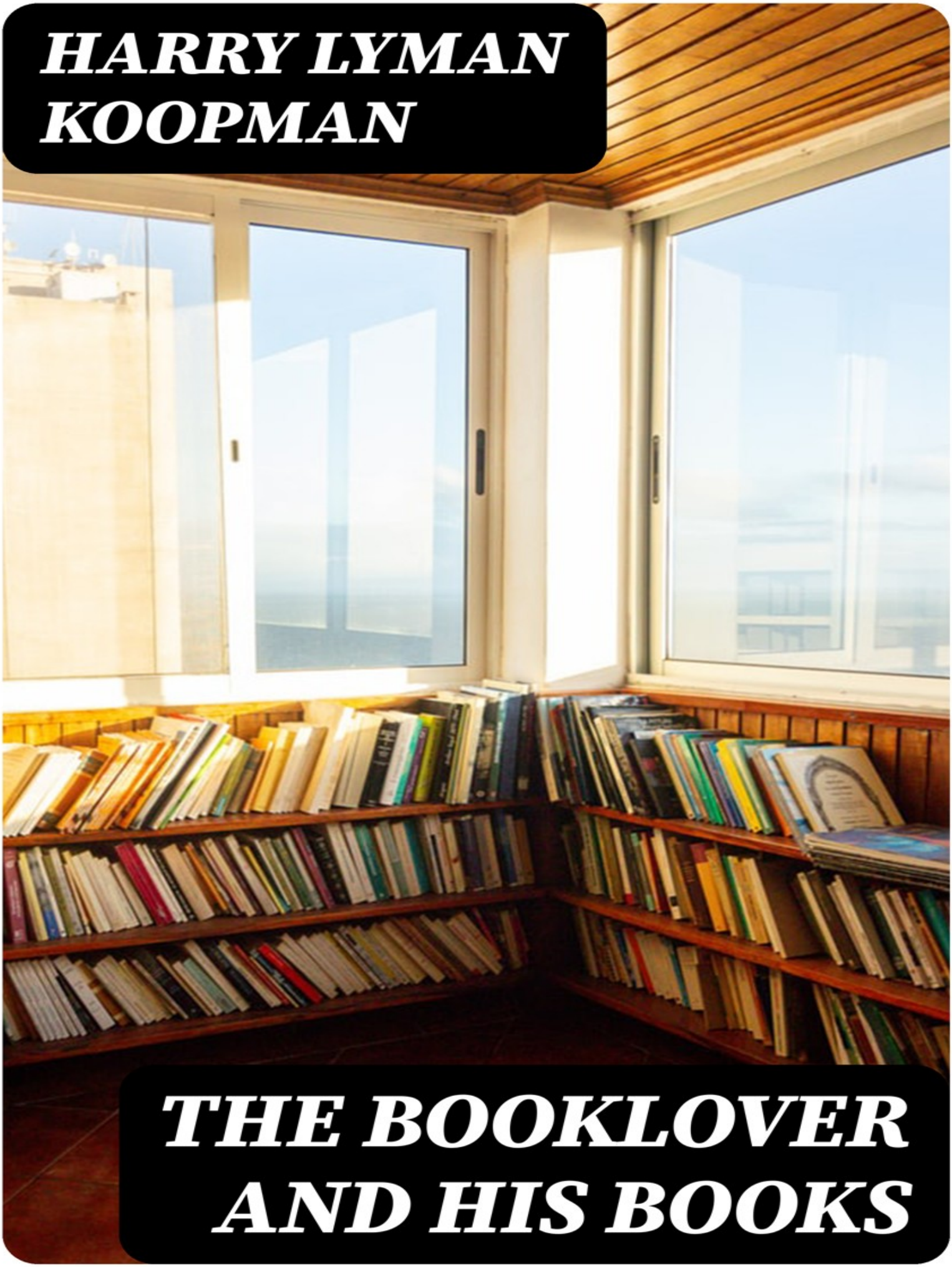
HARRY LYMAN KOOPMAN



THE BOOKLOVER AND HIS BOOKS

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BOOKS AND BOOKLOVERS[1]

HE booklover is distinguished from the reader as such by loving his books, and from the collector as such by reading them. He prizes not only the soul of the book, but also its body, which he would make a house beautiful, meet for the indwelling of the spirit given by its author. Love is not too strong a word to apply to his regard, which demands, in the language of Dorothy Wordsworth, "a beautiful book, a book to caress—peculiar, distinctive, individual: a book that hath first caught your eye and then pleased your fancy." The truth is that the book on its physical side is a highly organized art object. Not in vain has it transmitted the thought and passion of the ages; it has taken toll of them, and in the hands of its worthiest makers these elements have worked themselves out into its material body. Enshrining the artist's thought, it has, therefore, the qualities of a true art product, and stands second only to those which express it, such as painting and sculpture; but no other art product of its own order, not the violin nor the jewel-casket, can compare with the book in esthetic quality. It meets one of the highest tests of art, for it can appeal to

the senses of both beauty and grandeur, either separately, as in the work of Aldus and of Sweynheym and Pannartz, or together, as in that of Jenson.

Books have doubtless had their lovers in all ages, under all their forms. Even the Assyrian clay tablet, if stamped with the words of poet or sage, might have shared the affection which they inspired. So might the papyrus roll of the Egyptian, and so does even to-day the parchment book of the middle ages, whenever its fortunate owner has the soul of a booklover. From this book our own was derived, yet not without a break. For our book is not so much a copy of the Roman and medieval book as a "substitute" for it, a machine product made originally to sell at a large profit for the price of hand-work. It was fortunate for the early printed book that it stood in this intimate if not honored relation to the work of the scribes and illuminators, and fortunate for the book of to-day, since, with all its lapses, it cannot escape its heritage of those high standards.

Mr. John Cotton Dana has analyzed the book into forty elements; a minuter analysis might increase the number to sixty; but of either number the most are subsidiary, a few controlling. The latter are those of which each, if decided upon first, determines the character of the rest; they include size, paper, and type. The mention of any size, folio, quarto, octavo, twelvemo, sixteenmo, calls up at once a distinct mental picture of an ideal book for each dimension, and the series is marked by a decreasing thickness of paper and size of type as it progresses downward from the folio. The proportions of the page will also vary, as well as the surface

of the paper and the cut of the type, the other elements conforming to that first chosen.

Next to size, paper determines the expression of a book. It is the printing material par excellence; but for its production the art could never have flourished. It is as much preferred by the printer as parchment was by the scribe. Its three elements of body, surface, and tint must all be considered, and either body or surface may determine the size of the book or the character of the type. A smooth surface may be an element of beauty, as with the paper employed by Baskerville, but it must not be a shiny surface. The great desideratum in modern paper from the point of view of the book-buyer is a paper that, while opaque and tough, shall be thin enough to give us our books in small compass, one more akin to the dainty and precious vellum than to the heavier and coarser parchment. It should also be durable.

Type gives its name to the art and is the instrument by which the spoken word is made visible to the eye. The aims in its design should be legibility, beauty, and compactness, in this order; but these are more or less conflicting qualities, and it is doubtful if any one design can surpass in all. Modern type is cleaner-cut than the old, but it may be questioned whether this is a real gain. William Morris held that all types should avoid hair-lines, fussiness, and ugliness. Legibility should have the right of way for most printed matter, especially children's books and newspapers. If the latter desire compactness, they should condense their style, not their types.

A further important element, which affects both the legibility and the durability of the book, is the ink. For most purposes it should be a rich black. Some of the print of the early masters is now brown, and there have been fashions of gray printing, but the booklover demands black ink, except in ornaments, and there color, if it is to win his favor, must be used sparingly and with great skill. We are told that the best combination for the eye is ink of a bluish tint on buff-tinted paper; but, like much other good advice, this remains practically untried.

Illustrations have been a feature of the book for over four hundred years, but they have hardly yet become naturalized within its pages. Or shall we say that they soon forgot their proper subordination to the type and have since kept up a more or less open revolt? The law of fitness demands that whatever is introduced into the book in connection with type shall harmonize with the relatively heavy lines of type. This the early black-line engravings did. But the results of all other processes, from copper-plate to half-tone, conflict with the type-picture and should be placed where they are not seen with it. Photogravures, for instance, may be put at the end of the book, or they may be covered with a piece of opaque tissue paper, so that either their page or the facing type-page will be seen alone. We cannot do without illustrations. All mankind love a picture as they love a lover. But let the pictures belong to the book and not merely be thrust into it.

The binding is to the book what the book is to its subject-matter, a clothing and protection. In the middle ages, when books were so few as to be a distinction, they were

displayed sidewise, not edgewise, on the shelves, and their covers were often richly decorated, sometimes with costly gems. Even the wooden cover of the pre-Columbian Mexican book had gems set in its corners. Modern ornamentation is confined to tooling, blind and gilt, and inlaying. But some booklovers question whether any decoration really adds to the beauty of the finest leather. It should be remembered that the binding is not all on the outside. The visible cover is only the jacket of the real cover on which the integrity of the book depends. The sewing is the first element in time and importance. To be well bound a book should lie open well, otherwise it is bound not for the reader but only for the collector.

It cannot be too often repeated that properly made books are not extremely costly. A modern book offered at a fancy price means either a very small edition, an extravagant binding, or what is more likely, a gullible public. But most books that appeal to the booklover are not excessive in price. Never before was so much money spent in making books attractive—for the publisher always has half an eye on the booklover—and while much of this money is wasted, not all is laid out in vain. Our age is producing its quota of good books, and these the booklover makes it his business to discover.

In order to appreciate, the booklover must first know. He must be a book-kenner, a critic, but one who is looking for excellencies rather than faults, and this knowledge there are many books to teach him. But there is no guide that can impart the love of books; he must learn to love them as one learns to love sunsets, mountains, and the ocean, by seeing

them. So let him who would know the joys and rewards of the booklover associate with well-made books. Let him begin with the ancients of printing, the great Germans, Italians, Dutchmen. He can still buy their books if he is well-to-do, or see them in libraries and museums if he belongs to the majority. Working down to the moderns, he will find himself discriminating and rejecting, but he will be attracted by certain printers and certain periods in the last four hundred years, and he will be rejoiced to find that the last thirty years, though following a decline, hold their own—not by their mean but by their best—with any former period short of the great first half-century, 1450-1500.

Finally, if his book-love develops the missionary spirit in him, let him lend his support to the printers and publishers of to-day who are producing books worthy of the booklover's regard, for in no other way can he so effectually speed the day when all books shall justify the emotion which more than five hundred years ago Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, expressed in the title of his famous and still cherished work, the *Philobiblon*.

FITNESS IN BOOK DESIGN

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WOMAN'S fitness comes by fits," said slanderous Cloten; but to say as much of fitness in book design would be on the whole a compliment. Fitness as applied to book design means, of course, that the material form of the book shall correspond to its spiritual substance, shall be no finer and no meaner, and shall produce a like, even if a slighter, esthetic impression. At the outset we have to surrender to commercialism more than half our territory. All agree that our kings should be clothed in purple and our commoners in broadcloth; but how about the intellectual riffraff that makes up the majority of our books? Are our publishers willing that these should be clothed according to their station? Hardly; for then would much of their own occupation be gone. It is recognized that for a large proportion of our publications the design—the outward appearance—is in great measure counted on to sell the book; and printers and publishers will not consent to send the paupers of literature forth upon the world in their native rags, for so they would find no one to welcome them. It will be useless to quarrel with the fact that the design of many books is meant as a bait and not as a simple interpretation of their meaning and worth. Design of this character, however, is relatively easy; it is really not design at all, but millinery. It is when his work becomes

genuinely interpretative that the designer's difficulties begin.

The first business of the designer, therefore, is to understand the book he is treating. Here, of course, his judgment, however sincere, may be mistaken or misled. A classical instance of this is found in connection with one of the most famous books in the history of modern printing,—Barlow's "Columbiad." This work, which first appeared in 1787 under a different title, was enlarged to epic proportions during the next twenty years, and was finally given to the world in 1807 in the belief on the part of its author and in the hope at least on the part of its publisher that it would take rank and be honored for all time as the great American epic. Under this misconception the book was clothed in a form that might worthily have enshrined "Paradise Lost." Its stately quarto pages were set in a type specially designed for the work and taking from it the name of Columbian. The volume was embellished with full-page engravings after paintings in the heroic manner by Smirke; in short, it was the most pretentious book issued in America up to that time, and it still ranks, in the words of Professor Barrett Wendell, "among the most impressive books to look at in the world." But alas for the vanity of human aspirations! "The Columbiad" is now remembered as a contribution to typography rather than literature. The designer overshot his author.

We have tacitly assumed that a book has but one interpretation and therefore but one most appropriate design. This, however, is far from the truth. When, after various more or less successful editions of Irving's

"Knickerbocker" had appeared, Mr. Updike brought out some twenty years ago his comic edition, with the whole make-up of the book expressive of the clumsy and stupid Dutchmen depicted in Irving's mock-heroic, we felt at the moment that here was the one ideal "Knickerbocker." Yet, much as we still admire it, does it wholly satisfy us? Is there not as much room as ever for an edition that shall express primarily not the absurdity of its subject-matter, but the delicate playfulness of Irving's humor and the lightness and grace of his exuberant style? Has there ever been a final "Don Quixote"? Certainly not in the recent monumental editions with their quagmire of footnotes. Moreover, if *we* had a final edition of the great romance it would not remain final for our children's children. Every age will make its own interpretations of the classics and will demand that they be embodied in contemporary design. Thus every age in its book design mirrors itself for future admiration or contempt.

Obviously, in giving form to a single work a designer is freer than in handling a series by one or by various authors. In such cases he must seize upon more general and therefore less salient characteristics. The designer of "Hiawatha" or "Evangeline" has a fairly clear task before him, with a chance of distinct success or failure; but the designer of an appropriate form for the whole series of Longfellow's works, both prose and poetry, has a less individualized problem, and must think of the elements that run through all,—sweetness, grace, gentleness, dignity, learning. Yet, though general, these qualities in a series may be far from vague. We have only to consider the absurdity of a handy-volume Gibbon or a folio Lamb. On looking at the

bulky, large-type, black-covered volumes of the Forman edition of Shelley and Keats one instinctively asks, "What crime did these poets commit that they should be so impounded?" The original edition of the life of Tennyson by his son, in two lumbering, royal octavo volumes, comes near to what Thackeray called the Farnese Hercules, "a hulking abortion." Contrast with it the dignity linked with charm of the original edition of Longfellow's life by his brother. But of all monstrosities of book design the British three-volume novel mania is responsible for some of the worst. Henry Ward Beecher's one novel, "Norwood," which appeared in America becomingly clad in a single volume, received in England the regulation three-volume dress, in which it looks as ridiculously inflated as did a slender miss of that period in the crinoline then in vogue. There is one abomination in book design for which I owe a personal grudge to commercialism, and that is the dropsical book form given to Locker-Lampson's "My Confidences." If ever there was a winsome bit of writing it is this, and it should have made a book to take to one's heart, something not larger than a "Golden Treasury" volume, but of individual design. My comfort is that this will yet be done, and my belief is that art will justify itself better in the market than commercialism did. A more modern instance of expansion for commercial reasons defeating fitness in design is furnished by Waters' translation of "The Journal of Montaigne's Travels." Here we have three small volumes outwardly attractive, but printed on paper thick enough for catalogue cards, and therefore too stiff for the binding, also in type too large to be pleasant. The whole should have been issued in one volume

of the same size in smaller type, and would then have been as delightful in form as it is in substance.

It is not enough that all the elements of a book be honest, sincere, enduring; otherwise the clumsy royal octavos of Leslie Stephen's edition of Fielding would be as attractive as "the dear and dumpy twelves" of the original editions. Royal octavo, indeed, seems to be the pitfall of the book designer, though there is no inherent objection to it. Where in the whole range of reference books will be found a more attractive set of volumes than Moulton's "Library of Literary Criticism," with their realization in this format of the Horatian *simplex munditiis*? For extremely different treatments of this book size it is instructive to compare the slender volumes of the original editions of Ruskin with the slightly shorter but very much thicker volumes of the scholarly definitive edition, which is a monument of excellence in every element of book design except the crowning one of fitness. Our libraries must have this edition for its completeness and its editorship; its material excellence will insure the transmission of Ruskin's message to future centuries; but no one will ever fall in love with these volumes or think of likening them to the marriage of "perfect music unto noble words."

Granted that the designer knows the tools of his trade,—grasps the expressional value of every element with which he has to deal, from the cut of a type to the surface of a binder's cloth,—his task, as we said, is first to know the soul of the book intrusted to him for embodiment; it is next to decide upon its most characteristic quality, or the sum of its qualities; and, lastly, it is so to use his physical elements as

to give to the completed book an expression that shall be the outward manifestation of its indwelling spirit. This is all that can be asked of him; but, if he would add a touch of perfection, let him convey the subtle tribute of a sense of the value of his subject by reflecting in his design the artist's joy in his work.

PRINT AS AN INTERPRETER OF MEANING

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HE invention of printing, we have often been told, added to book production only the two commercial elements of speed and cheapness. As regards the book itself, we are assured, printing not only added nothing, but, during the four and a half centuries of its development, has constantly tended to take away. These statements are no doubt historically and theoretically true, yet they are so unjust to the present-day art that some supplementary statement of our obligations to printing seems called for, aside from the obvious rejoinder that, even if speed and cheapness are commercial qualities, they have reached a development—especially in the newspaper—beyond the dreams of the most imaginative fifteenth-century inventor, and have done nothing less than revolutionize the world.

Taking the service of printing as it stands to-day, what does it actually do for the reader? What is the great

difference between the printed word and even the best handwriting? It is obviously the condensation and the absolute mechanical sameness of print. The advantage of these differences to the eye in respect to rapid reading is hardly to be overestimated. Let any one take a specimen of average penmanship and note the time which he consumes in reading it; let him compare with this the time occupied in reading the same number of printed words, and the difference will be startling; but not even so will it do justice to print, for handwriting average in quality is very far from average in frequency. If it be urged that the twentieth-century comparison should be between typewriting and print, we may reply that typewriting *is* print, though it lacks most of its condensation, and that the credit for its superior legibility belongs to typography, of which the new art is obviously a by-product. But we are not yet out of the manuscript period, so far as private records are concerned, and it still is true, as it has been for many generations, that print multiplies the years of every scholar's and reader's life.

At this point we may even introduce a claim for print as a contributor to literature. There are certainly many books of high literary standing that never would have attained their present form without the intervention of type. It is well known that Carlyle rewrote his books in proof, so that the printer, instead of attempting to correct his galleys, reset them outright. Balzac went a step further, and largely wrote his novels in proof, if such an expression may be allowed. He so altered and expanded them that what went to the printing office as copy for a novelette finally came out of it a full-sized novel. Even where the changes are not so

extensive, as in the proof-sheets of the Waverley Novels preserved in the Cornell University Library, it is interesting to trace the alterations which the author was prompted to make by the sight of his paragraphs clothed in the startling distinctness of print. Nor is this at all surprising when one considers how much better the eye can take in the thought and style of a composition from the printed page than it can even from typewriting. The advantage is so marked that some publishers, before starting on an expensive literary venture, are accustomed to have the copy set up on the linotype for the benefit of their critics. If the work is accepted, the revisions are made on these sheets, and then, finally, the work is sent back to the composing room to receive the more elaborate typographic dress in which it is to appear.

But to return to the advantages of type to the reader. Handwriting can make distinctions, such as punctuation and paragraphing, but print can greatly enforce them. The meaning of no written page leaps out to the eye; but this is the regular experience of the reader with every well-printed page. While printing can do nothing on a single page that is beyond the power of a skillful penman, its ordinary resources are the extraordinary ones of manuscript. It might not be physically impossible, for instance, to duplicate with a pen a page of the Century Dictionary, but it would be practically impossible, and, if the pen were our only resource, we never should have such a marvel of condensation and distinctness as that triumph of typography in the service of scholarship.

In ordinary text, printing has grown away from the distinctions to the eye that were in vogue two hundred years ago—a gain to art and perhaps to legibility also, though contemporary critics like Franklin lamented the change—but in reference books we have attained to a finer skill in making distinctions to the eye than our forefathers achieved with all their typographic struggles. Nor are our reference pages lacking in beauty. But our familiarity with works of this class tends to obscure their wonderful merit as time-savers and eye-savers. It is only when we take up some foreign dictionary, printed with little contrast of type, perhaps in German text, and bristling with unmeaning abbreviations, that we appreciate our privilege. Surely this is a marvelous mechanical triumph, to present the words of an author in such a form that the eye, to take it in, needs but to sweep rapidly down the page, or, if it merely glances at the page, it shall have the meaning of the whole so focused in a few leading words that it can turn at once to the passage sought, or see that it must look elsewhere. The saving of time so effected may be interpreted either as a lengthening of life or as an increased fullness of life, but it means also a lessening of friction and thus an addition to human comfort.

We have been speaking of prose; but print has done as much or more to interpret the meaning of poetry. We have before us a facsimile of nineteen lines from the oldest Vatican manuscript of Vergil. The hexameters are written in single lines; but this is the only help to the eye. The letters are capitals and are individually very beautiful, indeed, the lines are like ribbons of rich decoration; but the words are

not separated, and the punctuation is inconspicuous and primitively simple, consisting merely of faint dots. Modern poetry, especially lyric, with its wealth and interplay of rhyme, affords a fine opportunity for the printer to mediate between the poet and his public, and this he has been able to do by mere indention and leading, without resorting to distinction of type. The reader of a sonnet or ballad printed without these two aids to the eye is robbed of his rightful clues to the construction of the verse. It seems hardly possible that a poem could have been read aloud from an ancient manuscript, at sight, with proper inflection; yet this is just what printing can make possible for the modern reader. It has not usually done so, for the printer has been very conservative; he has taken his conception of a page from prose, and, not being compelled to, has not placed all the resources of his art at the service of the poet. Accents, pauses, and certain arbitrary signs might well be employed to indicate to the reader the way the poet meant his line to be read. Milton curiously gave us some metric hints by means of changes in spelling, but we have to read all our other poets in the light of our own discernment, and it is not to be wondered at if doctors disagree. Even the caesura, or pause in the course of a long line, is not always easy to place. Francis Thompson, in his poem "A Judgement in Heaven," has indicated this by an asterisk, giving an example that might well be followed by other poets and their printers. The regularity of eighteenth-century verse made little call for guide-posts, but modern free meter, in proportion to its greater flexibility and richness, demands more assistance to the reader's eye, or even to his

understanding. For instance, to read aloud hexameters or other long lines, some of which have the initial accent on the first syllable and some later, is quite impossible without previous study supplemented by a marking of the page. Yet a few printed accents would make a false start impossible. Poetry will never require the elaborate aid from the printer which he gives to music; but it seems clear that he has not yet done for it all that he might or should.

It is surely not an extreme assumption that the first duty of the printer is to the meaning of his author, and his second to esthetics; but shall we not rather say that his duty is to meet both demands, not by a compromise, but by a complete satisfaction of each? A difficult requirement, surely, but one that we are confident the twentieth-century printer will not permit his critics to pronounce impossible.

FAVORITE BOOK SIZES

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N the following paper some account will be given of five book sizes that have taken rank as favorites. It should excite no surprise that all are small sizes. Nature's favorites are always small; her insect jewels outnumber her vertebrates a millionfold; and book-loving human nature takes the same delight in daintiness.

There is, to be sure, a general impression that the first centuries of printing were given up to folios, the eighteenth century to quartos and octavos, and that only the present period has been characterized by twelvemos and sixteenmos. We think of the Gutenberg Bible, the Nuremberg Chronicle, the mighty editions of the Fathers, the polyglot Bibles of Paris, London, and Antwerp,—fairly to be called limp teachers' Bibles,—the 1611 Bible, the Shakespeare folios; then of the quarto editions of Addison, Pope, Walpole, and their contemporaries, and the stately octavo editions of the same writers; and finally of the myriad *infra* that have swarmed from the press during the last century. But, when we walk through a library that offers a representative collection of books from the invention of printing to the present, we realize that the bigness of the folios and quartos has deceived us as to their relative number, all forms of literature being considered.

The parent of our present book form, the Roman codex, split from an actual block of wood, had a surface hardly as large as the cover of a Little Classic. The vellum Books of Hours were dainty volumes. Even in the period between Gutenberg and Aldus, books of moderate size were not uncommon, and continuously, from the days of the great Venetian popularizer of literature to the present, the small books have far outnumbered their heavy-armed allies. Common sense, indeed, would tell us that this must be so, even if it had not inspired Dr. Johnson, its eighteenth century exponent, to declare: "Books that you may carry to the fire, and hold readily in your hand, are the most useful after all."

Our account properly begins with Aldus. From 1494, the date of his first productions, until 1501 he printed his books in folio and quarto. But in the first year of the new century he began to use his famous cursive type, now called italic. The fineness of the new type, as has been suggested, called for a smaller size of book, which was also favored by considerations of economy and convenience; and so Aldus made up his sheets in a form which the fold compels us to call octavo, but which to-day would be called sixteenmo. Says Horatio F. Brown, in his "The Venetian Printing Press": "The public welcomed the new type and size. The College granted Aldus a monopoly for ten years for all books printed in this manner. The price of books was lowered at once. Didot calculates that an octavo of Aldus cost, on an average, two francs and a half, whereas a folio probably cost about twenty francs. These two innovations on type and on format constituted a veritable revolution in the