Grange Fibre Co Ltd

LINSON for Absolute Quality in Book Coverings

Linson Materials are unquestionably the finest in the whole range of Book Coverings. Always insist on the very best by demanding it by name:

Linson, Fabroleen, Excelin, Milskin, Querolin, Linline, Kinline and Spectra Linson

All completely dependable products to suit every sort and size of book. We will gladly help you to make the right selection. Send for our latest price list.

© Copyright 1966 by the Private Libraries Association
41 Cuckoo Hill Road, Pinner, Middlesex, England
Printed by The John Roberts Press Limited
14 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1
PUBLIC OPINION ON LOVERS
Popular Nigerian Literature sold in Onitsha Market
by Ulli Beier

In the first part of this article, published in the Summer 1966 issue of The Private Library, we considered some of the elements making up the novels and plays published in Onitsha for local consumption. Their subject matter is in the main concerned with 'Highlife', the reaction of developing but still unwesternised Africa against traditional ways of life. The plots are frequently wild and violent, and the authors have no difficulty in holding the attention of their readers. Nevertheless, they are not without their problems.

The authors' main difficulties arise from their struggle with the language and also from the fact that they have to write about new concepts and new ideals, and that they are constantly formulating new ideas and have to try and do so with the limited vocabulary at their disposal.

Such is for example the concept of beauty. Obviously, in traditional Ibo life there were very precise concepts of what constituted female beauty, but the Onitsha writers deal with a new type of girl, with the smart city girl who does all she can to look different from a traditional beauty, and he writes about "modern" boys who expect something different from a woman.

The writers often resort to impossible clichés when trying to describe the beauty of their heroines. One can read about "snow-white teeth", "scarlet red lips" and once even "blond hair" (!) Usually the ideal is "slim".

But there are also some more original notions. One writer speaks about the girl's "cannon ball head", another about her "burst shape", and several refer to her "hairy hands" and one even to her "hairy body" as a mark of beauty. One mentions "the round face that nature has awarded her as a scholarship."

The writers find it easier to describe the girl's accomplishments: "she was a beautiful certificated lady", "She had a laughing character", "the damsel loomed large on the social horizon of Nigeria".

They are fairly eloquent in describing the heroine's impact on the men: "Another peculiarity that goes to her credit is the undue satisfaction one feels and receives in merely seeing her." And "... she provoked the impetus of glaring at sexual menace below the belt."

Virginity is seldom praised in the girls, though once we hear that "She was in her maiden form and remained untampered, since her generate days. Even to meddle with her zestful glamour of beauty nobody had ever succeeded." However, they never stay virgins for long and a quality is preferred in the women which Miller O. Albert has called "her glamorous beautiful guts of life". On the whole they like them gorgeously dressed: "Her violet gown with vibrant colours and heavenly patterns vested below her knees. She wore a dazzling gold necklace, shiny earrings and a botanical veil, stained all over with jet colours." Usually also the "lip-painted ladies" are preferred to plain country beauties, and it is said of one girl that she powdered her nose "making it a more beautiful article from nature".

There are many touching scenes of courtship in these books: Rosemary drifted to him, loving him and loving him the more. She flashed her romantic eyes, bending down for shamefulness. A little of a time she made her character to be:

"How is it?"

"It is quite well."

And almost immediately they "delved into a torrential downpour of speeches, making their introductions".

Here is another passage from a book where three boys intercept a girl on the street all proposing love to her at once. She replies with decorum:

"Is that how I shall fall in love with three of you? You can come privately and let me consider within myself. At present your request is too childish, though of great worth. Just put it in writing. Please, I beg you to leave me if I waste more time here my parents will ask me questions if I reach home."

The girls are not always as shy and modest. In "Saturday Night Disappointment" it is the girl "gentle Eliza" who is proposing to the boy in no uncertain terms:

Soon gentle Eliza mettled up and said: "Chima I think you ain't feeling very comfortable." "Well," Chima hummed.

"Say on with certainty. Play your rough. Assume this is an opera. Calling on for your own art. Aren't you a generate male?"

Much of the courting is done by letter, and there are in fact several books entitled How To Write Love Letters. All novels contain love letters as some special kind of attraction.

"Men had now indulged in the habit of despatching floods of letters to me. The battle for love, who to love and how to make it in the
natural way became blooming.

The letters themselves are often quite touching:

“We are just like babes in love making and have not known the disadvantages and advantages of it.”

“I would like to make a suggestion. Let us become engaged, what do you think darling? You see, I want to buy you a ring so that you may feel that you are engaged and will stop worrying for the same purpose.”

“I love to buy you a ring now, so that people know you are mine. Will you allow me to do that? For your information the ring will mean that we are engaged which is a thing I devoutly desire. In fact it would bring us nearer to our marriage. Think of the joy of it all, darling.”

The Onitsha writers can often convey touches of real tenderness.

They find it a little harder when they attempt to express the big passions and violent emotions; too often they end in bathos:

“For a while after reading the letter not a word is spoken by Galinda. The roaring noise from the public field of the village was drawing under the setting moon of a perfect June night. She started baiting her nails and comforting herself with songs.”

(Disaster in the Realms of Love by J. N. C. Egemonye)

“She did not only want Ema to enter into the rite wholeheartedly, but he should, if possible, take the initiative. Then at last, she said justly, I love you. Don’t you in turn love me? Ascending the highest step of the staircase of feelings, Ema, with emotion and exposed white teeth, said softly but impressively: Why? I love you Rosie. Rose was maddened. She became wild with joy. She became restless in her seat. She has done what Napoleon found difficult. With every nerve in her body tingling she rose up and walked towards their refrigerator.”

(Miss Rosie in the Romance of Love by N. O. Madu)

“What a life for the female element,” Dora said, wiping her tears on the flowers she had used on her wedding day.

(from The Work of Love)

Some of the emotions do not ring true, but when the writers get down to brass tacks and describe real love-making they sound a lot more convincing. Here is Miller O. Albert again, in a scene from Rosemary and the Taxi Driver:

“They rocked each other, hugging themselves together, feeling the transfer of flirtation and fervourism, through the sending over of the warmth which God had wasted time in giving over to any living belong, excepting the reptiles. Their intentions were deep, mostly that of Okoro. His sexual instinct was in its worst urgent. Startled were the leaves around, mourning under the roary wind. The scaring desert winded over with tremor. They like doing the lot, the life they played was as the first day of a virgin in a honeymoon. How beautiful it is to toss oneself with ones wife, how lovely it was for Rosemary to feel very shy and sophisticated. Her youthful fidelity was exhausted and they delved into a romantic blast. It was a nice day for men to marry. If it hadn’t been that there was no responsible adult, it could have been a honeymoon.”

And another good passage from Nancy in Blooming Youth by an anonymous author:

“When, as it was often the case, the marriage ceremony was only
a couple of days ahead, Welly came to spend two jolly nights with me. We set aside these two nights as ‘Special Period of Romance.’ In deed and indeed they really were! Not to exaggerate matters, it was a FIRST CLASS ASPECT OF LOVE YOU CAN IMAGINE. I freely allowed Welly to satisfy his EMOTIONAL FEELINGS AS MUCH AS HE WISHED, and so be brief, I made him feel as if he were in Paradise. He confessed it! On kissing my soft lips Welly beckoned, ‘You see darling, that the love climax you’ve begun to play with me is one that intoxicates me as if I’d had two bottles of aromatic Schnapps. How I wish life were like that all the time! Are you, honestly speaking, mine for aye?’ ‘Why not, if not? I nodded.’

The Onitsha authors are seldom so explicit about love making, but their books are studded with little gems and brief remarks like this: “Come nearer darling and let me touch those soft balls on your chest, for they are always an invigorating cordial to me.”

The relationships between men and women are not always that romantic. Many of the pamphlets deal with unhappy marriages. They are always the result of an old rich but illiterate man marrying a young school girl.

Typical of these quarrels is the opening scene from the play Husband and Wife Who Hate Themselves.

HUSBAND RETURNS FROM WORK
(meets wife doing nothing)
Mark: This woman, have you cooked finish?
Victoria: I have not.
Mark: This woman why have you never finish the cooking by this time?
Victoria: Z.
Mark: You say what?
Victoria: What heard you?
Mark: I heard about your head.
Victoria: You can hear about your nose.
Mark: Nonsense woman, who are you talking to?
Victoria: Nonsense I am talking to your father.
Mark: To my father-a! To my father-a!

(THE SITUATION IS PROVOKED)

(Hon. Mark now becomes provoked and handles the wife, Victoria at her right hand and asks her to repeat what she has said. Victoria struggles to release her hand and pushes Mark back strongly with her left, and free fight starts.)

Mark slaps Victoria, and pushes her down. Victoria manages to get up and gets hold of the nearest plate and breaks it into pieces upon Mark’s head. (Blood rushes out.) She begins to damage properties, radio broken, cupboard pushed down, plates broken, wall clock damaged also.

And a few pages further on the final separation:
Mark: I will not marry you further you are a useless, hopeless, stupid disobedient and nonsense wife. (Victoria begins to pack her properties and talks as she packs.)
Victoria: Bad man, bokom man, silly man, wicked man, busb man, I am packing quick quick and must move today. You deceived and corrupted me. You deceived and corrupted him with a bottle of White Horse.
Fights are not missing in any of the books and usually they are among the most vigorous and colourful bits of writing. Here are two quotations again from the inimitable Miller O. Albert:

“The fight became too rigid Okoro manoeuvred the second time, blasting a punch on the man’s belly, beer rushed out forming a little rivulet, to mark the great occasion. He knocked the scoundrel down. After noticing the catastrophe as very unbecoming he set out on Olympic game with Rosemary, heading off to Onitsha, creating the worst record of event, ever recorded, in the annals of such an occasion.”

“He knew wrestling strategem. Then he let go the twisting leg type and hurled him up in the air and left him to land anyhow he likes, even if with his head broken; it was equally good. Soon, after a few minutes, all the heaviness of his body landed with a hefty noise of beer, from his stomach, like a parcel of sand.”

Gilbert Nwankwo also rises to the occasion when he describes a bloodthirsty scene in The Woman from Nowhere:

“And what did the chief do? He got up slowly holding on to his knees. His eyes were unnatural and bloodshot, and at that moment he was really mad; deliberately he put his hand inside his wrapper and brought out a dagger and in one swift movement he plunged it into the chest of his son. Blood burst out as if from a fountain—Have you ever seen a fountain of blood? I have seen it twice. One was when old Eke cut his leg and the blood flew to the heavens. This was the second one. The Chief’s face was covered with rich, red blood, it entered his mouth, his eyes, his nostrils. The Chief stood
where he was crazed and dazed. Then he opened his eyes and fainted.”

Much of the humour in these pamphlets is involuntary. But this does not mean that they are lacking in deliberate humour. Ogali’s plays are full of comical characters. We have already quoted a passage of Chief Jombo. Here is another piece of humour from Albert’s Saturday Night Disappointment:

“I wish I could hear a word from you, on how you conducted the interview.”

“Well, as my father told me that English people like people who are bold; when I reached there, I made a bold noise making the European fall from his chair. He felt my boldness. When I was told to be quiet, I kept mute even when he asked me questions. I then stood attention, making chest five inches fat and thickness over a yam mound. Haven’t I tried?

“You have fallen yourself.”

“Well, it is practical psychology.”

“What next did the European tell you?”

“He said: ‘Go, Idiot! You are too energetic for me.’ Then I nodded and went off breaking the steps leading downstairs.”

The Onitsha authors are clearly interested in human beings and in the relationships between them. As one of them put it: “This book deals mainly on the requirements of love and particularly the type existing between men and women.” The writers are not interested in the moods of nature and the changing of the season. Some of them appear to have noticed that descriptions of nature appear in European love stories and make efforts to introduce this element into their books. Mostly they are as incongruous as this passage from Romance in a Nutshell (E. Euba.)

“The faint sweet music of the cooling wind coupled with the song of birds and the piquant rustle of leaves helped her to give birth to her child when the time came.”

An even better example is the following one from Our Modern Ladies Characters towards Boys:

“She set out one bright sunny winter morning with thoughts of love and marriage scattered in her shallow troubled mind. She travelled through sand, stones, and foggy, deserted places where even the voice of an insect was not heard. Cannibals and wild flesh eating animals hunted her, but she was delivered by the Almighty. Hardship was hers. No any kind of hardship was purchased. She nearly died of hunger, thirst, and loneliness. Lamentation was inevitable...
Mr. Ofo-Ogeli to pay, and Mr. Ofo-Ogeli said: “Let me urinate.” From there he ran away as a madman. The harlot shouted: “Catcham! Catcham!”

**RENEW MY BODY AS IT WAS BEFORE**

A wife by name Nwanyioma argued before her husband at Aba, when the husband told her to pack away. “You caused my breasts which pointed as nails to collapse. I shall not pack away as you request, unless you renew my body as it was before.”

“Strong Man of the Pen” freely offers advice to all who want to hear about all kinds of “life problems”. Here is some on his advice on whom to marry:

**SHORT GIRLS.**

Too much beautiful girls are not advisable to be married, for they bring trouble to their husband. They are arrogant and too loose to boys. Very ugly girls are not recommended by me for marriage, because they hardly give romantic happiness. Very short girls “should not also be married”, because naturally or generally they are wicked and do not endure anything. These books are also full of “wise sayings” and maxims:

“Man do suffer till sweat comes out before he eats.”

“Man no go pass his fellow man in two ways; if you pass me tall, I pass you short, if you pass me white, I pass you black.” (Olisa.)

“Love is like measles. We all have to go through it.”

“Marriage is like a book, where the hero dies in the first chapter. The first to fall sick is not the first to die.”

“When you are away, the best lock against burglars is a wife in the house.”

“Tongue oftenly becomes more active and effective in getting a woman than money.” (N. O. Njoku *How to write Love Letters*)

These writers are particularly hard on women. “Strong Man of the Pen” claims (in his book *Money Hard but Some Women don’t know*) that women are harlots and “money mongers” and he levies ten serious accusations against all women. He agrees however to accept an apology from women on condition that “before tendering an apology, they must organise and hold a meeting of girls and ladies and pass a vote of no confidence in themselves to serve as public confession”.

The most amusing harangues against women are found in “Money Hard’s” delightful pamphlet: *Why Harlots love Bachelors and Hate Married men.*

“Why harlots, independent women, mostly lip-painted ladies love bachelors is because they know that the bachelors have a long way to go with them, and they will have to see them, and also will have to take care of their pride. They come to remember what they use to get from the bachelors and also the money they got from them to buy their needs such as rekyi-rekyi, popo-clotch, velvet, ejecome lawyer, sasarobia scent, fine pomade, gold and silver, headtie, handkerchiefs, umbrella, shoes, shirt and blouse, sandals, iron beds, blankets and bed sheets, pillows and pillow cases, sleeping gowns, cushion chairs and covers, door blinds, window blinds, mosquito nets, tables and table cloths, carpets, bed curtains, ladies handwatches, looking glass, powder, ladies sewing machine, portmanteaux, trunk box, bicycle, grammophone and so many other things a women could use.”

Complaints about the greediness of women occur over and over in these booklets and in *Public Opinion on Lovers* Highbred Maxwell is even prompted to write the following poem on the theme:

“Love is a walking shadow
Maria who has deserted me
All I spend no refund
Rice and beans all I cooked
Meat and bread, butter and milk
Coffee and tea now and then
Come and go transport I paid
Business I left for Maria’s sake
Legal action will pay the debt.”

All these examples have, I hope, conveyed some idea as to what this writing is like. Nobody could call it great literature, but these books have qualities that can give pleasure to a wider range of readers than they are intended for: there is the freshness and vigour of the language, the colourful and virile plots, and the all-pervading sense of humour.

Onitsha literature is important above all as a symptom. This literature symbolizes the tremendous vitality of these newly literate classes. Here are people who have had little chance of education, but who nevertheless grab hold of the new life with both hands. The self-taught Onitsha writers must be seen together with the self-taught Highlife musicians who play in the night clubs of Onitsha, Enugu and Port Harcourt. They are to be seen as part of the same culture that produced the self-
taught artists, who under the name of "sign writers" design barber's signs, decorate lorries, paint behind glass and produce rubber cuts as illustrations to the Onitsha books.

It is a new social class that within a single generation has been able to create its own popular art forms and which constitutes a vast reservoir of untrained but creative talent in modern Nigeria.
the itinerant or covetous biblioklept, although possibly the last recorded instance was in 1815 when John Fells, a mariner, left £30 to found a theological library in St. Peter's, Liverpool, and here the books were fastened with rods and chains to open shelves in the vestry. This tradition of chaining possessions up has continued — if not down to the present — then at least until just before the war, when in Lockharts in the Minories and elsewhere knives and forks were still chained to the tables for the use of all customers. There are still some chained books in Abington, Bromsgrove, Chelsea, Cherbury, Cumnor, Frampton Cotterell, Grantham, Leyland, Malvern, Mancetter, Merton College Oxford, Rochester, Southampton, Standon, Wiggenhall, Wootton, Worcester, York and elsewhere, but in many of these places most of the books have gone — torn, stolen, broken up or displaced, by rough usage, or by the progressive effects of continual damp or hungry vermin. In hundreds of churches up and down the country one can see the marks of the chains worn by these prisoners — but the books themselves have long since gone. In many libraries and collections there are books still bearing on their fore edge, the links and clasps, the books or rivets, but they have been freed from their chains and transferred from their tethering point to be safely locked away in chest, press, cupboard, or under or behind glass. Their life imprisonment continues although the manacles have been removed.

Those books which are still chained in the library at Wimborne Minster, although less than one sixth of the Hereford Cathedral stock, are important because apart from the collections at Hereford, it is the only other chained library left in this country which is in any way complete. Approached by a narrow winding stairway in the tower of the Minster Church of St. Cuthburga is an upper chamber immediately over the vaulted vestry. It is the old muniment room and it contains what remains of this old library. This was founded in 1686 for the citizens of Wimborne and the books given by one of the Presbyters, the Reverend William Stone. In spite of the fact that the little library and its fittings were extensively repaired and restored a little over a century ago, the old shelves having become so weakened by rot that for the safety of their cargo they had had to be replaced, one can still get a very good idea of how the original library must have looked. The books stand fore edges towards the spectator on two plain unadorned shelves running round three sides of this square room. This is done so that the chain, which is fastened to the fore edge of the boards can hang freely, and any title or shelf number is as a result marked on the fore edges of the pages. The ring at one end of the chain is attached to the book by a thin brass clip — originally cut with a pair of shears from a sheet kept for that purpose — and so no two clips are exactly the same. The chains at Wimborne are unusual, the links are in the shape of a figure eight like those in Michelangelo's Laurentian Library at Florence, a second detail which is unusual is that each chain has a swivel at each end. The rods also are attached in a similar manner to those in the Laurentian. A piece of iron is in the middle of the rod and at right angles to it; this in turn is secured by a lock to a bracket. These resemblances to the Florence library can hardly be coincidental. It may be that Stone or whoever was responsible for the structure or design of the library and fittings at St. Cuthburga's visited, and perhaps even spent some considerable time in the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, built by Buonarroti on the orders of Clement VII to house the great collections of Cosimo the Elder, Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici and Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Apparently there was also originally a moveable desk and stool provided but like some of the books these have gone, and are now replaced by a simple wooden lectern. There are 185 works in all in the Wimborne library, making nearly 250 volumes, and these are mainly theological. There are many Bibles, an early Septuaginta, a Bezan New Testament 1581, a blackletter Breeches Bible, Brian Walton's great six volume Polyglot Bible in nine languages, amongst them Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Persian, all with Latin translations, together with the Commonwealth edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch, London 1657. There are works by Calvin, Erasmus (Chilades adagiorum, Cologne 1530; Paraphrasis in Matthaeum, Basel 1522) Arminius and the Catholic Jensen. Of the secular writers represented there are Plato, Pliny and Plutarch and the historians Eusebius of Caesarea, translated Hammer, London 1665; the Venerable Bede, four volumes of Works, Cologne 1612; and William Camden, History of Elizabeth 1635. There are books too on medicine, ecclesiastical and civil law, and on husbandry. Hughes' Compleat vynyard 1670 is here and so too is John Evelyn's French gardiner of two years later. The Inquisition is represented by Index librorum expurgatorum, published in Saumur in 1601. The only manuscript in the library is now in a glass case — Regimen animarum on vellum written out in 1343, and the earliest printed book is a 1495 edition of Opuscula of Archbishop Anselm. The most fascinating book — also now under
glass and shown with great pride to visitors, is the 1634 edition of Raleigh's *History of the world* in which 104 pages have been burnt and each hole carefully repaired and the missing words written in. Legend attributes this feat to Matthew Prior of Wimborne, the epigrammatist and diplomat, who was in the habit of spending a considerable amount of his time reading in this library. One day it seems he paid Sir Walter Raleigh the involuntary insult of going to sleep over his book. The candle, seizing the opportunity, fell on to the book and burned through fifty two leaves before the smell awoke Prior, who filled with remorse and wishing to mark his own sense of the impropriety of which he had been guilty, repaired all the pages and carefully wrote in all the missing words. It may well have been Prior, but whoever the anonymous scribe may have been, his skill and craftsmanship have long been marvelled at and admired by many visitors.

Unfortunately, this little oakbeamed room, as well as housing the library also serves as an ecclesiastical museum. Saxon carvings, reliquaries, almsbox, deeds, charters and chests fight for the limited space along with a superb collection of early church music, much of it unique – the work of the madrigal composer, Thomas Weelkes who died in 1623. Towards the end of his life, while cathedral organist at Chichester, Weelkes wrote a great deal of church music, only a small proportion of which has ever been printed, anthems, five or six part madrigals and a few pieces for viol. Some of his work was reprinted in the middle of the nineteenth century by the Musical Antiquarian Society and his *Ayres or Phantastique Spirites* (1608) published in Arkwright’s Old English Edition 1889–1902, but much of the unpublished music only exists in manuscript and is at Wimborne.

Also there are what are believed to be the oldest church warden accounts in England, going back to 1399. By the entrance to St. Georges Chapel, originally used by the local guild of woollen manufacturers in the reign of Henry VII, is the only chained book not with the rest in the library – a copy of Bishop Jewell’s *Works*, first placed here in 1614.

If there are any members of the Private Libraries Association who may be passing through the West Country and have an hour or two to while away and a shilling to spare, they should visit this small but delightful library.
REPAIRING BOOKS BOUND IN LEATHER  
by Trevor Hickman

In a previous article, simple repair of cloth-covered books was described and it is hoped that those notes were of some interest. For those individuals who are a little more adventurous and have gained a certain amount of experience in re-backing and repairing cloth-covered books, the following notes have been compiled, on re-backing damaged or worn books bound in leather. It must be emphasised that this type of repair should be attempted only by those who have a reasonable knowledge of bookbinding.

Leather-bound books which need to be re-backed, fall into two basic groups - tight and hollow backs. A tight back is one where the leather adheres directly to the back folds of the leaves in the book on the spine; when the book is opened the leather bends with the spine. This style of binding is known as the flexible style, although on the majority of books bound by this method the spine is anything but flexible. On a book bound with a hollow back, a tube of paper is glued to the spine before covering. This enables the leather to be turned down inside the linings, and it is thus not directly attached to the spine. When the book is opened the leather on the spine lifts away.

Leather bound books needing repair have usually broken along the hinge joining the spine. This is particularly common on calf-bound books of the middle 19th century. It is caused mainly through the action of acids present in the leather breaking down the fibre structure, and the common practice of Victorian binders paring their leathers to paper thinness thereby destroying the strength. The use of the hollow and tight back binding has made little or no difference to the speed with which leathers deteriorate, but once rotting has started the collapse is far quicker on a tight spine, and it is virtually impossible to save the leather and still retain some of its original character. Repair and re-backing of tight bound volumes where the original spine must be preserved on the new cover should be left to the professional binder.

The same equipment is required for this type of repair as that used in the cloth case re-back - plus a number of additions. These are: one skin of acid-free, natural finished Niger goatskin, a very sharp book-binder’s paring knife, one smooth marble slab for paring surface...
(marble top from an old washstand is ideal), No. 1 Glasspaper, a quantity of 1½ wide cotton tape, 16½ cord bookbinder’s thread, one sponge, cotton wool, leather dressing and a small quantity of flour paste. This paste can easily be homemade. Mix 6 ozs of plain flour and 1 teaspoonful of alum to a smooth paste with a little cold water. Bring slowly to the boil over a low heat, stirring continuously, until the mixture begins to boil. Allow to cool for two or three hours before use.

For the purpose of these notes two 19th century leather bound volumes with hollow backs were re-backed. They are typically Victorian calf bindings; T. Wright’s *Biographia Britannica literaria*, 1842-46, bound in full, light brown calf, sprinkled with black and red stain, floral gilt spine, with five imitation raised cords. The edges of the board were tooled in gold with a fine bar roll. The books had single dark green head and tail bands, which were quite sound. The edges and endpapers were marbled with a brown shell pattern and exquisitely done. The main fault in these bindings, a typical one of the majority of calf bound books of this period, was the fact that the leather had broken at the joint and started to powder along the edges. Parts of the spine had also broken away from the hollow.

**Re-backing a full calf binding**

Before the repair operation could begin, the powdering of the leather on the edges and spine had to be arrested. This was done by dipping a moist sponge in thin flour paste, then working the paste into the sponge by rubbing it on a clean piece of paper. The loaded sponge was then rubbed in a circular motion over all the leather (a paste wash). This had the effect of sizing the porous and powdered leather, so making the handling of the damaged parts of the cover easier. The damaged spines were removed by slitting along the hollow with the surgical knife. (These hollow linings had been constructed from the pages of a magazine printed in 1846 advertising porcelain-sided grates for libraries and dining-rooms and at prices from thirty-five shillings!) All the endpapers were reasonably sound and the boards were still held in place with their original five recessed and laced-in cords. Fine glasspaper was then rubbed on the spines to remove any small pieces of lining paper. These linings were still firmly attached. If there had been any noticeable breaking down along the linings, this would have been removed by applying a coat of thin flour paste. This would have softened the glue, so enabling the old linings to be scraped off. A sloping cut-away from the spine was now made along the front and back boards ½ in, using the surgical knife. The ½ strips of leather were then scraped away with the point of the knife. The leather on the front and back covers was lifted away from the boards about 1½ in from the spine. This was done by carefully making a cut 1½ in long in the leather on the edge of the square on the inside of the boards, next to the spine. The leather is now lifted with the point of the knife, away from the spine, along the outside of both covers. To enable the new leather to be turned in at the head and tail, it was necessary to lift part of the turn-in next to the spine of the spine and head and tail of both boards, again with the knife. Kraft paper hollows for the spines (often called French or Oxford hollows) are now constructed. A strip of kraft paper with the ribbed lines running down was then cut – the length of the spine including headbands by three times the width. This was then folded equally into three divisions lengthwise and the two outer flaps glued together to form a flat tube. Glue was applied to the spine and the flat tube attached to the spine and well rubbed down with the double linings outside. If the old linings had been removed a single lining of kraft paper would have been attached first. Slits ⅛ down were made with the surgical knife on both sides, at the head and tail of the hollow. This was done to enable the new spine to be turned down inside the new hollow lining. Two strips of natural-finished, Niger goatskin were cut, one for each book. The measurements of these were: the curvature of the spine plus 1⅛, by the length of the boards plus 1½. The original turn-in on the covers being ½ on all edges. Goatskin was used in this case because on this re-back very little of the new leather showed, since the old spine was attached to the new, leaving only a line of new leather along the joints. Goatskin is produced from a mature animal, calf from an immature. It is obvious that leather processed from goatskin must be much stronger and more durable. If however the old spine had not been retained the re-back would have been in a matching calf skin.

The next operation – paring the edges of the leather strips could prove to be a very difficult task for the inexperienced binder. Shaving down the edges with the paring knife thin enough to be turned down into the spine, and under the old leather must be done with great care. A long gradual smooth finish on the flesh side of the skin should be obtained by shaving the leather away towards the edges. This is most important. If the leather is left too thick on the portion pasted over...
down under the old leather an unsightly bulge will occur. After
paring, the face-side of the skin was tinted with ink to match the
original leather and then sponged with water, and paste brushed into
the fibres on the flesh side. The damp leather was allowed to soak for
twenty minutes, then pasted again and a little paste brushed along the
spine. The moist leather was placed on the spine and moulded down
under the lifted portions of the old cover. The turn-in at the head and
tail was worked down inside the hollow spine and under the old turn-
in and endpapers. All the new leather was very carefully rubbed
down with the bone folder. A piece of 16-3 cord thread was now tied
around the book, along the join of the boards and spine pulling tightly
into the corners of each board at the head and tail, the knot was tied
over the marbled edge. The leather at the head and tail was carefully
moulded over the head bands to form a cap. P.V.A. adhesive was
now positioned under lifted portions of the old covers on the front
and back boards, with No. 5 brush. This leather was then carefully
rubbed down, through bank paper with the bone folder. This paper
was placed over the old leather to prevent any unnecessary bruising.
All the paper linings were now removed from the inside of the old
detached spine, this was then brushed with p.v.a. The new spine was
carefully rubbed with glasspaper to enable the adhesive to penetrate
easily, and an even coat of p.v.a. glue was applied. The old spine
was positioned carefully and neatly on the new, and well rubbed
down until stuck. White cotton tape was then wound tightly round
the spine and fore-edge of the books, giving a finished appearance
like that of a bandaged Egyptian mummy. They were left to dry like
this for twenty-four hours. On removal of the tape and binder’s
thread, a check was carried out to see that all portions of the old spine
had stuck firmly. The lifted parts of the endpapers and turn-in were
now glued down. Unfortunately, on one of the books the endpapers
had split down the joint through the strain applied during re-backing.
This was repaired by opening the cover back and gluing with p.v.a. a
$\frac{3}{8}$ wide strip of feathered bank paper into the joint. The feathered
edges were moulded down to blend into the marbled pattern, then
the strip of paper was coloured in with inks, to harmonise as closely as
possible to the original pattern. When the endpaper repairs were dry,
the books were closed and a dressing applied to the leather. An even
application of British Museum Leather Dressing* was worked into
the covers by rubbing in a circular motion a cotton-wool pad steeped
in the solution. This dressing feeds and lubricates the tissues of the
new leather and also consolidates the frail and powdery surface of the
old leather. The bindings were allowed to dry for twenty-four hours,
then polished with a soft cloth.

It is hoped that the amateur bookbinder may benefit from these
notes, although it must be pointed out that the re-backing of these two
volumes would have been much more difficult if the boards had been
detached, and the head and tail bands broken and in need of being
reworked. Simple re-backing is within the scope of a fairly skilled
binder, but without exception the repair of valuable books should
always be left to an expert.

* The composition of the dressing is

- Lanolin (anhydrous) 7 ozs (avoirdupois)
- Cedarwood oil 1 oz (fluid)
- Beeswax $\frac{1}{2}$ oz (avoirdupois)
- Hexane 11 ozs (fluid)

After The preservation of leather bookbinding by H. J. Plenderleith,
H.M.S.O.
REVIEWS


There is undoubtedly a place for this directory. The Sheppard Press' Directory of dealers in secondhand and antiquarian books 1964-66 (reviewed in the October 1965 Private Library) is admirable, but by no means all-inclusive. This new list includes brief details on some 299 booksellers, about one-third of whom are not listed in the Sheppard Press' Directory. Most of those listed are in the British Isles, and the majority are very small, working by post from private premises. Some, too, are very private: the present writer was intrigued by the number of dealers who say 'postal only . . . no lists issued.'

Being compiled in the very short space of three months, the new list has of course a few faults - geographical arrangement is probably more often useful than an alphabetical list, and the inclusion of a geographical index is not really a substitute. And a few large booksellers seem to have crept in . . . Nevertheless these are minor points, and we would wish to praise rather than find fault. We hope this directory is the first of many editions.

R.C.


When Thomas Kelly accepted a commission from the Library Association to write a new history of the rate-supported public library in Great Britain, he deemed it advisable to begin with an account of 'their precursors in earlier times'. The result of his preliminary labours is Early public libraries, a history of every kind of library, from the Middle Ages to the early nineteenth century, which was in any way accessible to the public.

An essential qualification for writing library history is to know more of history than the history of libraries. It is a particular advantage to be familiar with the history of education and on this subject Dr. Kelly is an authority. It was, in fact, while writing his biography of George Birkbeck and his History of adult education in Great Britain that he made his first contribution to library history, for libraries have always been important in adult education.

For his new book Dr. Kelly has not only read widely but has himself investigated the tangled history of our many endowed libraries. By diligent enquiry he has been able to compile the first authoritative list of these libraries up to the year 1800. In so doing he has amplified and corrected the information on the 'Bray' libraries in The parochial libraries of the Church of England (1959), the report sponsored by the Central Council for the Care of Churches.

Dr. Kelly writes clearly and precisely. If his book cannot be read easily it is because he has been at pains to provide many details for which we have hitherto had to search far and wide and often in vain.

The plan of the book has forced Dr. Kelly to break off his account of several kinds of libraries which flourished well beyond his terminal date, which is 1850, thus this volume is the first Public Libraries Act. We hope that when he deals with the history of the rate-supported public library he will find some means of continuing the story of the other community libraries, which he has begun so well.

The book has enough good illustrations to make one wish there could have been more. The delightful photograph on the dust-wrapper does not appear among the plates.

In 1577 a gentlemen's subscription library was founded at Liverpool and over the next eighty years similar libraries were established in almost every large town in Great Britain. Most of them have had their history written somewhere or other, but generally in pamphlets or articles which are not widely available. The History of the Birmingham Library is welcome because it makes readily accessible the history of a library important in itself and typical of its kind.

The Birmingham Library was founded in 1779 and survived as an independent proprietary library until 1955, when it was merged with the Birmingham and Midland Institute. Its founders were prosperous Dissenters. Many of them belonged to the famous Lunar Society, prominent among them Joseph Priestley, whose well-meaning interest in the library was the cause of much disension in the early days.

Mr. Parish tells a plain story, based upon the library's own records, where they exist, and on press reports where they do not. It would have been better to have provided some comparison between this library and other subscription libraries in place of the lengthy details of the tontine deed, it would have been a pity had we been deprived of a single word of the early 'Laws of the Library', so remarkably comprehensive and so admirably phrased.

The interest of this book begins and ends with its text. It is produced by varityper and there are no illustrations.

Raymond Irwin's book is a new edition of his first volume of essays on library history, originally published in 1958 under the title The origins of the English library. It now appears as The English library, largely re-written and with a new chapter on the Byzantine age.

Ancient library history is a jigsaw from which many of the pieces are missing and one cannot but admire the skill with which Professor Irwin endeavours to supply them. But the better half of the book is still the second. In this we have Professor Irwin's major contribution to library history, his story of the English domestic library, inspired as much by his love of literature as by his love of libraries.

All three of our authors acknowledge their indebtedness to Dr. Paul Kaufman, the American scholar whose recent labours on eighteenth century libraries and book clubs in Great Britain are of unique importance.


This is the second of Mr. Norton's studies of printing in the first twenty years of the sixteenth century, his first Italian printers 1501-1520 which formed Monograph No. 3 of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society having been published by Bowes & Bowes in 1958. He has dealt with the printing trade

Autumn 1966
of this period believing with considerable justification that 1520 is a better average date for the end of the first epoch of European printing than the conventional date of 1500, and his work therefore rounds off the detailed studies which have been made on Italian and Spanish printing in the fifteenth century. The work under review forms the full text of Mr. Norton's Sandars lectures delivered in 1963, and forms an admirable concise history of Spanish book production at an interesting period. It is based partly on the printed documents available, but to a greater extent on the bibliographical examination of surviving books: by careful study of typefaces and ornaments Mr. Norton has been able to establish the printers of many books which were printed anonymously. The results of his research into the early editions of the Celestina form an appendix.

It is not often that a book containing reproductions of the magnificent Spanish printing of this period will stand up well to the comparison. But the Cambridge University Press has accepted the challenge, and it is a real pleasure to handle a book as excellently produced as this.

J.M.


In his History of the Cambridge University Press 1521-1921 (1921) and The evolution of Cambridge publishing (1936) Sir Sydney Roberts presented admirable general pictures of printing at Cambridge at a very reasonable price indeed. Professor McKenzie's study of the Press presents a detailed study of the Press under Queen Anne, at the time of its revival under Bentley whose part in reviving printing as a function in which the university was directly concerned was as important as that of Fell had been at Oxford a few years earlier. As a study in depth of an old hand-press printing-house his work is without peer, and beyond question will be of immense value in textual and bibliographical work on early printing. It would not be possible to review his work adequately without taking up the whole of this issue of The Private Library, and in the space available one can do no more than indicate its contents. Professor McKenzie has been able to make this study because of the survival—surely unique in this country—of a mass of Press records which are printed in full in the second volume. These include the Curators' Minute Book, which records the deliberations of the managing body and provides a full account of the charges made for printing; the annual Press accounts which indicate clearly the kind of expenditure that a small printing-house incurred; and the vouchers which record in detail the payments made by the Press to those tradesmen who supplied it with goods and services and even more interestingly the payments to its employees, the compositors and pressmen. In the main text of his study, in the first part of the first volume (the second part consists of an excellent analytical bibliography of the books and other pieces printed at the University Press from 1698 to 1712) Professor McKenzie interprets these records to produce an admirable case-study of the costs of production of each book, the work done by each compositor and so on in a seventeenth century printing-house. The interest of his figures cannot be questioned, but it could be argued that they are untypical. There is little evidence for this; Professor McKenzie is able to show that piece-work rates, and the wages earned by the workmen were very much the same as in London, and it follows that productivity must also have conformed to the pattern in London trade houses, and unless fresh and totally dissimilar evidence comes to light one must accept his figures as valid for the printing trade in general although derived from a provincial press. All in all, this is a most important work, which has been well produced by Cambridge University Press. Though one can see that the complexity of setting the matter was very great (to give one very minor example of the care taken: the long f is used throughout in the bibliography and the second volume wherever present in the original documents it is a great pity the price had to be so high.

R.C.


This is the first volume of a projected four volume series. Later parts will deal with the musical, modern British and Continental drama and the screenplay. Reviews of the productions of fifty-two American dramatists ranging alphabetically from Edward Albee to Tennessee Williams are indexed, but the compiler has limited his selection to the period covering the early work of Eugene O'Neill to the present day.

The volume is arranged alphabetically by playwright with plays listed alphabetically under each writer. One is given the title of the play and the year, usually of the first New York production. The reviews indexed are arranged alphabetically by title of the journal or newspaper in which they appeared. There is a title index.

The volume is a useful tool if one has the use of a file copy of the New York Times, without this and unless one has access to numerous American periodicals the volume is useless. This bibliography could have become a useful reference work in its own right, if the compiler had added various details which seem to be essential to a reference work as specialist as this. First, he should have divided reviews into definite sections for each production. Listing reviews of numerous productions by periodical title is not very helpful. One can read through to search out for what one hopes is the first or most important of the earlier productions, but unless one has time, endless patience or access to periodicals this is not always possible and particularly at a time when xerography and micro-photography make it possible to obtain copies of reviews by post, this bibliography lacks many details which would have been of use to the average user. We should also have been given details of the date and theatre of each production and possibly information as to whom the producer/director and the chief actors were. Small details such as this would have turned this bibliography from a useful reference work into a standard bibliography of twentieth century American drama.

Despite its failings we must be grateful to Mr. Salem and his publishers for this attractively produced volume. I look forward to seeing the projected volumes where the task of selection and arrangement will be infinitely greater.

S.B.
RECENT PRIVATE PRESS BOOKS

Arbre Patriarche—Patriarch Tree, thirty poems by Raúl Maritain, with an English translation by a Benedictine of Stanbrook. (Pp. 99, 10 x 7 1/2 inches. Slip-case. 500 copies: 20 in full black morocco, price £14 14s. 3d left in sheets for individual binding to order, price from £6 16s.; 500 in quarter black morocco with decorated Japanese paper boards, price £6 6s. Stanbrook Abbey Press, Callow, Worcester, England.) Set in Romanèc italic, with French and English texts on facing pages. Printed in black, agate and yellow-green on Barcham Green's hand-made paper. Calligraphic devices by Margaret Adams printed in agate on the double title-pages of the ordinary copies, and in gold on the fifty specials. The boards of the quarter bindings are attractive, but would perhaps have been more suitably covered in a stronger material than the Japanese paper (decorated by the Takumi artists of Tokio) which was used; the full morocco bindings have the title-page devices blocked in gold on front and back. A sympathetic and graceful translation of these poems by a contemplative; worthily printed.

Poussière Mince, poems in French by José Agostirz-Melgar. (Pp. 31, 7 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches. stiff card covers, 222 copies. Price £1 or US$3.00. Oficina Stanislawa Gliwy, 52 Porters Grange Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, England.) Excellent presswork; printed in black, red and lilac, the poems set in Bembo italic, with French and English texts on facing pages. Printed in black, agate and yellow-green on Barcham Green's hand-made paper. Calligraphic devices by Margaret Adams printed in agate on the double title-pages of the ordinary copies, and in gold on the fifty specials. The boards of the quarter bindings are attractive, but would perhaps have been more suitably covered in a stronger material than the Japanese paper (decorated by the Takumi artists of Tokio) which was used; the full morocco bindings have the title-page devices blocked in gold on front and back. A sympathetic and graceful translation of these poems by a contemplative; worthily printed.

Green chuckles, poems by Julian Berry and seven others. (Pp. 35, 9 x 5 inches. Paper boards, 200 copies. Price 16s. Hygeia Press, 4 Roper's Orchard, Danvers Street, London, S.W.3, England.) Bold typography, good presswork, text in New Clarendon in black with ruling in Univers Bold in burnt ochre or black. Four tipped-in double page experimental monotypes (printed from lino built up with leaves, cloth and other materials) and another used for the cover paper.

Urns and angels, an anthology of epitaphs and engravings by Kenneth Lindley. (Pp. 21, 8 1/2 x 11 inches. Quarter red morocco. 22 copies, of which 18 for sale, price £6 6s. Pointing Finger Press, distributed by Bertram Rota Ltd, 41 Savile Row, London, W.1, England.) A fine book, set in SB Grotesque No. 18 and Modern No. 20, with seven wood-engravings, three relief etchings on zinc, lino cut title-lettering and an original slate rubbing tipped in at the end.

The tragic death of a apple pie, a block book of 27 original lino cut characters by Ben Sands. (Pp. 28, 7 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches. Loosely inserted into brown paper wrappers. 223 copies, price £1 2s. 6d. or US$6.00, post free. Shoe String Press, 97 Island Wall, Whitstable, Kent, England.) Seven long sheets, folded and joined by self-adhesive linen tape to make a twelve foot long concertina. Each letter has a page to itself and is cut as a grotesque figure engaged in whatever activities its rhyme (set in Letraset Cooper Black and printed from line plates) describes. A colourful, robust and well printed piece, very reasonably priced.

The execution of a bookbinder, James Cook, by Trevor Hickman, with two cuts by Rigby Graham. (A single French-folded sheet, 10 x 7 1/2 inches when folded, loosely inserted into a black, gold-blocked folder. 75 copies, price 16s. 6d. post free, cash with order. Brewhouse Press, The Orchard, Wymondham, Leicestershire, England.) At first sight an ordinary French-fold, with a large crude black cut on the front showing Cook dismembering his victim, John Paas; the middle two pages giving the grisly details of the murder, trial and execution with typical Brewhouse enthusiasm; while the back page is devoted to the colophon. But the ferocity of the Press is only truly revealed when the sheet is fully opened, to reveal the murder in process, all in black, grey-blue and vicious red, press pin flying and blood all over the place.

The Pickworth Fragment, written and illustrated by Rigby Graham, with John Clare's Elegy on the ruins of Pickworth. (A fifteen foot whirlwind zigzag encompassed by a quarter suede leather binding, with printed and gold-blocked paper boards. 32 pages, 7 1/2 x 5 inches. 75 signed and numbered copies, price £4 4s., post free. Brewhouse Press.) The ruined village of Pickworth, desolated by York and Lancaster in the fifteenth century, and by plague in the sixteenth and seventeenth, inspired Clare's Elegy and now Graham's intense illustrations. The latter have been printed by hand in ink and gouache and, in one case, action-toolled in gold. Good presswork and an interesting experimental binding (described as a 'bastard form of Sempu-yo'); a most successful book.
Minims retrieved, poems and illustrations by Giles Dixey. (Pp. 44, 7 × 4\frac{1}{2} inches. Sewn into yellow paper covers. 107 copies, of which a very few for sale at 10s. H. G. Dixey, 102 Kingston Road, Oxford, England.) Sixteen illustrations: a mixture of boxwood engravings, linoleum, cardboard and hardboard cuts, mounted string, and line-blocks; and verse of all sorts, for children and for scholars, homely and classic by turns. The printing, type and paper are all ordinary—a most unpretentious book in fact, and yet entirely delightful.

These women all, a medieval ballad newly decorated with lino cuts by John Craig. (13 leaves printed on rectos only, 6\frac{1}{2} × 3\frac{3}{4} inches. Sewn into card covers, with printed translucent dust-jacket. 300 copies, of which 250 are for sale, price 10s. plus postage. Piccolo Press, c/o Alan and Joan Tucker, 4 and 5 Hill Street, Stroud, Gloucestershire, England.) Seven fresh, naive cuts, a frolicsome ballad, fine paper, fine typography, 'lively treatment within a restrained concept', the first booklet from Piccolo, and a small gem.


The illuminator, a tribute to Albert Cousins, by Raymond Lister. (Pp. 16 + 2 colour and 10 black and white plates, 8\frac{1}{2} × 5\frac{1}{2} inches. Quarter cloth with paper boards. 250 copies, price £1 9s. 6d. post free. Golden Head Press, 26 Abbey Road, Cambridge, England.) A brief tribute and a tentative checklist of the work of a twentieth century artist and craftsman—a friend and follower of Sir Sydney Cockerell. Some very pretty illustrations go far to justify Mr. Lister's enthusiastic essay.

College stamps of Oxford and Cambridge, by Raymond Lister. (Pp. 64 + frontispiece half-tone plate, 8\frac{1}{2} × 5\frac{1}{2} inches. Paper wrappers. Price 18s. post free. Golden Head Press.) A most interesting introductory essay followed by a very detailed catalogue, with estimates of current value, of the stamps used for the college messenger services operated in the late nineteenth century.

Eleven poems, by Edmund Blunden. (Pp. 21, 8\frac{1}{2} × 5\frac{1}{2} inches. 220 copies: 20 on Hodomura paper, bound in Japanese decorative paper boards, signed by the author, price £5; 200 on Glastonbury Antique paper, sewn into turquoise paper wrappers, price £1. Golden Head Press, 26 Abbey Road, Cambridge, England.) Ten of the eleven poems are previously unpublished; the original manuscript of one is reproduced as a half-tone plate. Neatly produced; printed by Crampton and Sons Ltd.

The name of John Roberts Press is well known to collectors of fine editions and privately printed books. Their productions range from the twenty-guinea magnificence of a folio 'Song of Songs' to the more modest charm of 'Twelve by Eight', recently published by the Private Libraries Association.

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 cooperation from John Roberts Press Ltd, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1.