

**EXCURSIONS IN
VICTORIAN
BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Excursions in Victorian bibliography by Michael Sadleir

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MICHAEL SADLEIR

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IN VICTORIAN
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY

MICHAEL SADLEIR

181201.
8.6.23.

LONDON
CHAUNDY & COX
40 MADDOX STREET
MCMXXII

TO MY
FATHER

ERRATA

- P. 24 line 33 for "first" read "second."
P. " " 36 for "Finn" read "Redux."
P. 29 " 20 for "invented for" read "'presented' in."

ADDENDUM.

P. 72. The following paragraph should precede "1865/ A WELCOME, etc."

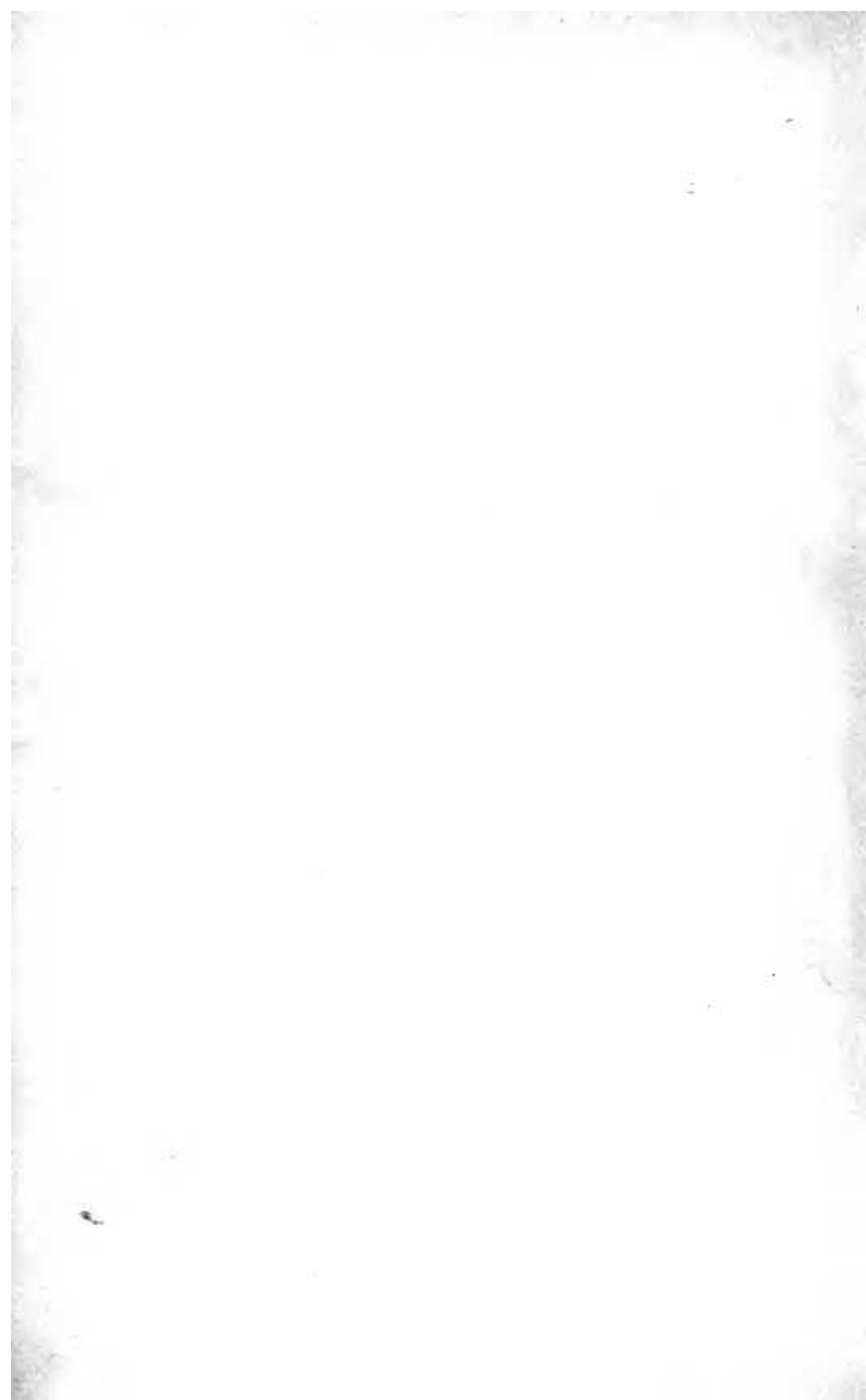
1861

THE VICTORIA REGIA: A VOLUME OF ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN POETRY AND PROSE. Edited by Adelaide A. Procter. London: Printed and Published by Emily Faithfull and Co., Victoria Press (for the Employment of Women), Great Coram Street, W.C. 1861. 1 vol. Royal 8vo (6¼×9¾). Pp. x+349+(1). No half-title. Red-brown embossed cloth, all edges gilt, blocked in gold and blind. Red chocolate end-papers.

NOTE.—Pp. 187 to 214 are occupied by a story by Anthony Trollope entitled *The Journey to Panama*. This is the first appearance in book form of a tale afterwards published in *Lotta Schmidl and other Stories*.

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EXCURSIONS IN VICTORIAN BIBLIOGRAPHY

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THIS book is so essentially an accumulation of notes and so emphatically wanting in the qualities of completeness and learning proper to genuine bibliography that I have sought, even on the title-page, to indicate its limitations. It were indeed presumption to enter the field of nineteenth-century bibliography, in which already so much fine and skilful work has been accomplished, with the slight technical equipment to which I may lay claim. On the other hand, the experience of collectors conforms oddly to type, and where, in the study of certain Victorian first editions, I have found perplexity and doubt, others in the same study will likely find them too. Wherefore my annotations, in this book set in order and to a certain point rounded off, should help my fellow-students to a speedier knowledge of points and pitfalls in the collecting of their favourites than was easily accessible to myself. In time (maybe in short time) my work will be superseded by investigation more accomplished, by analysis more detailed. At such time collectors (and myself among them) will rightly substitute for this volume on their shelf of bibliographies the later, more comprehensive, handbooks that shall have taken its place. Meanwhile I dare to hope that the present work, with all its shortcomings, will find appreciative users, and among them a few who, realizing the difficulties that even so modest a compilation has been

forced to surmount, will forgive its imperfections for the sake of its attributes.



With the general propriety of book-collecting I am not here concerned. Men there are to whom all collecting is folly; others to whom every passion is vile. To the logical asceticism of their private Utopias they are welcome, provided the lover be left to enjoy his mistress, the lepidopterist his butterflies, the bibliophile his books. Even the more subtle critic, who admits the lure of collecting but maintains that the craze of the first edition is senseless hysteria, shall not tempt me to dispute. This is a book about first editions, and will be read only by the initiate. If we be hystericals, we have at least our weakness in common. Let us therefore shut the door and compare symptoms, for we are all fools together.

The superior and the sceptical are now excluded from the privacy of our imaginary club-house. But a further reservation must be made. Although it were impractical idealism to demand that the collector transcend in his collecting every sordid consideration of market and fluctuating value, it is reasonable to look askance at the mere speculator. From the scope of this word I exclude, of course, the whole fraternity of booksellers. They exist frankly for the marketing of books; and who shall grudge them the profits of their toil? My animadversion is against the private person to whom rare books are mere scrip, to be bought and sold by telephone, their very titles meaningless, their contents utterly unknown. No doubt, if this book is of service at all, it will be of service incidentally to individuals of the kind described. That it should be so is unpreventable. But on the general ethics of collecting the compiler may be allowed the consolation of bearing his trivial testimony. The private collector who buys what he likes to read merits such reward as wise buying may earn for him. He, however, who buys by rote, puts away and resells,

is no collector at all, but rather a trespasser on the preserves of the bookseller, taking advantage of a noble trade while sharing none of its burdens.

With this dictum I descend from the august to the particular. Collecting, collecting books, collecting first editions of books—all these are postulates. At this point is a parting of the ways. The frontiers of dispute now lie across our path; for within the bounds of the realm of first editions are to be found divergent tastes, conflicting fancies, all the clamour and thrust of an enthusiasm that grows ever more complex.

The collecting of first editions is, in its present form, a diversion of recent growth. Fifty years ago amateurs of books were few in number and, necessarily, rich in gold, for only the great books of past literature were regarded as fit material for collection, and great books, though cheaper then than now, were never to be had for love. But the passage of time has transformed, in another way than that of mere numbers, the community of book-collectors. Not only are there nowadays more collectors and a greater variety of books collected, but there has come to its own the great principle of *original condition*. This is not so pale a platitude as to many it will appear. A few book-buyers there have always been to whom original binding, original end-papers, uncut edges, incidental advertisements, errata slips, and half-titles have meant perfection. But they were rare exceptions. To the large majority a first edition was a book of a certain date without "Second" or "New Edition" on its title-page. Buyers of this school were indifferent to the disfigurement of library labels on side or end-paper; gave no thought to errata slips; but shaved their favourites, fore-edge and tail, dressed them in uniform calf gilt, affixed a bookplate, and went their way.

Such collectors as these are still amongst us, but they are now awaking to the folly of their past. The market—that indisputable witness to human taste—gives hard but practical proof of their wrongdoing. "Good and original condition" is nowadays three-quarters of a