

**BOOK AUCTIONS IN ENGLAND IN  
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY  
(1676-1700); WITH A  
CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE  
BOOK AUCTIONS OF THE PERIOD**

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Book auctions in England in the seventeenth century (1676-1700); with a chronological list of the book auctions of the period by John Lawler

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**JOHN LAWLER**

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SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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*WITH A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE BOOK AUCTIONS  
OF THE PERIOD.*

BY

JOHN LAWLER

(COMPILER OF THE SUSDERLAND, GENNADIUS, ASHBURNHAM  
AND OTHER IMPORTANT SALE CATALOGUES, ETC.)



LONDON

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**Dedicated**

WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT

TO

**EDWARD GROSE HODGE**

(OF SOTHERY'S),

BY HIS

PRINCIPAL BOOK-CATALOGUER,

**JOHN LAWLER.**



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## P R E F A C E .

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**N**ONE consolation gratifying to the writer of a book such as the present is that he need have little fear of serious criticism, for its comparative insignificance precludes this, and the undertaking would

*“Resemble ocean into tempest tossed  
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly.”*

I hope, however, that this little work may have some interest for Book-lovers, as introducing them to a little-known episode in the history of the dissemination of literature under the hammer of the auctioneer. In more experienced literary hands the volume could certainly have been made more entertaining; but I thought, in dealing with the first Catalogues of Book Auctions in

*England, that I could not do better than let the auctioneers of the time speak for themselves, which they do in their quaint and often useful and informing Prefaces. The most interesting of these Prefaces have therefore been copied in full, with all their singular turns of spelling, grammar and phrase.*

*I do not pretend to have dealt exhaustively with the subject, for, although the materials are scanty and scattered, a person with more leisure could have gained fuller information, if not about the auctioneers themselves, certainly about the buyers at the sales and the formers of libraries at the period treated of. Such as it is, however, it appears, like imperfect books in auctioneers' catalogues, "With all faults."*

*I have not made any mention of Scottish auctions, as I had not seen any catalogues of them before the book went to press, but Mr. J. H. Slater has since given me a reference on this subject. Mr. Dobson, in his "History of the Bassandynce Bible," has noticed that "the first sale of books by auction in Scotland was in November 1688" (in Edinburgh), the announcement*

of which was made by Andrew Anderson (the printer) as follows: "A Catalogue of excellent and rare Books, especially Histories and Romances, for the most part in English, and the Variorums, are to be sold by way of Auction the 12th day of November, 1688."

The occasions on which the claims of rival book auctioneers have given opportunity for epigram are so very rare that an unprinted specimen may not be thought to be inappropriate here; although it is not connected with the period treated of in the present volume. It is in manuscript in the handwriting of Thomas Park, the well-known antiquary, and refers to the (at that time) two chief and rival firms of auctioneers King and Leigh in 1774. As will be seen, it alludes to George Steevens' edition of Shakespeare. I transcribe it in full, notes and all:—

"Tom King, the pomposo of book-auctioneers,  
 And no delicate hand at a puff,  
 Deem'd this modish<sup>1</sup> edition by George and  
 Compeers  
 Immaculate! . . . erat quam suff.

<sup>1</sup> So termed by Ireland Senr. in one of his advertisements.