



A BOOK COLLECTORS' QUARTERLY

THE COLOPHON
PART EIGHT

EDITORS

Elmer Adler Burton Emmett John T. Winterich

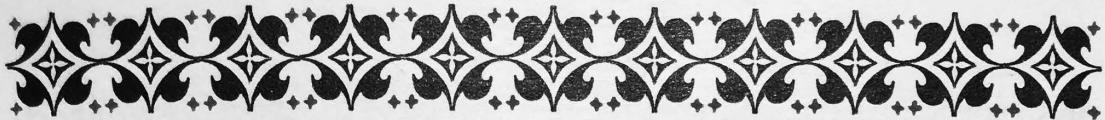
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Frank Altschul	Henry W. Kent
Thomas Beer	Rockwell Kent
Pierce Butler	Christopher Morley
W. A. Dwiggins	A. Edward Newton
John C. Eckel	Vrest Orton
Frederic W. Goudy	Bruce Rogers
Ruth S. Granniss	Carl Purington Rollins
Belle da Costa Greene	Gilbert M. Troxel
Dard Hunter	Carolyn Wells
William M. Ivins, Jr.	George Parker Winship

PUBLICATION AND EDITORIAL OFFICE OF
THE COLOPHON LTD
229 West 43^d Street, New York

The Colophon, copyright 1931

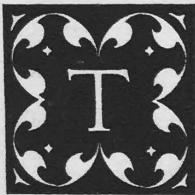
*All rights reserved including the right
to reproduce parts thereof in any form*



FOUR CENTURIES OF BOOK TITLES

or What Price Glory?

BY RALPH SAMUEL



O ASSUME that book titles came into being with books is at least a half-error. Colophons, which of course antedated title pages, usually gave the reader the subject of the book, its author, and the place and the date of printing as well as the name of the printer, and frequently a list of signatures as a guide for the binder. In those colophon days this data would be introduced with "Here beginneth" or "Incipit". Your vague memory of Latin, I am sure, will identify "incipit" with the English word inception, and not, I hope, with insipid, a word similar in sound but from a different root.

As an example of a colophon carrying an informal book title I quote from the first book printed in England: "Here endeth the book named the dictes or sayinges of the Philosophres emprynted by me William Caxton at Westmestre the yere of our Lord MCCCCLXXVII."

In *The Arts of the Book*, by William M. Ivins, Jr., we read that the first title page appeared in a papal bull printed about 1463 by Fust and Schoeffer, that the first dated title page featured Rolewink's *Sermo*, printed

Four Centuries of Book Titles

in Cologne in 1470, and that the first complete title page, as we understand a title page today, giving the name of the author, the title of the book, the name of the printer or publisher and the place and date of printing, appeared in Regiomontanus's *Calendar*, Venice, 1476. Thereafter, however, the use of the title page was somewhat haphazard, and its adoption by printers as a uniform practice did not begin until about 1525.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to a far greater extent even than today, titles played an important part in the sale of a book. The title was far more than a tabulation of the name of the book, of its author, and of its publisher; it lustily puffed the book, presenting an extensive summary of the contents and indicating where the book could be purchased. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of extra title pages were printed and displayed as advertisements around London or other important centers. In the first "good" quarto of *Hamlet* we find on the title page, as an example, "Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his shoppe vnder Saint Dunstons Church in Fleetstreet. 1605".

McKerrow, in his *Introduction to Bibliography*, writes on this point: "It seems clear that title-pages were actually posted up as advertisements, and that with a view to this use of them they were sometimes kept standing in type after the rest of the book had been distributed. This was no doubt one of the reasons for the care that was generally taken to specify where the book could be bought. During this period, which may be taken to include the last quarter of the sixteenth and the whole of the seventeenth century, we must, I think, regard the title-page not as part of the work to which it is prefixed, or as the production of its author, but rather as an explanatory label affixed to the book by the printer or publisher".

Four Centuries of Book Titles

Sixteenth and seventeenth century titles can in general be divided in two groups, one terse, spicy, provoking, the other offering a fair and full description of the contents. The short titles of the period call to mind the headlines in the tabloids of today: "Secret Love or The Maiden Queen" "The Woman Captain", "The Libertine", "A True Widow", "The Way of the World", "The Fair Maid of Bristow", "The Rival Ladies", "A Chaste Maid in Cheapside", "Marriage à la Mode", "The Duke's Mistress." A publisher of our day would doubtless feel that these were fitted only for cheap burlesque shows or for stories that would invite the early attention of a Mr. Sumner.

It would seem like a maladroit bit of padding if I recited more than one title of the all-inclusive group. For my single example I have selected one that for length was not out of the ordinary in those times. Take a deep breath and begin: "The Life and Death of Lewis Gaufredy: A Priest of the Church of the accoules in Marceilles in France (who after hee had giuen himselfe soule and bodie to the Diuell) committed many most abhominal Sorceries, but chiefly vpon two very faire young Gentle women, Mistris Magdalene of the Marish, and Mistris Victoire Corbier, whose horrible life being made manifest, hee was Arraigned and Condemned by the Court of Parliament of Aix in Prouince, to be burnt aliue, which was performed the last day of Aprill. 1611. Together with the 53. Articles of his Confession. To which is annexed, a true discourse of a murther, committed by foure women Witches, vpon a young Gyrle". A leisurely title for leisurely days, and a far cry from the staccato tempo to which we are accustomed.

Double or alternative titles were also very much in vogue from the sixteenth century through the seventeenth, and endured well into the

Four Centuries of Book Titles

middle of the eighteenth century. "She Stoops to Conquer or The Mistakes of a Night", "All for Love or The World Well Lost", "The Forced Marriage or The Jealous Bridegroom", "The Compleat Angler or The Contemplative Man's Recreation" are fair examples. Resort to the double title was probably due to the feeling of the author or publisher that the main or single title possessed inadequate attraction and would not do its part sufficiently in aiding the sale of the book.

Soon afterward was inaugurated the practice of choosing for a title the name of the leading character of the book, almost invariably linked up with the phrases "The Adventures of", "The History of", or "The Story of". Fielding, Sterne, Smollett and Richardson,—even Dickens and Thackeray used this arrangement frequently. Here are some typical titles: "The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby", "The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit", "The History of Henry Esmond" "The History of Pendennis", "The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling" "The Adventures of Joseph Andrews", "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy", "The Adventures of Roderick Random", "The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle", "Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady", "The History of Sir Charles Grandison"—there are classic American examples: "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn".

To bring the changing trends of titles up to date, it is only necessary to add that our twentieth century book names reflect the modern fondness for the cryptic, the unusual, the provocative. "Desire Under the Elms" "Fiery Particles", "The Three Black Pennys", "Dark Laughter", and "Men Without Women" are good examples of the preference of present day authors and publishers. Perhaps Bodenheim's "Naked on Roller Skates" should be mentioned as an extreme example of today's tastes.

Four Centuries of Book Titles

It was a favorite saying of Dickens that the three most difficult tasks of authorship were the first paragraph, the final paragraph and the title. Even the most casual study of the letters and autobiographies of authors demonstrates that to most of them the choosing of a suitable title was a task approached with little confidence. Why this should be so is not, upon reflection, difficult to understand. The type of mind that can coin the word Kodak obviously is not the type that can originate and devise the complicated mechanism which the name is to fit. I do not believe it is carrying the comparison too far to point out that a great creative literary genius may have, in frequent instances, a mind unfitted to give his work a title that is appropriate.

It has been said that a title is like a key—it should fit and unlock something of the author's purpose. A publisher years ago said he regarded a suitable title as one that was "a full packed bit of description, an almost miraculous piece of verbal condensation, the author striving to embody the whole sum and substance of his story in an inch of space". You will know that that is a rather modern publisher's opinion when he speaks of "an inch of space", for titles in the earlier days of English literature in many cases could have been made to fit only with difficulty into six inches of space. Another bookman makes this pronouncement: "A good title attracts attention, arouses appreciation and aids the reader to remember the point, moral or story". This is rather reaching for the moon, and one would be hard put to it to find many titles that would meet all these conditions. Perhaps John Hill Burton, in "The Book Hunter", sums up the problem fairly when he states that a title should constitute an "infallible finger post to the nature of a book". This seems simple enough, but he adds, "Authors struggle for it in vain and take refuge in some fortuitous

Four Centuries of Book Titles

word". I think we may agree on his condition that a title must give an unequivocal indication of the nature of the book. A publisher would add, I have no doubt, that a title must have charm, attraction, "it"—in general be of a nature that will tempt the customer, at the same time in a form sufficiently terse and pronounceable that it will not interfere with word-of-mouth recommendation. As a modern member of the book trade states it, an author "should aim to put in his title the spark electric, the smart fillip that will twang a common human chord". If these are the exacting qualifications of publishers it is of little wonder that many authors admit that their most satisfactory titles are more or less accidental.

In an old issue of the *Bookman* I find a division of eight titles into two groups, positive and negative. In the group of positive titles (and by positive I presume was meant meritorious) were included "The Hound of the Baskervilles", "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come", "A Certain Rich Man" and "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine". Classified as negative were "Trilby", "Ben-Hur", "The Weavers" and "The Virginian". "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come" was regarded as the best of all the titles of the day, and a book with that name "would have to be very bad to fail".

One can certainly classify as titles of outstanding merit "The Way of All Flesh", "The Tragic Comedians", "The Citizen of the World" and "Wit Without Money". This is a random selection of four excellent titles published over a span of three hundred years. With the hope that the reader will start now to think of titles both good and bad, let me mention a few that I regard as inferior: "A Laodicean", "Villa Rubein", "A Paladin of Philanthropy" and "Thyrza". But to expect agreement among a group of bookmen as to which titles should be classified as good and which as inferior is a trifle unreasonable. Also, perhaps, unimportant.

Four Centuries of Book Titles

Much could be written on the subject of Shakespeare's titles. As I reflect upon them and try to separate the titles from the glorious brilliance of the plays I come to the conclusion that Shakespeare would have done a better titling job had he anticipated what so many writers for three hundred years following him have done—using as titles some of the memorable or profound lines from the plays.

The titles Shakespeare chose would indicate that he placed little or no importance on his selection. Except in those instances where he made the simple choice of the leading character or characters, we have very little dependable information on which conclusions can be based. "King John" "Antony and Cleopatra", "Romeo and Juliet", "King Lear", "Othello" and "Macbeth" are world familiar examples of the use of names as titles. When we leave this group we are on very uncertain ground. "As You Like It" may have been taken from a similar play by Lodge or developed from the prologue and epilogue of the play itself, which contain the lines "I hope you will like my play" and "Like as much of this play as please you". "A Winter's Tale" may come from the line in the play "A sad tale's best for winter", and "The Taming of the Shrew" was probably based on the title of an earlier play, "A Pleasant Conceited Historie called the Taming of a Shrew".

Some years ago Volney Streamer published a list of books whose titles were quotations from Shakespeare's plays. He pointed out that William Dean Howells alone had used thirteen Shakespearian quotations for titles. Streamer listed over eighty book names that were plucked from "Hamlet", and all told up to the date of his listing (1911) there were over four hundred books with Shakespearian quotation titles that he could list. Let me recite a few of the better known: "Under the Greenwood

Four Centuries of Book Titles

"Tree", "Ships That Pass in the Night", "Arms and the Man", "Twice-Told Tales", "Westward Ho!", "Mine Own People" and "Locusts and Wild Honey".

Latin titles have occasionally been used for English books, but with no considerable frequency. Our publishers of today, and more power to them, would probably refuse to accept for publication a book with a Latin title. But had it always been so, we should never have had "Religio Medici", "Sartor Resartus", "Virginibus Puerisque", "Obiter Dicta", "Aes Triplex", "Areopagitica" and "Ultima Thule".

Hardly an English writer of note has been able to refrain from giving one of his books an alliterative title. Some have used them almost exclusively. There are "Captains Courageous" and "Wee Willie Winkie" by Kipling, "Pride and Prejudice" and "Sense and Sensibility" by Jane Austen; Barrie's "Peter Pan", Shaw's "The Devil's Disciple", Stevenson's "The Silverado Squatters", Hardy's "Two on a Tower", Beerbohm's "The Happy Hypocrite", George Borrow's "Romany Rye", Dickens's "Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club" and "Nicholas Nickleby". The list can be extended into the hundreds, and although I must beg leave not to do the extending here and now, I would like at least to mention "The Nigger of the Narcissus", "A Tale of a Tub", "Right Royal", "The Doctor's Dilemma", "The Shaving of Shagpat" and "The Lady of the Lake".

Alliterative titles are probably welcome to publishers. They trip rather glibly from the tongue and doubtless are more easily remembered by the book-purchasing public.

A general study of the titles chosen by favorite authors indicates that their selections are just as uneven as to merit and quality as the books which they accompany. Dickens could devise "A Christmas Carol"

Four Centuries of Book Titles

and "The Old Curiosity Shop". These are admirable titles, but can one say as much for "Barnaby Rudge" and "Hard Times for these Times"? As an aside, you will be interested to learn, if you don't already know it, that the unique names that Dickens selected for his characters he obtained by running through the London city directory. This was the source of such famous designations as David Copperfield, Martin Chuzzlewit, Nicholas Nickleby and Oliver Twist.

Kipling's titles, I think, are collectively as fine a group as can be found by any author so prolific. His "Departmental Ditties", "Soldiers Three", "The Light That Failed", "The Day's Work" and "The Man Who Would Be King" are excellent, but "The Naulahka" and "Under the Deodars" have little merit.

Shaw's titles are at times heavy and usually have a sociological touch. Others are plainly cynical. "Man and Superman" and "The Apple Cart" strike me as being the best. "The Quintessence of Ibsenism" and "The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet" are unattractive.

I referred before to Meredith's "The Tragic Comedians". His "Diana of the Crossways" and "One of our Conquerors" are good titles, but of doubtful merit are "The Egoist" and "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel". I like Hudson's "The Purple Land That England Lost" and his "Far Away and Long Ago".

Thackeray displayed little talent in choosing names for his books. "Vanity Fair" is an exception. As is well known, the title occurred to him in bed. Excepting "Weir of Hermiston" and the Latin examples mentioned earlier, Stevenson's titles are singularly good. They have a flavor that is effectively expressive of his books, and while not always of his own contriving, his approval of the suggestions of others would indicate

Four Centuries of Book Titles

his talent for good titling. On the other hand the titles of the Brontës—such as "Jane Eyre", "Shirley" and "Wuthering Heights"—are cold and bleak and forbidding, and as dreary as the backgrounds of the novels.

Conrad selected few poor titles. "Tales of Unrest", "Almayer's Folly", "An Outcast of the Islands", "The Arrow of Gold" and "Under Western Eyes" I think are all exciting names for books. I like, too, "Lord Jim", "The Nigger of the Narcissus" and "Within the Tides". "Nostromo" I think is distinctly inferior, and "Romance" possesses no originality.

An interesting aside in a study of titles is the manner in which the designations of some famous books have been chosen. Authors have changed their minds as to titles times without number before the books left the printer's hands. George Meredith's "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel" was originally intended to be called "The Fair Frankincense". His first title for "Rhod Fleming" was "A Woman's Battle". To his "Treasure Island" Stevenson originally gave the name "The Sea Cook", and the book's title as we know it was chosen by James Henderson. "The Wrong Box" he expected to entitle "A Game of Bluff", and "A Child's Garden of Verses", of course, as every bookman knows, was to be "Penny Whistles for Small Whistlers".

A literary legend has it that Goldsmith, lacking a title for his famous comedy, turned to Dr. Johnson, who suggested "She Stoops to Conquer". Charles Lamb will live and be loved for many a long day for his "Essays of Elia". Elia was the actual name of a fellow clerk. Whistler's famous "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies" was suggested to him by Sheridan Ford, who was to have been the publisher. Melville first called "Moby-Dick" "The Whale", and this was its title when published in England. Butler referred often in his letters to his novel "Ernest Pontifex", which

Four Centuries of Book Titles

was published posthumously as "The Way of All Flesh". Johnson's "Rasselas" was "The Prince of Abissinia" when first printed.

In one of George Eliot's letters she refers to her new novel, "Sister Maggie". At George Henry Lewes's suggestion she dropped that title and adopted "The Tullivers or Life on the Floss". For John Blackwood, her publisher, however, this had no appeal and she finally adopted Blackwood's suggestion, "The Mill on the Floss".

Masefield some years ago published a volume entitled "Odtaa", a name with little appeal until we admire his sly humor when it is pointed out that the initials stand for "One damn thing after another". Kipling's story "The Child of Calamity" was so entitled when it appeared in England; in America it was published as "My Sunday at Home", a sharply contrasting pair of titles. Charles Reade's "The Cloister and the Hearth" is a story that he expanded from its original serial appearance under the name "A Good Fight". On one side of the Atlantic Hawthorne used the title "The Marble Faun", on the other "Transformation, or The Romance of Monte Beni".

Conrad apparently used meticulous care in selecting his titles, for his many changes before publication are well known. In the manuscript "Youth" was entitled "A Voyage", and his original choice for the book we know as "Under Western Eyes" was "Razumov". "Victory" was a third choice following Conrad's discard of "An Episode of Dollars" and "Smouldering Fire". His "Romance" he first intended to call "Seraphina, a Romance". His "Nigger of the Narcissus" first appeared on our side as "The Children of the Sea", the change being due apparently to the desire of the publisher to avoid any slight to our Negro population.

An interesting and recent oddity of a title change through a trans-

Four Centuries of Book Titles

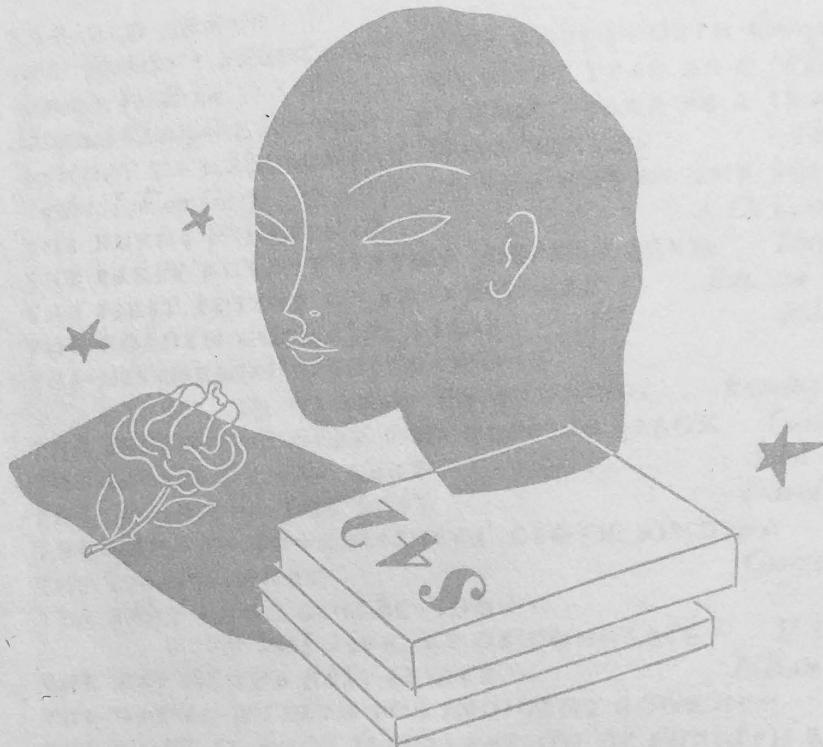
atlantic journey is found in John Russell's "The Red Mark". With that title it was published in America and failed to make its mark, red or otherwise. In England it appeared as "Where the Pavement Ends" and became a best seller. With its new name it was again issued in the United States with success.

If we like a book and do not like its title we can always change the title. "What!" you exclaim. "How can the book buying and book reading public do that?" Well, they have been doing it since long before you and I were born.

Can you imagine the expression on the face of the bookman if you walked into his shop and asked for a copy of Swift's "Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver"? The title is correct, but neither you nor I know the book by that name. Book lovers long ago retitled it "Gulliver's Travels", and for all practical purposes that is its true name.

And can you give the correct title of the classic we know as "Robinson Crusoe"? I will assume that you can't, so here it is: "The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates". If these two examples do not convince you, let me remind you in conclusion that there is no novel named "Dombey and Son", no play called "Hamlet", no collection of essays "Heroes and Hero-Worship".

FOR PART EIGHT OF THE COLOPHON



H E R E E N D S

*Volume II of The Colophon, a book collectors' quarterly
made possible by the enthusiasm and cooperation
of lithographers, collectors, authors, artists and printers
each part issued to three thousand subscribers*

*No. 5 in March, No. 6 in June, No. 7 in September,
ε No. 8 in December*

I . 9 . 3 . I