

GLAISTER'S GLOSSARY OF THE BOOK

Glaister, Geoffrey Ashall. *Glaister's Glossary of the Book*. Second edition, completely revised. London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1979. \$95. ISBN 0 04 010006 5.

GLAISTER'S 457-WORD ENTRY on **marbling**, after describing this fascinating process of decorating the edges of books or surfaces of sheets of paper, traces the origins of the art from its early practice in Japan in the ninth century A.D., quotes Francis Bacon in 1622 on the Turks and their 'pretty art of chambletting paper which is not in use with us', describes the introduction of marbling in France and England in the seventeenth century, and mentions notable manuals on the subject, including Woolnough's *The Whole Art of Marbling* of 1853. The entry concludes with the following paragraph:

British marbled papers are currently among the best being used by craftsmen binders in several parts of the world. Many are made by S.M. Cockerell of Riversdale who offers 150 coded designs. His chief marbler is William Chapman. When in 1960 swatches of Cockerell's marbled papers were shown to a seventy year old master binder in Paris he said 'on doit s'agenouiller devant un tel travail' ('one should kneel before such work').

The emotion of the bookbinder expressed in this characteristic anecdote is what I myself feel about *Glaister's Glossary of the Book* after living with it and using it to my great benefit and pleasure for several months, in all of which time I have failed only once or twice to find a reference to something I was seeking. The declared scope of the work ('terms used in Papermaking, Printing, Bookbinding and Publishing with notes on Illuminated Manuscripts and Private Presses') is daunting. It implies a comprehensive attempt to define the past and present terminology of trades that have been notorious for coining their own words. It also announces a special interest of the compiler — private presses — which he joyfully indulges in about one hundred entries, ranging from **Ashendene**, **Doves**, **Golden Cockerel**, **Grabhorn** and other great names down to such transient enterprises as the **Mall Press** of London, 1916-17, whose celebrated proprietors Bruce Rogers and Emery Walker produced but one book under this imprint.

As *Glossary of the Book*, the first edition of Glaister was published in 1960 by Sir Stanley Unwin, who saw possibilities in the work that others had not perceived. Glaister, born in Bradford in 1917, and a librarian since 1934, had begun its compilation in 1947, at the time when he entered upon his wide-ranging service as a librarian for the British Council. It is clear that in more than thirty years the task of collecting material and writing it up can never have been laid aside for long.

The first edition contained 3,269 entries. Of these, 481 'of diminished interest' have been dropped from the completely revised second edition, and 1,050 have been rewritten. In all, 1,144 new entries have been added. As one might

expect, subjects such as **computer assisted typesetting**, **computer terminology for the printer**, **optical character recognition** and **video display unit**, none of which appeared in the first edition, receive extended treatment. But modern developments in typesetting and printing, so rapid in their acceleration during the past twenty years, and so far-reaching in their effects on the trade, by no means dominate the changes that Glaister embodies in this revision. In the first edition, between **feet** (of type) and **Fell types** stood a 43-word note on the **Felicia Hemans Prize**, an annual award of a medal and a cash prize of about £2 for a lyrical poem written by past and present members of University College or of the University of Liverpool. In the arrangement of the second edition, Felicia Hemans Prize would be located in the H's, but it has vanished altogether, and between feet and Fell types we now have 175 words on **Sigmund Feierabend** (1528–90), a woodcutter and typecutter from Heidelberg, who became the leading printer of Frankfurt of his day; and 162 words on **Felice Feliciano** (1433–c.79), of Verona, a manuscript copyist, scribe and rubricator, whose treatise of about 1460 for stone cutters on the construction of roman capitals was reprinted in 1960 by Giovanni Mardersteig's Officina Bodoni.

Glaister in his preface draws attention to the greater length of many of the 1,050 entries that he has revised. Thus **arabic type** has grown from 38 words to 1,364; **William Caxton** from 330 to 2,053; **Benjamin Franklin** from 123 to 363; and **morocco** from 41 to 284. He also notes the length of some of the entries that are wholly new: **Bengali printing and typography** (3,076 words); **Hebrew printing before 1600** (2,077); **Islamic bookbinding** (986); **Persian illumination** (1,030). To the reader who may be unfamiliar with Glaister's work, it will be obvious from these figures that this is far more than a collection of brief definitions that the word 'glossary' implies. Certainly there is a large number of entries in one or two lines; but the abiding impression left by the book is of its generous treatment of countless subjects, in succinctly written but quite lengthy articles, seeded with cross-references and often concluding by citing a notable book or books on the subject under discussion.

To an extent that is amazing, this is the work of one man; but it is appropriate to mention some of his collaborators, who between them are responsible for 390 of the 3,932 entries. The Swedish manual for the graphic trades, *Grafisk Uppslagsbok*, first published in 1951, provides 220 entries in translated and sometimes edited form, and is the chief source of Glaister's indebtedness. The late Dr Muriel Lock contributes 90 short entries on a variety of subjects, many of which (e.g. **embossing plate**, **embossing press**, **emerald and emptying the stick**) would surely not have troubled the compiler to write; and Lewis Kitcat, David Welsh and John Jarrold offer 64, 10 and 4 entries respectively on trade bookbinding, Americana and colour printing. Many other experts counselled the compiler; for example, Howard Nixon (librarian of Westminster Abbey) on the history of bookbinding, C.M. Thompson and C.G. Ingamells of John Dickinson & Co. on papermaking, D.P. Brooks of the Staples Press on letterpress printing, and the late Ronald Barker (of the Publishers Association) and Philip Unwin on

publishing and bookselling. Ronald Eames, formerly design director of George Allen & Unwin, contributes (as to the first edition) an illustrated appendix of specimen typefaces, in which one notes that Helvetica still fails to win a place among the three sans serifs shown, although Gill Sans, Univers and the little-known Vogue (designed for *Vogue* magazine in 1932) continue to appear. With others who read the compiler's manuscript and advised him, these experts lend an air of exceptional authority to this encyclopaedic enterprise.

The reader may perhaps infer from the title of the book and what I have said about it so far that Glaister is chiefly concerned with the technicalities of making books. This is not so. I have read with interest his biography of **Bernard Quaritch**, the history of **Maggs Brothers**, and a summary of the success story of **Sotheby & Co.** as book auctioneers. It is pleasing to find brief entries on the **Australian Children's Book Award**, the **Australian National Book Council**, the **Moomba Award for Australian Literature** and the **Miles Franklin Award** (but not the Patrick White Award?) among the many articles on literary and other prizes. I was a little surprised by the brevity of **Nobel Prize for Literature** (41 words) alongside, for example, **Newbery Medal** (150 words) and **Booker Prize** (83 words). It is impressive, to mention quite a different subject, to read Glaister's 2,985-word article on **Bible printing in England**, from the Lollard Bible inspired by John Wycliffe (c.1330–84) to the New English Bible of 1961–70 ('doubtless clear and readable but marred for some by the impersonal style associated with committee composition. It has been widely accepted, particularly overseas, where the language of 1611 presents unnecessary difficulty of comprehension, but there will always be those who prefer the A.V.'). Glaister has interesting publishing history to record of the A.V., as well as his prejudice in its favour. He notes that copyright in it is vested in the Crown, authority to print it in England being granted by charter to Oxford and Cambridge university presses, and by licence to the Queen's Printer (Messrs Eyre & Spottiswoode). He then mentions the 'interesting sequel' that Eyre & Spottiswoode 'came under Catholic control' and that in 1957 the firm was sold to Methuen, so that for a time the right to print the Bible for the Church of England 'came into Catholic hands, and the right was subsequently sold, though technically Eyre & Spottiswoode exist in the Associated Book Publishers group'.

One of the pleasures of consulting Glaister is to find how often one's attention is intercepted by entries other than what one set out to look up. On my way to **British National Bibliography** my eye was distracted by **bellows press**, a type of hand-operated table press best known from the Parlour press of the mid-nineteenth century, and still in existence in the form of the Adana flatbed press, as used in Australia, for example, by Mr. Gerald Fischer at his Pump Press. In **bellows press** I learnt that in India, William Sleeman bought a Parlour press to print eighteen copies of his 607-page confidential *Diary* at Lucknow in 1852. To anyone who has been a hand printer, this casually imparted note gives rise to fascinated speculation. Glaister's book is like that. It is deeply learned and serious, but always alert to the idiosyncratic achievements of bookmen. An

example at random is the entry on **Richard Jugge** (fl.1547-77), a London printer who held the Bible patent and who issued the folio Bishops' Bible, 'a curious feature of [which] was the printing of the N.T. on thicker paper than the Old since it was likely to be more used'.

If there is a criticism to be made of this edition it is that Glaister does not seem fully to reflect the speed with which letterpress printing has yielded to offset litho in the past ten years, at least in developed countries of the West. The lengthy entries on **hand composition**, **Linotype** and **Monotype**, for example, and numerous other entries associated with the terminology of the composing room, imply by their unswerving use of the present tense a lively continuation of hot metal typesetting and letterpress printing. The facts are surely otherwise. This does not mean that Glaister underrates changing technology. He has much to say about **photosetting**, **ink-jet printing** and similar subjects, and mentions Monotype's Lasercomp, announced in 1977, which is up-to-date information to find in a work of this encyclopaedic nature published in 1979. Yet the era of hot metal still seems to dominate the second edition of the *Glossary* as it did the first. Perhaps it is an effect of the weighting of the illustrations? For example, there are four pictures of parts of the Linotype and three of that old warrior the Ludlow, but none of the Linotron.

No doubt the avid reader of the *Glossary* will eventually find something missing that he thinks should have been included. I have spent much time 'challenging' Glaister and trying to catch him out. At the end of the day I can query only two omissions. One is that he does not include a note on Letraset, whose products and whose marketing skills have changed the work of so many graphic arts studios in recent years. It is a success story as notable in its way as that of Sotheby's or Maggs'. (I should add that the name Letraset does appear, but only as glancing example under **transfer lettering**.) My other query is that there seems to be no mention of the Pantone Matching System. The specification of 497 PMS shades of ink from standard blends of a few basic colours is now such a common practice that I am surprised John Jarrold, the author of **colour systems**, does not refer to it.

The first edition of Glaister was printed by letterpress; the second, as one might expect, is by litho, but from the same firm, Unwin Brothers Ltd, of Woking. One of the delights of the first edition was four tipped samples of marbled papers by Douglas Cockerell & Sons; another was a collotype plate. These have disappeared, no doubt because of the high cost and rarity of such work. Altogether there were twelve illustrations accompanying **collotype** in the first edition, but there are none with the much shorter entry in the second edition, where Glaister notes with detachment that, although capable of the finest results, the collotype process is slow and costly and that 'by 1975 only one firm in Britain was using it'. In entries such as this, Glaister defies any imputation that he is not abreast of developments.

For anyone whose life is in books, it is scarcely enough to have access to a library copy of this wonderful work. The *Glossary* is an unfailing source of information and inspiration that should be always on one's desk or at one's bedside. I recall the bewilderment I felt when I entered publishing many years ago, as I groped to find the meaning of the mysterious words and phrases that were so constantly on the lips of my seniors. Since then I have learnt a few things about the language and the technicalities of the trade, but Glaister shows me that I still have far to go. It seems to me that his *Glossary* is the most useful book about books that I have encountered. How fitting that in this second edition the name of the compiler should be embodied in the title. The only misgiving I have about the future of the *Glossary* is that its price (£35 in the United Kingdom, \$95 in Australia) may prevent many young bookmen from acquiring it as the essential foundation stone of their private libraries.

A.T. Bolton,
National Library of Australia

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