down the other end.'

By 1929 university life was over, the golden days were done, and after a spell in Germany I entered Cassells on January 1st, 1930, to begin work. During that year I first met Oliver Simon who became one of my closest friends and remained so until his death. At that time he had published two annual volumes of a little work called *The Bibliophile's Almanac*, but had decided not to go on. I asked him if I could take it over and to his assent he added the advice that I should seek an article from A. J. A. Symons. I accordingly called upon that tall, bespectacled and genial figure. I entered the portals of the imposing mansion in Bedford Square which then housed the First Edition Club to ask for an article for an annual, and I emerged the

editor of a periodical. Together A.J. and I decided to found *The Book Collectors' Quarterly*, which we kept going for four years until the slump finally beat us.

Much has been written and told about A.J. I must say that to me he was a very good friend, but there is no doubt that he could be a ruthless and unscrupulous enemy. He was one of the first seriously to collect the books of the nineties and in his heyday his library was a revelation. But he was, unfortunately, a literary speculator, living largely on his wits, and like so many of that sort at that time his grandiose schemes eventually failed. If he had been operating today, he would have succeeded, but it was the shortage of money in the Thirties which really beat him. So many of his ideas were good ones, but nobody had the funds with which to back them. In his collecting days he had an uncanny knack of ferreting out the surviving luminaries of the nineties, but what he knew and had found out he kept strictly to himself. For instance, he sold to my father Dowson's poetical notebook, which Father gave to me and I in turn eventually sold to the Morgan Library. But he would never tell me where he got it; there is plenty of evidence as to where he must, in fact, have found it, but to give a straight answer would have been contrary to his principles. He could be quite remarkably tortuous, and I remember that he—a master of the English language—once let off one of the finest mixed metaphors that I have ever heard. He made a publishing proposition to me of which I thought nothing at the time and told him so. But on reflection his scheme seemed to me to have something to recommend it, and I rang him up a few days later saying that I had changed my mind. I sensed at once that he was embarrassed; after a pause he said: 'When you turned down my proposal I had to try elsewhere; as a result I started several hares and—one of them has come home to roost.'

I said also that he could be an unscrupulous enemy. During our association I once asked a bookseller in the Midlands to send me a book on approval. He wrote in reply that he would be glad to do so if I could give him an assurance that I was not in business with A. J. A. Symons. After a good deal of writing back and forth the book was sent to me; and the next time I saw A.J. I taxed him as to what he had done to this wretched dealer to engender such bitterness. A far away look came into his eye and after a moment he said: 'Ah, yes, I remember him; a foolish fellow.'

One pleasant concomitant of my meeting with A.J. was that he used to take me round to Conduit Street where Elkin Mathews then had

their shop. Evans was there and Gathorne-Hardy, and of course Percy Muir. It was a wonderful atmosphere, talking, talking about books, books, books over a glass of good sherry; and one of the most interesting subjects of discussion was the possible new horizons in collecting. There were many then. And it was at this time that Elkin Mathews began to use the back cover of their catalogue to advertise a book which they considered important but under-estimated. I remember one was Macaulay's *History of England*, which tickled my vanity because I had just acquired a set. It was a good idea, and one which they would be hard put to carry out today.

The acquisition by my father of the Dowson notebook was to have a profound effect upon my life as a book collector. The plan was that my father, who had seen Dowson in the flesh and loved his poetry, would keep the notebook while I would incorporate the unpublished verses which it contained in a new edition of the poetical works. I decided to include in the volume, which was published in 1934, some passages from Dowson's translation of Voltaire's *Pucelle* as specimens of his ability in this *genre*. In those days the barrows in the Farringdon Road, a few minutes' walk from La Belle Sauvage where I worked, were still a promising hunting-ground. On one of my lunch-time explorations I found an edition of *La Pucelle* dated 1755. I bought it for the purpose of comparing Dowson's translation with the original. Bound in I found a number of pamphlets, of the same year, all by Voltaire. My curiosity was aroused and I went off to the London Library to find a bibliography to check up on what I had got. I sat in the stacks poring over Bengesco and I realized at once that I had found my collecting *métier*. Gone was my interest in Gill—although I knew and loved him as a friend, gone was Sitwell, Tennyson and all the others. Voltaire was my man. That was thirty years ago and today my Voltaire collection has assumed formidable proportions. That is the way it all began, and I have enjoyed every minute of it.

THE KEEPSAKE PRESS *Roy Lewis*

WE do not forget those rare moments of *éclaircissement* when we know we love and know the object of that love. I recall the afternoon in 1928, in the remote, informal skylighted brightness of the school art-room when I and a dozen other escapees doing 'voluntary art' gathered round a boy demonstrating how he *really printed* an amateur magazine on a wooden flatbed press with a chase measurement of 8 × 5 inches and a corresponding page size (the impression was achieved, though I did not realise it, by four-point leading between the lines of 10-point type and en to em spaces between words). My nostrils took in the aroma of paraffin, printer's ink and type-metal. I knew. Within a week the *Exchange & Mart* offered for sale a complete railway and army. Childish things disposed of, I acquired a press for 57s 6d complete with instructions and two card founts.

I ceased to eat lunch in the Kardomah, and bought type. I produced, after a misunderstanding with my press over its inability to print 10-point type set solid, my own magazine, *The Lilliputian*—later, more pretentiously, *The Meanderer*. I presented a surprised father with an edition of his humorous lecture (for Christmas parties and Church 'evenings') on the anatomy of fabulous beasts, rewritten in rhymed couplets and printed with linocut diagrams and index in twelve 5 × 8 inch pages bound in wallpaper. He entered the depths of Smethwick and returned with about 10 lbs of 12-point Caslon, two dozen of each character from A to Z and Æ to ffl including small caps and italics. He then took me aside, presented me with Updike's *Printing Types*, and read me a solemn lecture on the iniquities of the Cheltenham family which I have never forgotten.

Happiness in an attic for nearly two years. Then two million unemployed, my father's firm sold up, the National Government, Hitler—and the certainty that I could not go to Oxford unless I won a scholarship. I cut printing out of my heart, put an advertisement in the *Exchange and Mart*, *For sale, complete printing plant*, and decided to grow up completely.

I believe this is quite a common story. However, many waters cannot quench love. I cannot explain the Keepsake Press truthfully if I omit this excursion into the past. Behold the boy becomes portly ratepayer and paterfamilias with his own children to amuse and instruct. He rummages in family debris, for all children love such archaeology. And up comes, with the photographs of the great-aunts in cloche-hats, a

Linocuts by Elizabeth Lewis



Charles I



Edward IV

forme of type. It must—it must!—be demonstrated, and so forgotten lore is recalled and a wooden press hammered together from odds and ends. A Christmas card is produced. The ashes are in flame. Lewis & Daughters picked up a Columbian press in the nick of time to be included in the *Book of the Private Press*, by Messrs Rac and Handley-Taylor.

The excuse that I am amusing and instructing my daughters will no longer wash. They are now tripping into the nuclear age as I stumbled into the 'thirties. I have to confess that I have returned to the charms of

my first mistress. I ought not. I neglect my publishers. Besides, the first rapture is irrecoverable. Type, even at 8s a lb, does not cost me my lunch; modern printing inks have lost their seductive pungency of odour; and my mistress has become exacting in matters of performance—impression, register, and so on. Alas, I fear I am too old to learn the tricks that would have come so easily in 1930 had I enrolled under Leonard Jay and Harold Holden instead of under G. D. H. Cole.

These are the facts. The owners of private presses are so sure of themselves, so clear in their aims, such enviable craftsmen, so often established artists and the habitués of charmed circles—people with a secret ('with it')—that I don't know what place there is for a press with such a history as ours. It is not quite a private press: it is an amateur press—it is a retreat. The Freudians (I know them) would recognise it for a symptom of infantilism. Is it not significant (to use the essential Freudian word) that I love very small formats? Was not the use of 18-point Black Letter in the Keepsake Press *Death of God* and *Genesis* an over-compensation? We printed Edward Lowbury's *Metamorphoses* (now worthily republished by Chatto & Windus) in 8 point in Pott 8vo, and likewise Charles St. J. Shore's *Reminiscences of a Tax Inspector*.

Perhaps it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive. We print the poems, stories, satires, essays, *jeux d'esprit*, off-cuts, marginalia, of our friends, established and unestablished, as keepsakes for them to give their friends. We hope for their woodcuts. If we can see a hole to be filled in the vast output of commercial publishing we will fill it; the Keepsake Press will, for example, commemorate Annus Shakespearianus 1964 with a delightful and handy chronology of the poet's life. It will be fun to set:

There be some sports are painful, and their labour
Delight in them sets off.

The title page will be Period. We will also print a bouquet of flowers in colour and some poems of the new generation in 14-point italic. A history, in very small format, is also planned, though it may not be as witty as Jane Austen's, which we reprinted in 1962.

Thus, the Keepsake Press (Group IV). Types: Bell, in 8, 11, 14 and 18 point; Times in 6, 8, 10, 12 point; black-letter in 12, 18 and 30 point; and for display a few card founts of Albertus, Bodoni bold, Gill, Cursive and Latin Antique, which were the gift of our valued friend and well-wisher, Mr John Lewis, the typographer. For presses, we have a Model Platen and a card Albion. For premises, a shed in a rose-garden. For a philosophy, we grope.

If you tell your ordinary acquaintance that your recreation is printing (and of course without the explanations advanced here) you will generally be thought to have a rather unusual hobby. Tell a Russian, Chinese or Bulgarian and the reaction will be very different: surprise, excitement, questioning. He will ask what kind of subversive stuff you print. Explain, and he will be disgusted with your bourgeois diletantism. Behind the Iron Curtain, it seems, there is no hobby of *private* printing, any more than on this side there is one of private minting of the coinage of the realm. Private presses seem to be all Class V, clandestine. Whatever may be said in praise or otherwise, about printing as a hobby or artistic exercise, it does quietly attest the tenets of a free society. The productions listed in *Private Press Books* may not often scare the pants off the Prime Minister. But did the little boats that saw service off Dunkirk know in advance their appointment with destiny? I hope it isn't presumptuous of me to conclude our contribution to this series with the observation that messing about with type in a backyard is anyhow a hobby for free men.

OXFORD BOOKSHOPS

William Ridler

THE stranger to Oxford, approaching Blackwell's Bookshop in Broad Street just before they reopen after lunch, might wonder if a dog-fight had broken out and attracted a crowd of spectators. It is a rare thing for the customers of a bookshop to queue up to get in. And once inside, the visitor would find that he was welcome to browse to his heart's content. Which is what all book collectors love to do, and in welcome contrast to some of the shops in Charing Cross Road, where they hover round and would be better employed selling packets of sugar and tea. Nothing is more infuriating to the book collector than that question, 'What are you looking for?' We are looking for treasure trove and unconsidered trifles. If we do have a particular book in mind we can generally spot it for ourselves. We like to peep at the price and consider its condition, and half the fun has gone if it is thrust at us. The friendly bookseller who knows our interests and tucks

things away for us is another matter. We are all in his debt—often in both senses of the word!

The visitor to Blackwell's will see displayed a notice which might well serve as a model for all booksellers.

When you visit Blackwell's no one will ask you what you want.

You are free to ramble where you will; to handle any book; in short, to browse at leisure.

The staff are at your service when you need them; but unless you look to them, they will leave you undisturbed.

You are equally welcome whether you come to buy or to browse.

Such has been the tradition at Blackwell's for more than seventy years.

Blackwell's carry a tremendous stock and free catalogues are issued at frequent intervals.

The ground floor is devoted to new books, but the two upper floors have second-hand books on all subjects. The oriental department and the English Literature department are particularly large. In the latter, prices for Ackermann's *Oxford* or a Kelmscott *Chaucer* will be at current market levels, but most modern first editions, and books from the lesser private presses, are often surprisingly cheap. I have bought the Centenary Edition of *The Newcomes*, issued by the Heritage Club with illustrations by Edward Ardizzone, for only 15s, and some of the Bruce Rogers unpretentious early Riverside Press items for even less. Incidentally, the collection of bibliography is always worth examination.

Thornton's, also in Broad Street, is noted for theology, but the shop is a delightfully rambling one, and there are large sections devoted to travel, Greek and Roman classics, history, and oriental books.

Parker's, formerly on one of the Broad Street corners of Turl Street, has been demolished for rebuilding. We are promised one of the finest bookshops in the country on the same site. Let us hope that second-hand books will still be found there. See *A. D. Thomas' note below*.

A. Rosenthal Ltd., also in Broad Street, is noted for early Spanish and Portuguese books, Judaica, and books on music and musicology.

Along Turl Street, adjoining the Mitre Hotel, is the Turl Cash Bookshop. The shop is an old cottage and, since they seem to be trying to fill it up to its full *cubic* capacity, one often has to edge in sideways. Standing on one of its creaking upper floors, one fears that it might collapse at any moment and an avalanche of books descend on the assistant on the ground floor, causing him to give his life for literature. But they have withstood the load for many years past and



Arsist's impression of Parker's new bookshop

maybe the danger is not as great as one might imagine. The shop holds frequent half-price sales.

Almost opposite the Mitre Hotel, in the High Street, is Sanders' bookshop. The secondhand books are at the back of the shop and upstairs. Here is to be found one of the most interesting 'pokes-round' in Oxford. I remember finding a set of the Daniel Press *Our Memories* — *Shadows of Old Oxford*. Madan describes this as the 'most readable and amusing of the Daniel books'. The twenty numbers were by senior members of the University and were devoted to personal reminiscences. The first number was issued in December 1888, and the 20th in May 1893. This last number contains an interesting colophon: 'Here ends the first series of *Our Memories* to be followed by a second if time circumstances and contributors assist the Editor!' Two more numbers of the second series appeared, and my copy includes them. 'These', says Madan, 'must be rather rarer than the first.' About 100 copies of each number were issued for private circulation, sent out unbound, and 'often mislaid by the recipient'. Complete sets in existence, including the two numbers of the second series, must be considerably fewer than the number issued.

The owner of Sanders', Lord John Kerr, is most approachable and is a specialist in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Continental books.

The Dolphin Book Co., dealers in new Spanish books, carry a large and very fine stock of antiquarian Spanish books (many of them in exquisite bindings), early Americana, and also a stock of cheaper secondhand Spanish books.

A. R. Bullock issues occasional catalogues of Islamic books and books on the Middle East. Business is by correspondence or by appointment.

Last (and least), the basement of the writer's antique shop at the bottom of the High, on the Magdalen College side, usually contains a mixture of about 2,000 volumes. But prices are low and members of the Association are always welcome.

Oxford Bookshops

B. H. Blackwell Ltd, 48-51 Broad Street.

J. Thornton & Son, 11 Broad Street.

A. Rosenthal Ltd, 2nd Floor, 9 Broad Street.

The Turl Cash Bookshop, 3 Turl Street.

Sanders & Co., 104 High Street.

The Dolphin Book Co. Ltd, 14 Fyfield Road.

A. R. Bullock, 62 Kelburne Road.

W. H. Ridler, 50 High Street.

PARKER'S BOOKSHOP

The new shop will occupy the whole of the ground floor frontage of the Broad Street-Turl Street corner of the extension being built for Exeter College, the architects of which are Messrs Brett & Pollen.

It is planned on the split-level principle and consists of mezzanine, ground floor, lower ground floor and basement. With the exception of the basement the various levels are open to each other and connected by two sets of staircases. Waist-high bookcases act as balustrades to the edge of each level.

The total area of the premises is approximately 3,090 feet, giving a run of some 3,000 feet of shelving. The whole of the premises will be used solely for display purposes, carrying a representative stock of some 20,000 volumes, together with the Ordnance Survey maps, for which Messrs Parker are local agents, and usual stocks of other maps and guides. Messrs Parker's Accounts Department, Mail Order and Publicity Department will not be returning to the site, but will be operated from other premises.

A. D. THOMAS

A MAGICAL LIBRARY: II

Trevor H. Hall

EARLY American conjuring items are very scarce. The collector who, like myself, pines in vain for the first book on magic published in the United States will probably continue to do so, for only two copies are known. This is a reprint (styled the eleventh edition and with the predominant title changed to *Hocus Pocus*) of Dean's *The Whole Art of Legerdemain*, published in Philadelphia in 1795. I do, however, possess the second, Pinchbeck's *The Expositor; or, Many Mysteries Unravell'd* (Boston, 1805) and a representative American section including Nickerson's *The Whole Art of Legerdemain* (Baltimore, 1830)¹, *Ventriloquism Explained; and Juggler's Tricks, or Legerdemain Exposed* (Amherst, 1834) and Engstrom's *The Humorous Magician Unmasked* (Philadelphia, 1836).

A few conjuring books published after 1850 are difficult to find because of limited editions, and are in consequence highly regarded. Examples are the Brinsley Nicholson *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, to which reference has been made, *Second Sight Simplified* (1883) and *Second Sight for Amateurs* (1888), of which respectively fifty and twenty-five copies were printed. One of the most desirable items in my collection is *The Annals of Conjuring* (1929), by Sidney W. Clarke, a barrister and a Vice-President of the Magic Circle. It was published as a serial in the late George Johnson's quarterly *The Magic Wand* during the years 1924-28. Only four copies of this lavishly illustrated and monumental history of the conjurer's art were, however, printed in book form.

Six years ago I accidentally created a modern rarity of my own, and as an American bookseller has since alluded to its existence² the story should perhaps be recorded. The circumstances which led to the printing of a few copies of my conjuring bibliography prior to 1957, the year of publication, are not without interest. The late Carl W. Jones of Minneapolis³ and I were old friends and had discussed such a project for many years, but it was not until Carl's last illness that he asked me to make it possible for his name as publisher to appear on the title-page of a bibliography of the older conjuring books which had such a compelling interest for both of us. He knew that his life was drawing to its close, and he was especially anxious that this, his final contribution to the literature of magic, should be completed before his death. He invited me to take responsibility for the prepara-

tion of the MS., and the printing and illustrating of the book in England.

I was sadly aware that time was short. However, much of the material was already assembled in my library, and I enjoyed, moreover, the inestimable advantage of having friends whose expert help was available to me.⁴ The page-proofs were completed in December 1956, but it was clear that publication would be inevitably delayed until 1957. The news from Minneapolis was not good, but through the kindness of the Shenval Press I was able partly to implement my promise to Carl. Six special copies of the book were illustrated, sewn and wrapped and one of these was sent by air mail to Carl Jones in time for Christmas Day. These copies were dated 1956 on the title-page. Carl Jones died on January 5th, 1957, serene and courageous to the end, and before his death was able to see and handle the book he had so much wished to publish.

Some post-1850 books of which large editions are printed are now of considerable rarity for reasons difficult to comprehend. Douglas Blackburn's *Thought-Reading; or, Modern Mysteries Explained* [1884], for example, exists in the libraries of Cambridge and London Universities and the Magic Circle, and in the British Museum and in my own collection, but I have not been able to trace its presence elsewhere. Bibliographers are curiously silent about it. So far as I am aware, it has not been offered for sale since 1924.⁵ Blackburn and G. A. Smith were the two Brighton 'telepathists' who were the subjects of early experiments in thought-transference, conducted by Edmund Gurney and Frederic W. H. Myers in 1882-83, and described as genuine in the first volume of the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research. Blackburn subsequently confessed that the whole affair had been a gigantic hoax. Why virtually all copies of his little book should have disappeared is a matter of conjecture, particularly when another book by the same publishers, *Christmas Entertainments* (1883), of similar format and price, is of fairly common occurrence.

During the last twenty years old conjuring books have become increasingly hard to find, and prices have tended steadily to rise. I have had occasion to observe elsewhere⁶ that in my view the late Leo Rullman's catalogue No. 42, issued in April 1940, marked a climacteric in the antiquarian book market. Never again was a lover of conjuring books to have the opportunity of buying from the same list a dozen scarce and desirable items, or as Rullman put it, 'a nice assortment of rare books and pamphlets to delight the heart of the collector'. It was, from the purchaser's point of view, the last illuminated window display

before the lights went out.

The reasons for this state of affairs is, I fancy, twofold. First, in recent years the number of collectors of conjuring books has rapidly increased, especially in the United States. The bookseller who in September 1958 offered me an immaculate copy of *Hocus Pocus: or Sleight of Hand Explained* (1826) had no anxiety as to its saleability nor any noticeable inhibitions regarding price. He merely had to decide upon whom amongst the clamouring multitude he was to bestow the privilege of possessing this rare pamphlet, and I happened to be first in the field. The second reason, as I have said in another place, is the very curious absence in the case of conjuring books of the normal cyclic redistribution from one generation of bibliophiles to the next.⁷ It would seem that, in the main, earlier collectors of conjuring literature have been unable to bring themselves to arrange for the piecemeal disposal of their beloved books. The important libraries assembled by Dr Milton Bridges, C. H. Charlton, Harry Houdini, Carl W. Jones and Harry Price, to name but five, have all passed into institutional ownership or have been bought intact by other book-lovers.

The collector of an unusual subject is invariably asked how his interest was first aroused. I have been a Sherlock Holmes enthusiast since my schooldays and it was as a schoolboy that my father, who was acquainted with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, introduced me to the creator of my hero. The meeting took place in Sir Arthur's psychic bookshop in Westminster, and we were invited to inspect the curious exhibits in the basement museum. The impression made upon a small boy by the greatest exponent and champion of spiritualism in its history was clearly formidable, and my father, who was a wise man, decided that an immediate antidote was necessary. We went to Maskelynes, where I saw that greater miracles than those described by Sir Arthur could be accomplished in full light by normal means. An enthusiasm for amateur conjuring was a natural development, leading in its turn as the years went by to an interest in the history and bibliography of the subject. That afternoon in London so long ago probably accounts also for my occasional critical contributions to the literature of psychical research.

¹ A rarity brought back across the Atlantic for me, under the noses of American collectors, by the late Peter Murray Hill.

² Edgar Heyl, Catalogue no. 28 (Baltimore, July 1958).

³ Carl Jones's library of early conjuring books, containing what was the only free copy of the first edition of *Hocus Pocus Junior* (1634), passed to Princeton University on his death. He was, of course, the son of Herschel V. Jones, who assembled one of the most complete collections of Americana in private hands.

⁴ Especially Dr E. J. Dingwall, the honorary assistant keeper of printed books at the British Museum and Mr J. H. P. Pafford, the Goldsmiths' Librarian of the University of London.

⁵ By the late Arthur Margery of Brompton. Mr H. E. Pratt, the Magic Circle Librarian, thinks it probable that this is the copy now in his care, its having passed through the libraries of Dr Milton Bridges and C. H. Charlton. The latter's collection was purchased *en bloc* by the Magic Circle some years ago.

⁶ *The Magic Circular*, June 1951, p. 197.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 198-200. The essay in which this theme was developed included a short history of magical libraries.

REVIEWS

Private presses and their books, by Will Ransom. 493pp. Philip C. Duschnes, New York, \$20.00 or £7 6. 0.

Selective checklists of press books, by Will Ransom. 420pp. Philip C. Duschnes, New York, \$15.00 or £5 10. 0.

When Will Ransom's *Private Presses* appeared in an edition of 1200 copies in 1929, it quickly established itself as the standard authority in the field of private printing in the English speaking world. Depending quite heavily upon Tomkinson's earlier bibliography of the English presses, and to a lesser extent on such earlier workers as Martin and Dobell, he nevertheless accomplished very much more in his remarkably full and accurate checklists of the private presses. His *Selective checklists*, published in twelve parts between 1945 and 1950, were an attempt to bring the picture up to date, at any rate for the more important of the Private Presses; in these lists too, he included some of the most important of the continental presses - Bremer, Cranach, and so on - whose absence had weakened his earlier book.

The new editions of these two works which have just been published by Philip C. Duschnes of New York are extremely welcome, as the books are now by no means easy or cheap to come by. They have been reproduced by photolithography from the original volumes, which accounts for the odd pagination of parts of the *Selective checklists*; and, more regrettably, for the perpetuation of a few silly errors - 'Sir Horace Walpole', 'Lacock, nr. Shrewsbury' etc. - which disfigured the original. But Ransom's mistakes were small in number, and though one today can think of minor presses which he never knew about, and can add to the information he gives about such presses as that of Albany Wallace, or correct him on a few minor points, his book remains immensely useful and is scarcely likely to be replaced. The *Selective checklists* were never intended as more than an interim publication, and as such contain a number of queries and loose-ends which could with advantage be settled, but until another writer of Ransom's stature appears, are still very valuable.

R.C.

Victorian book design and colour printing by Ruari McLean. 182 pp. Faber and Faber, 45s. Victoriana is nearly in, and those who would buy fine examples of Victorian book production at the low prices still current in the general bookshops will do well to move quickly. For some time, the specialist booksellers have been edging up their prices, and now this lavishly illustrated work, highlighting the most desirable books, will arouse more enthusiasm. It may be time that the textual content of many of the books of the period is still of little interest to the contemporary collector, but the gorgeous and extravagant bindings and the sometimes exquisite, and always vigorous, coloured wood-engravings and lithographs undoubtedly have an instant appeal. Mr McLean has rightly concentrated his researches on these lesser-known aspects of his subject, touching only briefly on the illustrations of the sixties which have already been so fully documented. He has gathered a mass of detail which has saved his text from the name-dropping catalogue it might have been, and has illustrated it by no less than 64 pages of half-tones and eight excellent colour plates reproducing photographs of well over a hundred typical pages and bindings: a most informative and welcome survey.

D. J. C.

RECENT PRIVATE PRESS BOOKS

An American school with an unusually vigorous programme is the Department of Graphic Arts at the Pratt Institute.¹ At the 'Pratt Adlib Press'—the students' book design and production workshop—they are now producing an annual compendium of the best work of their students, *Adlib*, of which editions of up to 500 copies are printed from the students' original blocks, plates and type. This collection, together with two keepsakes a year, goes to 'Friends of the Graphic Arts Workshop' for \$10.00 a year. The two keepsakes which I have so far seen: Rolf Fjelde's suite of twelve poems, *The Imaged Word*, with four autolithographs by John Rose; and *Exiles*, a poem with original woodcuts by Robert Tomlinson, are very handsome pieces of work. Equally attractive is a third booklet, a special keepsake produced for guests at the opening of the exhibition of Pratt Graphic Talent, 1962: *The Pterodactyl and the Lamb*, a charming fable by Marshall Hinrichs with accomplished wood-engravings by Michael Horen.

Several outstanding and substantial books have been produced in recent months by American presses. From the Adagio Press², John Ruskin's hitherto unpublished letter on *The Contemptible Horse* is presented in a very handsome manner, with illustrations by Adele Bichan. Approximately 360 copies were printed, of which 280 were for sale at \$12.50 each. At the same price, from Henry Morris's Bird & Bull Press³ came *Three Erfurt Tales*, of which 310 copies were printed on Morris's own paper. The stories were originally published in Erfurt, 1497-98, and in this translation by Arnold H. Price are illustrated with reproductions of woodcuts in the original edition.

For the English reader, *Two Diaries* from the Little Press of Este Es⁴ and *The California and Overland Diaries of Count Leonetto Cipriani* from the Champoeg Press⁵ are likely to remain closed books; of great interest to those who specialize in the history of the great American West, but rather dull to others as the two diarists—Calvin Perry Clark, who went to Denver over the Santa Fe trail in 1859, and his sister Helen who took the alternative northern route the following year—and Count Cipriani are not the most entertaining of writers. This is a pity, as the design of the books is of a very high standard. The 750 copies of Cipriani's diaries were printed by Lawton Kennedy; the *Two Diaries* (of which only 300 copies were printed for publication by Denver Public Library at \$12.50 each) are printed back to back, so that each starts at the beginning of the volume and meets the other (upside down) in the middle. This is an unusual and happy way to avoid subordinating one text to the other; less successful is the attempt to simulate the original manuscripts by setting the text in two different script-types.

From the Oriole Press⁶ have come two collections of booklets gathered in slipcases: *Darien's World*, poems by Peter Darien; and the *Collected Works of Rose Freeman-Ishill*, the printer's wife. Both sets show the usual care in production that we have come to take for granted in Ishill, and are good examples of his rather florid design. A third work of considerable interest which he has recently printed is *The People and John Quincy Adams*, an article by Walt Whitman which had never been published but survived in galley-proof. Seventy-five copies were printed and, like the other two works mentioned, it is not for sale. Another booklet printed for presentation only is *Robert Louis Stevenson on Talk and Talkers*, a very pleasant little Christmas keepsake from the Redcoat Press⁷ whose work was described in a recent article in *The American Book Collector*.

Mark Twain's curious *1601*, for which I can arouse no enthusiasm, is seemingly becoming as popular a text with contemporary American private printers as *Sonnets from*

- 1 Pratt Adlib Press, Pratt Institute Department of Graphic Arts, Brooklyn 5, N.Y.
- 2 Leonard F. Bahr, 1725 Van Dyke, Apt. 4, Detroit 14, Michigan.
- 3 Henry Morris, 321 Elm Avenue, North Hills, Pa.
- 4 John R. Evans, Box 76, Parker, Colorado.
- 5 Richard Abel, Champoeg Press, Reed College, Portland 2, Oregon.
- 6 Joseph Ishill, 11 Hamilton Terrace, Berkeley Heights, N.J.
- 7 Ralph V. Sollitt, 43 Redcoat Road, Westport, Conn.

the Portuguese was—with more justification—with their forebears fifty years ago. Two recent issues have come from the Press of a Yankee Ink Dauber,⁸ quite an attractively produced edition of 300 copies at \$6.50 each, and from Robert Jaskovski's River Hill Press⁹, whose less successful edition of eighty copies is not for sale. A much more substantial book from this press is an appreciation of the work of *Janis Muncis*, the theatrical designer. Like nearly all Jaskovski's books, this is in Latvian, but it includes summaries in English, and as the chief virtue of the book is in its excellent reproductions of Muncis' work the language barrier is insignificant. At \$4.90 the book is very good value.

In poetry, too, some important books have been produced, three of them being the first works from their presses. Readers of *Private Press Books 1962* will already be familiar with the book from the Tenfingers Press:¹⁰ *Proverbis on Musyke*, a charming little edition of some verses supposed to have been inscribed in the 'garet at the New Lodge in the Park of Lekingfelde' during the reign of Henry VII.

Wallace J. Bonk's *Crown Garland of Ungolden Roses*, printed by the author under the imprint of Westport House,¹¹ is a very much less attractive book physically, but its poems are sometimes of considerable beauty. One section of the volume is devoted to verses for greetings cards for some rather unusual festivals—among them Janus' Day, the death of Alexander the Great, the restoration of Charles II and so on—an odd idea, but one which introduces some fine work on the chosen themes. Roy A. Squires private press¹² has produced an attractive selection of poems by Clark Ashton Smith, *The Hill of Dionysus*, and a French-folded printing of Smith's *Cycles*. Both are attractively designed and well printed, and augur well for the press's future work. Verse of a very much lighter sort is printed in Foster Macy Johnson's *Verse and Worse*, of which 100 copies have been published at \$1.50 from the author's Bayberry Hill Press.¹³ It is attractively bound, but spoiled by the very thick paper on which it has been printed, which prevents the book being opened properly.

As usual, several American presses have produced pieces (some very distinguished) which appeal primarily to the typophile. As these have all been listed in *Private Press Books 1962*, those who care for such things will find details of them there.

R.C.

The Discovery and Naming of Lyndoch Valley: 1837, from the Pump Press of Australia,¹⁴ is a modest eight-page pamphlet reprinting Colonel William Light's diary of a week's journey in South Australia in December 1837. Despite a slightly uneven impression this is a pleasant and worthwhile piece, enlivened by line-block reproductions of a sketch by Light in the text and of the arms of Lord Lyndoch printed in red on the cover. *In Capricornia*, a collection of 'Pointless Exotic Ballads' by Albin Eiger, from the Wattle Grove Press of Tasmania¹⁵ is a complete contrast in style and content. The nearly unreadable 18-point condensed Grottesque type fits the tall format of the book admirably, and is printed with a heavy, if careless, black impression. A large Old Style roman used on the title page and cover detracts from the unity of an otherwise vigorous production, the mood of which is sustained by the strongly-drawn frontispiece and cover device by H. Buehler. The binding, though ingenious, is not really good enough: perhaps there is no way of binding single leaves together completely satisfactorily.

D. J. C.

- 8 Frederick B. MacMahon, Rural Route 2, Rockville, Conn.
- 9 Robert J. Jaskovski, R.D.1, Box 251, Shippensburg, Pa.
- 10 Frank J. Thomas, 4921 Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles 29, Calif.
- 11 Wallace J. Bonk, 2002 Shadford Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- 12 Roy A. Squires, 1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale 1, Calif.
- 13 Foster M. Johnson, 403 Preston Avenue, Meriden, Conn.
- 14 Pump Press, Box 48, P.O., Aldgate, South Australia. Unpriced.
- 15 Wattle Grove Press, 69 George Town Road, Newnham, Tasmania, Australia.
Price £1 6s.

Letter to the Editor

Messieurs,

Nous sommes très heureux de vous annoncer que notre "Asociación de Bibliófilos de Barcelona" ayant été désignée pour organiser le IIIème Congrès International de Bibliophilie, a fixé la date du 7 octobre pour son inauguration officielle qui aura lieu à la salle gothique (Salón de Ciento) de l'Hôtel de Ville de Barcelone.

La veille les membres du Congrès seront reçus par son Président Mr. Miguel Mateu, Ambassadeur d'Espagne, en son château de Perelada ou ils pourront visiter sa bibliothèque.

Les séances de travail du Congrès se dérouleront le même jour de l'inauguration et les jours suivants 8, 9 et 10 à Barcelone. Ensuite trois jours sont prévus pour la visite des bibliothèques et des collections privées à Madrid.

Dans une prochaine circulaire nous pourrions vous donner de plus amples informations sur tous les détails d'organisation du Congrès ainsi que vous fournir d'autres informations qui puissent être d'intérêt pour ses membres.

Dans l'attente nous vous prions de bien vouloir agréer nos sentiments les plus distingués

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Many bibliophiles cause small books to be privately printed, so to clothe some favoured item in worthy typographical dress. They may cost little more than a good Christmas card – though there is, of course, no limit at the opposite end of the scale.

Those contemplating the production of a book or booklet 'printed for their friends' may expect interested co-operation from John Roberts Press Ltd, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1.