

English Summaries

Translated by
BENT NORDHJEM

The Penguin Books and their Typography

By ERIK ELLEGAARD FREDERIKSEN

During recent years, the world-famous English publishing firm Penguin Books Ltd. have been making remarkable efforts to achieve a more satisfactory typographical standard for their books. The right format was found at the very outset when the series was launched twenty-one years ago; but the design of the books did not come under critical review until 1948-50 when the loosening of the restrictions imposed by war-time economy made it possible to plan a production of cheap but carefully designed books for the masses. The task of revising the Penguins was entrusted to Jan Tschichold, a German-born book-designer resident in Switzerland. Sir Allen Lane, director of Penguin Books, flew to Bâle with Oliver Simon from Curwen Press and persuaded Tschichold to come to London. His main task consisted in formulating the so-called Penguin Composition Rules, which improved both the appearance and the readability of the print. Next he re-designed several covers and the many emblems of the various series, and introduced standard leaves for illustrations. Among his best works, both as regards cover and typography, may be listed the Penguin Shakespeare, "Alice in Wonderland", and the "Penguin Modern Painters", to mention but a few. Towards the end of 1949 he left England owing to the devaluation; but he had created a standard, and H. P. Schmoller from Curwen Press, another German-born book-designer, was able to carry on his work. Schmoller has his typographical individuality but has refrained from departing seriously from the lines laid down by his predecessor. In addition to many other tasks which the firm offers a typographer, he has been responsible for "The Pelican History of Art" and the introduction of a special Penguin binding.

The revision of the typography of the Penguin books is a real event, says Mrs. Beatrice Warde, and she continues: "The success of Penguins is one of the asset-facts of every designer for mass production now living—and for all citizens who can look through the glutinous phrase 'the masses' and perceive, beyond it, millions of their fellow citizens".

Subscription - Its Uses and Abuses

By OTTO ANDERSEN

The idea of persuading purchasers to pay for copies of a book before it is published by offering them a discount seems first to have occurred to John Minsheu, a philologist living in London; his "Guide into Tongues" (1617) is the first work known to have been

published in this manner. The system became popular when Brian Walton's Polyglot Bible was offered to subscribers on these terms in 1657, and it flourished in England in the eighteenth century. It was imitated in France and Germany, where it gradually fell into disrepute. From there it was imported into Denmark, where Ludvig Holberg claimed to have pioneered it; later, however, he dissociated himself from the practice, on the grounds that "it developed into a kind of begging and enabled many useless books to appear in print".

The collection of book prospectuses in the Royal Library of Copenhagen comprises between three and four hundred items. The oldest of these is an advertisement from 1741 (Fig. 1). The oldest circular prospectus—which describes Laurids Thurah's "Den danske Vitruvius", publ. in 1745 (Fig. 2)—gives full details of the subscription terms: the bishops and various civil servants would receive subscriptions and sign receipts. Referring to another work by Thurah, for which subscribers had also paid in advance, an advertisement from 1756 (Fig. 3) reports that it will be larger than originally foreseen, so that, by returning their receipts, subscribers may either have a complete refund of their money, or a partial refund and the first volume of the work. A prospectus describing Pontoppidan's "Danske Atlas" from 1763 (Fig. 4) contains nothing about payment in advance but merely requests potential buyers to sign a subscription list, and thus offers an early example of the newer type of subscription; the bishops' secretaries are offered every tenth copy at a discount for their trouble. An advertisement about a work on Iceland published by The Royal Danish Society (Fig. 5) requests the bishops to report the number of copies subscribed, "as they are to be paid for when delivered". An example illustrating the difficulty of finding purchasers for learned works is provided by a circular issued by The Royal Norwegian Society in 1782 (Fig. 6) urging members to buy the publications of the Society. An edition of Wessel's works was issued in 1787; Figs. 7 and 8 show the end of the Introduction fully describing the method of publication, and the beginning of the list of subscribers. Such lists were usually printed in all books published by subscription, whether paid for before publication or on delivery. Many works planned never materialised because of lack of subscribers; the number required was usually 150—200. Fig. 9 shows the names of subscribers and that of a canvasser, who, in this case, was entitled to a free copy for securing five subscribers; the book never appeared. Søren Gyl-dendal, the well-known Danish publisher, relied on both the older and the newer type of subscription; he was not always successful, and was even occasionally involved in lawsuits when he could not keep his promises because the author failed to deliver the manuscript.

Especially in the eighteenth century, the publication of many important works was rendered possible by subscribers paying for copies in advance. They were usually published by the author in collaboration with a printer-publisher. But gradually the system of payment in advance was ousted by the principle of payment on delivery, which was very common until about the middle of the nineteenth century. The Danish poet Adam Oehlenschläger, who usually preferred to be his own publisher, employed the new system of subscription, offering subscribers a rebate and promising to print their names in the book (Fig. 10). Nowadays, the system of payment before publication is practically extinct, except for *Festskrifter*; in such cases, the surplus, if any, goes to the person in whose honour the book is published, and the list of subscribers serves as a message of homage.

Liber Librorum

By EJNAR PHILIP

The international project *Liber Librorum* is a common manifestation on the part of leading book designers all over the world to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the 42-line Bible. Each participant has designed and printed 1500 copies of his individual solution of the typographical problems of the Bible. The items have been assembled into sets at Stockholm, of which two hundred copies are presented to leading churches, libraries, and other learned institutions in various countries, and five hundred copies are offered for sale at the price of \$22,50.

Ever since Gutenberg, book designers have been attracted to the Bible, owing to its sublimity, its unique position in literature, and the typographical problems it raises. The annual production of Bibles now amounts to about 30 million copies; yet few book designers are entrusted with the task of planning a Bible edition. No restrictions regarding typographical design were imposed on the participants in this common manifestation; consequently the collection includes a wide variety of proposals. There are bold and imaginative designs; there are sober functional Bibles, meant to be read; and there are Bibles of a simple monumental sublimity which may justly be called typographical masterpieces. Some of the designs are, I think, "over-artistic"; while few are devoid of interest.

Among the best proposals, special mention should be made of *Max Caflisch's* little octavo Bible, *Hermann Zapf's* Greek-German Bible, *Werner Stauffacher's* English-Latin Bible, and particularly *Jan van Krimpen's* and *Hans Schmoller's* beautiful folio Bibles.

Countess Danner's Library

By CARL DUMREICHER

From 1854, Jægerspris Castle in Northern Zealand belonged to King Frederik VII. Until his death, in 1863, he and his morganatic wife, Countess *Louise Christine Danner*, made it their favourite resort. By birth a natural child, and in her youth a *figurante* at the ballet school of the Royal Theatre, she became to some extent a student of languages and literature after her marriage with the King and gradually acquired a sizable private library, to which, by a clause in the royal will, were added several thousand volumes from the King's reference library in 1864. On her death in 1874, the whole of this collection, comprising about 4000 volumes, was sold by public auction; and the money it fetched became part of the endowment of an institution she had established at Jægerspris, of which the purpose was to improve and instruct poor girls of the people. Many volumes were not put up for sale, either because they contained dedications, or because they were transferred to the library of the school. Later, they came to form a separate collection, which has now been combed for items of interest, especially books with dedications and with peculiar bindings.

The Temple of Muses

An Eighteenth-Century Book-seller's Life

By ALEKS. FRØLAND

In the history of the book trade in Europe, especially in England, the latter half of the eighteenth century was a significant period, witnessing a rapid advance towards the present distribution of labour between authors, publishers, and booksellers. Special importance attaches to the life and work of *James Lackington* (b. at Wellington in 1746, d. at Budleigh Salterton in Devonshire in 1815), who, born of humble parents, became a wealthy bookseller. Even as a boy he displayed a rare talent for business. Handicapped by his background, he did not learn to read until he was sixteen or seventeen, and he could not write till he was about 23. At the age of 14, he was apprenticed to a shoemaker—the trade of his drunken father—in the village of Taunton, where he embraced Wesley's Methodism (which he later renounced, but reverted to in his old age).

In 1770 Lackington married for the first time, but although both he and his wife were hard workers, they earned only a modest income. So, in 1773, he left Bristol and went up to London with the traditional half-crown in his pocket to find a better-paid job; shortly afterwards, he could send for his wife. In 1774, Lackington set up his own shop in Featherstone Street, where, now a voracious reader, he sold shoes and books. His whole stock had a value of £5; but, thanks to his ability, his economical habits, and a loan of £5 from a Methodist fund, he improved his position so much in the course of six months that in 1775 he could move to Chiswell Street with a stock worth £25. He now abandoned shoemaking and concentrated on books. In the same year, he and his wife contracted a serious disease; he recovered, but she died. Two months later, he married a woman who was "immoderately fond of books" and became a valuable assistant in the shop, which now made rapid progress. In 1778 he enlarged his capital by entering into partnership with John Denis, oil merchant and book-collector. A catalogue listing 12000 volumes was issued in 1779 by J. Lackington & Co. In 1780, the partnership was dissolved; and in the same year, Lackington took a decision revolutionary for his time: not to give credit to any customer, "not even the Nobility". It was about this time that he broke with the Methodists and began to sell books of all types instead of specialising in religious works. In 1784 he issued a catalogue with 30000 items of a considerably better quality than those of the previous catalogue. He had now gained a reputation for cheapness—indeed, he styled himself "the cheapest bookseller in the world"; consequently, prospective sellers suspected that he would pay less for their collections than other booksellers. He tried to counteract this suspicion by offering to value collections at a rate of 5%, which was refunded when the owners, after finding that they could not get better terms from other booksellers, came back to him. When he first set up as a bookseller, Lackington was totally ignorant of the customs of the trade; and his success depended in no small measure on his disregard of traditional procedures. At that time it was customary that remainders which publishers and authors could not sell in the normal way were auctioned to the trade on the tacit understanding that the buyers would destroy so many copies that the rest could be sold at the published price. But Lackington soon found that it was easier to sell many copies at a reduced price than a few copies at the

original price. Through this unconventional practice he procured many new customers, but also many enemies in the trade; and in his *Memoirs*, the most important source of information regarding his life, he complains of persecution on the part of the other booksellers. The *Memoirs*, which throw important light on the history of the English book trade, are marred by coarse attacks on the Methodists and a great number of irrelevant quotations and anecdotes. In a later book, "Confessions" (1805), he retracts his attacks on the Methodists. An irrelevant appendix, "Observations on the bad consequences of educating daughters at boarding schools", produced a pseudonymous travesty, published in the same year.

When he had become a wealthy man, Lackington lived in an appropriate style, keeping his own carriage with a coachman and a liveried footman. In this vehicle he undertook several journeys in England and Scotland, and in his native district he visited his old master shoemakers, greeting them with the words, "Pray, sir, have you got any occasion?" In 1793, Lackington sold a fourth of his interests in the bookshop to Robert Allen, a collaborator of many years' standing, and, probably in 1794, moved to Finsbury Square where he set up a magnificent corner shop, dubbing it "The Temple of Muses"—one of the attractions of London in those days. The building was destroyed by fire about 1840. In 1795, Lackington's second wife died; and four months later, he married one of her relatives. In 1798, he sold the rest of his interests in the firm. In 1805—the year after he had retracted his attacks on the Methodists—he built a Methodist chapel in Taunton, where he had once been an apprentice, and where he now took up residence. After quarrelling with his Taunton co-religionists, he moved to Budleigh Salterton in 1812, where he also erected a Methodist chapel, and where he died in 1815.

Some Modern French *De Luxe* Bindings

By BENT ANDRÉE

French bookbinding can boast a handful of superior artists, ranking in skill and knowledge on a par with Henri Marius-Michel and the late Léon Gruel. The article gives a short account of *Paul Bonet*, *Pierre Martin*, *Georges Cretté*, and *Robert Bonfils*, and includes illustrations of works by Bonet and Cretté.

The pre-eminence of these *de luxe* bindings depends on a perfect command of a variety of technical processes, and the employment of choice leathers, usually strongly grained, finely glazed, and exquisitely scarfed. The insides of most of the bindings are highly ornamented in several colours.

The decorations on the covers are often pictorial—frequently made by gold lines and mosaic, of the type which Pierre Legrain introduced. Nowadays, however, the cover is no longer required to indicate the contents of the volume, as was often the case in the nineteenth century; "*la reliure parlante*", though it still flourishes among bookbinders, is now usually abstract and indirect.

French *de luxe* bindings, which are often priced at several hundred pounds, are artistic creations rather than utilitarian products and belong in art museums rather than in libraries; but it is good to know that such work is still being done; for it helps to keep alive the fine traditions of an old craft in an industrialised age.

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