TITLE PAGES.

They Were Unknown Until After the Invention of Printing.

The most surprising thing in the history of the title page is the fact that it was utterly unknown until a few years after the invention of printing. In the days before that great era, when all books were in manuscript, no scribe ever thought of prefacing his work with a separate page or leaf devoted to the title.

When printing took the place of writing, changes came gradually. In many early printed books there was still space for handwork. Initial letters were left for the "rubrisher," as he was called, to decorate and illuminate by hand.

As books multiplied this practice, of course, soon died out. Occasionally wealthy and luxurious book owners would employ a skillful illuminator to adorn the pages and margins of a printed book just as in former days manuscripts had been illuminated.

The manuscript practice of surrounding the text with an ornamental border was also often applied to early printed books. The introduction of the title page showed the same mingling of old and new.

Printing was invented about 1450, but no title page, properly so called, is known before 1470. In the earliest examples the title is either, as in manuscripts, given in the first two or three lines of the first page, to be immediately followed by the printed text, or is simply, as it has been called, a label—that is, it consists of a very brief title at the top of a blank page.

There was one curious exception. A "Kalendar" printed by Ratdolt at Venice in 1476 has a full title page in the modern style. This remarkable page consists of an introductory poem surrounded on three sides by ornamental borders, with, at the bottom, the place of printing and date—"Venetiis, 1476" —and the names of the printers.

But this is quite an exceptional instance. Such a title page is hardly found again for twenty years and did not become common till about 1520, more than forty years later.

A particularly noticeable feature in many title pages of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is the length of the descriptive titles. Controversial pamphlets and books of travel and adventure especially have titles which are extraordinarily long winded. The whole page is filled with small type, giving an analysis of the contents of book or pamphlet.

Then toward the end of the seventeenth century and through its successor came the reign of the bold and plain title page, and the plain title has lasted until the present day.

Persian Athletes.

Strong and skilled as western athletes are, there are some respects in which the athletes of the east, and especially those of Persia, surpass them.

Their skill is due to the fact that they do not rely on brute strength, but on adroitness, which they have acquired after years of strenuous training. They know the function of every muscle in their bodies, and they are not regarded as experts until they are so well trained that they can perform with ease any feat which depends for success not only upon their strength, but also upon the proper play of their muscles.

They are not as bulky as some of the well known athletes of Europe and America, but, on the other hand, their bodies are wonderfully symmetrical, and all their movements are most graceful.

In wrestling and swinging clubs they especially excel, and, no matter how expert they may be, not a day passes that they do not practice for several hours.

Steadfast.

Tupman—My watch is one of the cheapest makes, but it hasn't varied a second in the last three months.

Snodgrass—It seems almost incredible, doesn't it?

Tupman—Oh, I don't know about that. It stopped the first day I bought it and hasn't gone since.

Shaky Rope Bridges.

In the wilds of South America many rope bridges exist, and in writing of them a traveler, who published through Messrs. Longmans "The Great Mountains and Forests of South America," says: "There being no trees here, such bridges as were necessary were usually constructed of a couple of ropes stretched across a chasm, upon which was spread a rough kind of matting made of pliant brushwood or a sort of rush. Such bridges swung about fearfully and cracked under the foot as if about to give way. Often I held my breath while passing such a bridge, momentarily expecting the rotten contrivance to part in the middle. There was plenty of evidence in the skeletons of horses and mules on the rocks below that accidents not infrequently occurred, but I was assured that not many men were lost, which, of course, was an exceedingly comforting assurance, especially as I noticed that the guides were careful to see that either I or George was the first to cross these confounded structures. At one of these places we saw on the rocks 300 feet below the skull and bones of two men who had been lost about eight years before."

Snakes Waste Little Time Eating.

A serpent will go for weeks, sometimes even for months, without feeding. Then it may take three rabbits or ducks, one after the other, at a single meal and afterward become torpid while digestion proceeds. When, after a sufficient period of fasting, it gets disposed to eat and a rabbit happens to be introduced into its cage, it may plainly be seen that the rabbit's presence is quickly noticed by it. The snake will begin to move slowly about till it has brought its snout opposite the rabbit's muzzle. Then, in an instant, it will seize the rabbit's head in its mouth, simultaneously coiling its powerful body around it and crushing it to death at once.

The action is so instantaneous that it is impossible for the rabbit to suffer. Certainly it can suffer no more than when killed by a poulterer. The snake does not immediately uncoil its folds, but continues for a time to hold its victim tightly embraced, sometimes rocking itself gently to and fro. Then it slowly unwinds its huge body and once more takes the rabbit's head in its mouth and swallows it.

Superstitions About Bread.

In Brittany when a housewife begins to knead dough she makes a cross with her right hand, the left being placed in the trough. If a cat enters the room, it is believed the bread will not rise. It is supposed that certain women can cause the dough to multiply itself. On the coast of the channel the dough is adjured to imitate the leaven, the miller and the baker and to rise.

The oven is a sacred object and connected with crowds of superstitions. The oven is dedicated, with ceremonies. In certain places in Brittany the wood is watered with blessed water. Bread must not be cooked on certain days, as on Holy Friday or during the night of All Saints, when the ghosts would eat it.

The Introduction of Forks.

Forks are articles of such common household necessity to us that we hardly realize that there was a time, and not so long ago either, when forks were entirely unknown. A knife was used at the table to cut up food, but the food so cut was afterward conveyed by the fingers to the mouth. Rich and poor alike were accustomed to this method and so thought it perfectly correct.

It was about the year 1600 and in the reign of James I. when forks were first introduced into England. This "piece of refinement," we are told, was derived from the Italians.

Literary Diseases.

Many occupations have diseases which are more or less incidental to them, and literature is not exempt. The two most prevalent literary maladies are writer's cramp and swelled head. The unfortunate thing about writer's cramp is that it is never cured. The unfortunate thing about swelled head is that it never kills.—Exchange.

Reed Enjoyed It.

Thomas B. Reed was once the victim of a printer's error the unusual aptness of which, after the first flush of indignation had subsided, appealed so strongly to his sense of the comic that he never failed to refer to the matter with the keenest gusto whenever he met the man whom he, with the utmost mock solemnity, always held responsible for it.

The late Colonel John A. Cockerill's handwriting in the heat of composition was sometimes liable to lose itself in an almost interminable tangle, decipherable only with the greatest difficulty. On one occasion he undertook to say that "any one can see Tom Reed has the face of an honest man," but was horrified when he opened his paper the following morning and found that the types made him say that "any one can see Tom Reed has a face like a harvest moon."

Wonders of the Human Heart.

The workings of the human heart have been computed by a celebrated physiologist, and he has demonstrated that it is equal to the lifting of 120 tons in twenty-four hours. Presuming that the blood is thrown out of the heart at each pulsation in the proportion of sixty-nine strokes of nine feet, the mileage of the blood through the body might be taken at 207 yards per minute, seven miles per hour, 168 miles per day, 61,320 miles per year, or 5,150,000 miles in a lifetime of eighty-four years. In the same period of time the heart must beat 2,869,776,000 times

Sadiron and Tailor's Goose.

A "sadiron" is the style in which the common flatiron is spoken of in print, says the Syracuse Herald. "Sad" is an old English synonym for heavy, and Spenser wrote, "More sad than lump of lead." A "sadiron" was a heavy iron and long ago was applied to the flatiron now in common domestic use. The tailor's "goose" was so called because the handle bears a fanciful resemblance to the neck of a goose. This name because it had a reason for being still survives.

Serpent Worship In India.

Serpent worship, once very widely diffused, survives in India. Sometimes when Hindoos find a cobra in some crevice in the wall of their house it will often be reverenced, fed and propitiated, and if fear or the death of some one bitten by it induces them to remove it they will handle it tenderly and let it loose in some field. When Hindoos are bitten, they have far more confidence in their magic spell or "muntra" than in any medicine, even if they do not scruple to make use of medical aid.

Fill the Place Well.

Where one man is called to be a hero on some great scale 10,000 men are called to be courteous, gentle, patient. There are conspicuous virtues which make reputation, and there are quiet virtues, the virtues of private life, which make character. It is not every man's duty to fill a large place, but it is every man's duty to fill his own place well.—Christian Evangelist.

A Narrow Margin.

John Stuart Mill was once dining with two brilliant French talkers who were given to monologue. One had possession of the field, and the other was watching him so intently to strike in that Mill exclaimed aloud, "If he stops to breathe, he's gone."

Responsibilities.

"Remember," said the serious citizen, "that wealth has its responsibilities."

"Yes," answered Mr. Cumrox. "So long as you are humble and obscure you can say 'I seen it' and 'I done it' and eat with your knife all you want to."—Washington Star.

Defined.

She—Dear, you have crushed and almost suffocated me. What kind of a hug do you call that?

He—That's a Metropolitan street railway hug.—New York Life.

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