

concepts of collecting (such as “condition”) but also standard reference books and fundamental points of bibliographical analysis.

Indeed, Carter’s recognition of the essential role of bibliographical scholarship in collecting is a notable feature of the book. One learns, for example, about formes and collations, the bibliographical meanings of “sheet” and “signature,” and the importance of distinguishing integral from inserted advertisements. And the information is sound, as when he emphatically states that collations are necessary for modern books. He even brings up press figures, clearly summarizing the current knowledge of them and then adding, “The bibliographers have not made much out of them yet. But they will.” The only place I have found in the first edition where Carter slips up seriously is when he says that valuing dust-jackets is “a matter of taste,” noting that Morris L. Parrish, “one of the greatest sticklers who ever lived,” threw them away; he should simply have said that Parrish was wrong. (The reference to Parrish was deleted twenty years later, in the fifth edition.) Another distinguishing characteristic of the book is that its advice is conveyed in the entertaining prose that was by then well-honed. Commenting on the indiscriminating citation of author bibliographies (at the end of the entry for “Bibliography”), Carter says,

The judicious collector soon learns that verdicts are not infallible just because they are in print; that the cry of “Not in Prism” should excite him only if Prism’s book both claims to be comprehensive and has some reputation for accuracy; but that as long as others continue to cherish a variant or issue canonised by however incompetent a bibliographer, so long will booksellers continue to cite even an incompetent bibliography rather than none at all.

And the long entry on “Rarity” begins this way (with what is probably the most quoted passage in the book):

Rarity is the salt in book-collecting. But if you take too much salt, the flavour of the dish is spoiled; and if you take it neat it will make you sick. Similarly, those book-collectors who exalt rarity above any other criterion tend to develop third-degree bibliomania, which is a painful and slightly ridiculous ailment.

It is easy to see why this book is such a pleasure to consult. The book world is fortunate to have a reliable source of basic information that has been, through its appeal, widely disseminated and influential.

In 1958 Carter brought out a revised edition of Browne’s *Urne Buriall and the Garden of Cyrus*, marking the three-hundredth anniversary of its original appearance. As published by Cambridge University Press in a compact and attractive volume, it gave Carter’s text a much wider circulation than it had achieved in the limited edition of 1932, a not inconsiderable service. And the two-page preface shows the skill and charm that Carter brought to the writing of such pieces. In his praise of Browne’s two