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It is rarely difficult to discern the intentions which give birth to a book, however well or poorly the book realizes those intentions and regardless of how appealing or distressing we find them. A later reprint, however, oddly both expands and contracts the range of possible intentions: those surrounding the original publication may be of continued or only marginal relevance while others, most obviously the reprinter's admiration for the text and/or his sense there's a buck to made, assume far greater importance.

It thus comes as a surprise to finish this new edition of Boynton's *Annals*, first published in 1932 to celebrate the 125th anniversary of John Wiley and Sons and now gracefully introduced by Joseph Rosenbloom, carefully reproduced on good paper, sewn and cased in attractive blocked and gold-stamped cloth, and still find oneself puzzled as to why this book was selected as volume five of the Oak Knoll Series on the History of the Book.

Boynton comments on the contribution of a predecessor, "His memories are not altogether accurate, but his general picture is vivid" (page 169). Rosenbloom notes that Boynton's near-exclusive "interest is in the colorful figures that populated the book world of early America," where "book world" means printers and publishers and "America," ignoring an occasional aside, means Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Boynton's chronology is sketchy, if not shaky, and scholarship has filled in so much detail to so many stories that Boynton's picture strikes one as exhibiting not the clarity of a cartoon but the muddiness of an out of register pochoir. "Still," Rosenbloom writes, "he tells a fascinating story in an entertaining manner" (page [ii]). If one suspends one's critical faculties and reads for the pithy phrase, the apt metaphor--savors the well-turned sentence--this is quite true.

If, in other words, it is Oak Knoll's intent to resurrect the more ornate and polished language of an earlier time, the book is a successful salvo, which *Bookways* readers will instinctively recognize and gratefully applaud, in the face of declining cultural interest in books, the indifferent proofreading which tops the quirky editing of the meretricious selection which the mass-market commercial publishers offer us, and the creeping inarticulateness wed to cultural illiteracy we sense among the "educated" young.

But, then, Boynton, a literate man who as early as 1901 had composed 79 quatrains for his *The Golfer's Rubaiyat*, might have expressed similar sentiments. He gives a page (177-8) to James Russell Lowell's *A Fable for Critics*, "not yet forgotten" in 1932, but, alas, without previous presence in my mental attic, in order to score a second point against George Palmer Putnam (his first had been the charge of unreliable memory mentioned above). Putnam had missed Lowell's joke, Boynton says, dropped a line from the first issue, and unable to scan poetry (or not realizing Lowell's intent), freely updated the address to "10 Park Place" in later editions. To save other readers the trouble of looking up *A Fable*, let me quote Lowell's titlepage: "Reader! Walk..."
up at once (it will soon be too late) and buy / at a perfectly ruinous rate / a / fable for critics; / or / better-- / I like, as a thing that the reader's first fancy may strike, / an old fashioned title-page, / such as presents a tabular view of the volume's content-- / a glance at a few of our literary progenies / (Mrs. Malaprop's word) / from / the tub of Diogenes: / a vocal and musical medley / that is, / a series of jokes / By A Wonderful Quiz, / who accompanies himself with a rub-a-dub-dub, full of spirit and grace, / on the top of the tub. / Set forth in / October, the 21st Day, in the year '48, / G.P. Putnam, Broadway."

Boynton, one supposes, would dislike quite firmly being thus upstaged by Putnam, even in a review; but I'm out of space. Readers will have to have to look up for themselves Amy Lowell's rather more amusing sequel, A Critical Fable, published September, 1922 -- if they can't recall it.

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