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*Lionel Madden**

REPRINTING VICTORIAN TEXTS

DURING 1969 LEICESTER UNIVERSITY PRESS PUBLISHED THE FIRST SIX VOLUMES in a series of reprints under the general title of "The Victorian Library." The present article attempts to use some of the practical experiences of the editorial committee as illustrations of certain issues of general interest which are involved in this form of publication.

The intention to undertake a series of reprints of Victorian texts formed part of the original plans of the University of Leicester Victorian Studies Centre when it was established in 1966. Since 1968 the planning of the series has been directed by an editorial committee which cooperates with the Press Secretary in devising a list of titles for recommendation to the Board of the University Press. During 1968 and 1969 an extensive list of titles was compiled and vetted and a programme was evolved which would ensure a regular flow of publications to the end of 1971. At its future meetings the editorial committee will recommend further titles for publication beyond that date.

The declared aim of the series is to reprint classics of the Victorian period in a wide variety of fields of interest. The term "classics" is, of course, open to many differing interpretations. Nevertheless, the declaration indicates the committee's intention of directing its attention to works which have a continuing significance for modern students of the period. Recommendations of titles for consideration are received from specialists both inside and outside the university. These are scrutinised by the committee and, where necessary, further advice about their value is sought from other scholars.

The selection of titles to be reprinted is based primarily on their significance for scholars of the Victorian period. From the inception of the project it was hoped to publish the volumes at prices within the reach of the individual purchaser. To achieve this it is necessary to undertake fairly sizeable print runs, which in turn requires the selection of titles for which a reasonably large demand is likely. In the planning and distribution of the series the University Press has been helped by an arrangement with Humanities Press, New York, who undertake distribution in the United States and Canada. In general, it is not the committee's intention to reprint works which are readily available in the second-hand market or which have already been reprinted or announced

* The author is Secretary of the editorial committee. For suggestions about the content of this article he is indebted to Professor Philip Collins, Chairman of the committee, and to Mr. Peter L. Boulton, Secretary of the Leicester University Press.

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by other publishers. A careful check is therefore made against current bibliographies of new and forthcoming books and, so far as possible, against the lists of second-hand booksellers.

Because of the wide range of interests represented by the Victorian Studies Centre, the selection of titles for the series aims at a balanced representation of subject areas. Practical experience, however, has revealed certain difficulties in the application of this principle. To take the most obvious example: most major works of Victorian literature are readily available in a number of modern editions. The works of many minor authors are not difficult to obtain in the second-hand market. Little useful purpose would seem to be served by reprinting such texts. Furthermore, in the field of Victorian fiction, the popularity of the three-decker novel raises special problems of production and cost for a reprint publisher. Where later one-volume editions of such novels exist, they often fail to provide sufficiently authoritative texts to enable them to be adopted as the basis of a photographic reprint. By contrast, there are many works in the areas of economic, social, and urban history, which are clearly worthy of republication. The considerable interests within the university in these subjects – as represented, for example, by the *Urban History Newsletter* – ensure that the editorial committee is provided with specialist advice on many of these topics.

The problem of three-decker novels is closely linked with practical considerations of the methods of publication adopted by the University Press. For the prospective purchaser of any reprint, two requirements are of paramount importance: the first is that the text chosen must be both authoritative and accurately copied; the second, that it should be issued at as moderate a price as possible, consistent with accuracy, clarity, and good standards of book production. In the opinion of the Press, these requirements are best satisfied by employing the technique of photographic reproduction of the original volumes, and this method has been adopted for the majority of the texts so far included in the series.

Inevitably, there are certain cases in which the technique of photographic reproduction is inappropriate. One of the texts which was early adopted was *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* by Andrew Mearns. It was felt that the value of this reprint would be considerably increased by the inclusion in the volume of a selection of related material. The text of *The Bitter Cry* is, therefore, accompanied by Forster Crozier's pamphlet, *Methodism and 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London,'* two leading articles from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and edited versions of items by Lord Shaftesbury and Joseph Chamberlain. For such a composite volume photographic reproduction was clearly impracticable and the texts were reset in type. For purposes of reference, the original page numbers were inserted in the body of the texts.

A more complicated problem was encountered with the decision to reprint *A History of the Gothic Revival* by Charles L. Eastlake. It was evident that this work could usefully be brought up to date by the inclusion of suitable corrections and additions. While Eastlake's preface and narrative text retain their value, the appended list of "Selected examples of Gothic buildings erected between 1820 and 1870" was in need of revision if it was to be of use as a reference tool for the modern reader. A revised and supplemented list by

J. Mordaunt Crook was, therefore, included in the volume to replace the original section. A completely new bibliography and index were also provided and twenty-six new illustrations were added. The composite volume thus unites a photographic copy of the text of a large part of Eastlake's work with considerable new material of value to the modern student.

Where, as in the majority of cases, the method of photographic reproduction of the text has been adopted, it is clearly of the greatest importance that the edition to be copied should be carefully selected. Most of the titles so far adopted for "The Victorian Library" appeared in more than one edition during the nineteenth century. Since the series is publishing reprints and not critical editions, the selection of the most useful edition for the student has in each case to be determined on its own merits. The text of certain works was radically altered between one edition and the next. *Contrasts* by A. W. N. Pugin, first published in 1836, was extensively revised and expanded for the second edition in 1841. The second edition, which is more than twice the length of the first, was selected for reproduction. In this edition, Pugin reproduced all except one of the illustrations which appeared in the first edition and added five new plates. In order to ensure that the reprint should have the greatest possible usefulness, it was decided to include the rejected plate from the first edition as an extra illustration in the volume.

The extent to which alterations and additions in new editions may change the character of a work is well illustrated by *A Discourse on the Studies of the University* by Adam Sedgwick. This was first published in 1833 as a slim volume of little more than one hundred pages. In three subsequent editions in 1834 and 1835 Sedgwick made only minor revisions and additions. In 1850, however, the *Discourse* was published in a fifth edition of 766 pages, of which approximately 650 contained wholly new material. Most notably, the fifth edition contained a preface of 434 pages and a supplement to the appendix of 145 pages. The bulk of the new material is concerned with controversies about evolution in general and attacks upon Robert Chambers's *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* in particular. While the first edition of Sedgwick's *Discourse* is of interest to historians of education, the fifth edition is of special value to historians of science. The editorial committee decided to reprint the first edition in "The Victorian Library" and the introduction by Sir Eric Ashby and Mary Anderson is directed to the consideration of the work as a text in educational history. By a happy example of the benefits of consultation between publishers, Gregg International Publishers Ltd. found it possible to undertake a reprint of the fifth edition, thus ensuring that the appropriate forms of the work are available to historians of education and science.

The complexity of such bibliographical detail emphasises the necessity for any reprint to state clearly and in a prominent position in the book exactly what is being offered to the reader. It is not sufficient to publish a reprint without some unambiguous statement of its contents and their relationship to previous editions of the text. "The Victorian Library" has adopted a standard practice of prefacing each volume with a bibliographical note. This note provides a concise summary of the publishing history of the text and a clear statement about the edition selected for reprinting. A brief indication of the reasons for the choice of edition is given either in the bibliographical note or

in the introduction. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the provision of precise information about the edition adopted is a duty which the publisher owes to the reader. The practices of presenting reprints as if they were new works, or of including insufficient information to enable the reader to identify easily and precisely which version of the text has been used, will inevitably involve readers and librarians in a frustrating waste of time and will generate only ill-will towards the publisher.

Although there is considerable value in any accurate reprint of a work which is out of print and difficult to obtain, the editorial committee felt that the inclusion of introductory assessments by distinguished modern scholars would immeasurably increase the usefulness and appeal of the series. As each title has been selected, therefore, a well-known authority has been invited to contribute an essay evaluating the contemporary significance of the work and its value for modern students. The introductions constitute scholarly essays, written specially for the series, substantiating the claims of each text to be considered worthy of reprinting by a modern academic press, and themselves adding an important contribution to the literature of their subjects.

From the practical experience so far gained by the editorial committee it is evident that, in the current state of the reprint industry, even the most careful investigation of the announcements of forthcoming reprints and correspondence with other publishers in this field will be insufficient to prevent a certain amount of unavoidable duplication. At the present time, all the indications are that the number of publishers entering this field and the number of reprints which they produce will continue to increase rapidly. It is reasonable to suppose that in this, as in other areas of production, the final selection of works for purchase will be determined by the value of material in relation to its cost. Volumes in "The Victorian Library" are at present planned to appear at a rate of approximately six each year. It seems inadvisable to make definite plans for future titles to be published more than two or three years in advance. Planning beyond this would certainly result in increased duplication with titles produced by other publishers. Nevertheless, when a title has been approved and an introduction commissioned, it is not withdrawn if another publisher subsequently announces it. The validity of pre-publication announcements is thus maintained. "The Victorian Library" may hope to benefit from its standing as a recognisable series which attracts librarians especially to place standing orders for all volumes as they are published. In planning the newly-set pages, the Press designer, Arthur Lockwood, has established a consistent typographic style which is adaptable to the necessarily varying sizes of the volumes. A uniform design of binding and jackets facilitates ready recognition of volumes of the series when shelved under different subject groups in bookshops and libraries.

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