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978-0-521-15320-1 - A Victorian Publisher: A Study of the Bentley Papers

Royal A. Gettmann

Frontmatter

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# A VICTORIAN PUBLISHER

A STUDY OF  
THE BENTLEY PAPERS

BY

ROYAL A. GETTMANN



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AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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**FOR E.H.G.**

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## PLATES

- Ia Richard Bentley (1794–1871) *-facing p. 17*
- Ib George Bentley (1828–1895) *-facing p. 17*
- II Mrs Gore's puffs: "I have no scruple in praising . . .  
such of my own—witness *Pin Money*—as are really  
meritorious. . . ." *-facing p. 65*
- IIIa Bindings of late three-deckers: butterflies, tulips, lilies,  
and humming birds in shades of blue, green, tan, and  
yellow *-facing p. 132*
- IIIb A binding, frontispiece, and title-page of the Standard  
Novels *-facing p. 132*
- IV Pages of the three-volume *Maxwell* (1830), which ran to  
1039 pages, and of the Standard Novels edition (1834),  
which contained the text in 567 pages *-facing p. 234*

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## PREFACE

THE numerous books on British publishing include such works as Charles Morgan's graceful narrative commemorating the centenary of the House of Macmillan, Arthur Waugh's vivid reminiscences of Chapman and Hall, and Edmund Blunden's thoughtful account of John Taylor. For the most part books of this kind are chronological surveys, with the emphasis on historical continuity, the men who guided the fortunes of the firm, and notable books published by them. Although they are readable and valuable, they do not, for reasons easily understood, concentrate upon what is needed by the scholar working in the history of publishing and the student of literary history—namely, intensive detail about the publication of specific books of various types and information about the ways in which the publisher mediated between the readers and the author and thus influenced the text.

My aim in the present study is to supply just such information: many pages are deliberately studded with titles, sums of money, sizes of editions, and numbers of copies sold. And there are revealing glimpses of writers engaged in what Carlyle described as the 'wondrous chaos of "Author by trade"'. In other words this book is not offered as full-dress history of the House of Bentley. It is rather a study of the problems of nineteenth-century publishing as they are embedded in the records of Richard Bentley and Son. On occasion, points drawn from the activities of the firm are expanded into generalizations about British publishing as a whole. I regret the lack of a chapter on the serial publication of fiction in monthly parts and periodical instalments. The recent work on Dickens by John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson shows how revealing such an investigation may be, and how complex as well, for it requires the close scrutiny of the manuscript, the text of the serial, and the text or texts of the book version. Since the Bentleys did very little publishing in this form, the

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## Preface

primary materials for a first-hand treatment of the problem were not available.

In the course of my work I have received help from a number of individuals and institutions. My initial obligation is to Gordon N. Ray, Vice-President and Provost of the University of Illinois, who was instrumental in the acquisition by the University of the correspondence files of Richard Bentley and Son. These contain a bountiful store of letters to the Bentleys, but several important groups had previously been sold. Some of these were acquired by the Bodleian Library and the Berg Collection of the New York City Public Library, and I thank the officials of those institutions for placing manuscript materials at my disposal. The extant business records—those for an important decade are missing—and the letter-books containing transcripts of outgoing correspondence are deposited in the British Museum, and my greatest obligation is to the staff of the Manuscript Room for their unfailing courtesy and efficiency. I thank the Trustees of the University of Illinois for a sabbatical leave during which I began my study. I am indebted to Donald Reiman for help with the illustrations. For aid of various kinds, cheerfully and effectively given, I am grateful to Mrs Charles Shattuck, George Goodin, Jacob Korg, Bruce Harkness, and Miss Eva Faye Benton.

In a slightly modified form the first chapter and the table on pp. 52–3 originally appeared in *Studies in Bibliography*, and I am obliged to Fredson Bowers for permission to reprint it. A few passages, much altered, are taken from articles published in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, *Modern Language Quarterly*, and *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, and I thank the editors of these journals for permission to use them.

R.A.G.

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## NOTE ON THE REFERENCES

WHEN a reference in the footnotes to unpublished materials does not specify the location, it is to be understood that the manuscript is in the Illinois Collection of the Bentley Papers. Since the Bentley Papers in the British Museum consist largely of letter-books and indexed ledgers, the references to them are given in terms of date and manuscript number—that is, folio numbers are omitted. A word of explanation should be given for the several references to the *List*. This privately printed catalogue of all works published by the House of Bentley was prepared by Richard Bentley II after his retirement. There is a *List* for each year, recording the books and editions of the year in chronological order with bibliographical and miscellaneous information.