

## Book Design

*Victorian Book Design & Colour Printing.*

By Ruari McLean. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963. 182p. \$10.

Ruari McLean's standard handbook on *Modern Book Design*, published by Essential Books in 1959 is well known. Mr. McLean began that volume with the founding of the Kelmscott Press in 1890, which now serves as well as the terminal point of his present study of the Victorian period in book design.

This new volume will be welcomed by bibliographers, art historians, librarians, and collectors as the first attempt to treat comprehensively the several separate factors that were interworked by nineteenth-century artists and craftsmen to effect the totality of impression that comprised the design of their books. Although typography, binding, paper, and illustration are all discussed, it is the last of these that receives most of Mr. McLean's attention; this is perhaps as it should be, since illustration and illustrators of the period—especially early workers in color—have perhaps received less than their due of attention in the past. Despite this emphasis, however, the total impact of the book is one of balance and appropriate pertinence to its title.

It is difficult for any book of 182 pages to discuss successively 459 titles—as the present volume does—without at times reading a bit like a catalog, and *Victorian Book Design* cannot wholly disclaim this criticism. Yet it does well to minimize it through its good organization, which is adequate to sustain a not unpleasant continuity throughout.

There is no doubt in this reviewer's mind but that its excellent illustrations also do much to lend a cohesiveness to this book.

There are eight color plates, sixty-four halftones, and nine line illustrations of title pages, openings, bindings, and devices. All are carefully chosen, well reproduced, and conscientiously keyed to the text. Despite their major role in this volume, however, the fine illustrations in no case overpower the work, but rather remain always appropriately subdued to the text.

Mr. McLean begins his monograph, as he should, with the work of the Whittinghams, especially the younger, and of William Pickering, through the Chiswick Press. The excellent design and ingenious inventiveness that went into the fine volumes issued during a quarter century over this imprint make them of outstanding importance in the history of the book arts. The author discusses new illustrative techniques as both cause and effect of gift book printing. The use of lithography—especially of chromolithography—for book work is described in some detail, as well as color printing from woodcuts.

Among the persons singled to figure prominently in this book are George Baxter, Charles Knight, Henry Shaw, Owen Jones, Henry Noel Humphreys, Joseph Cundall, Henry Vizetelly, and Edmund Evans, and their several contributions are well described. Topics included for special discussion are the illustration of yellow-backs, the developing styles of bookbindings, nineteenth-century illuminations, and the illustrating of children's books.

In collecting his data for this book, Mr. McLean has consulted not only secondary sources, but also such primary documents as newspaper files, patent records, and publishing house archives. His workmanship has been thorough, and the resulting study is a valuable one.—D. K.