

# Recent Publications

## BOOK REVIEWS

***Book Pirating in Taiwan.*** By David Kaser. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969. ix, 154p. \$6.50. (69-12289).

Perhaps any reference to piracy whets the reading appetite; in any case, David Kaser's book presents a suspenseful account of a bedeviling situation in the book publishing world. The book has much to offer for serious thought; it happens also to be entertaining, a quality that never prejudices a judgment.

The chapter headings are tempting. Witness a few: "Through Tara's Halls: The Beginnings of Copyright"; "A Lick and a Promise: First Attempts at Resolution"; "The Carrot and the Stick: Reactions on Taiwan"; "And Never the Twain . . . : Negotiations Flounder"; "Hope Springs Eternal . . . : New Efforts to Bargain"; "Dashed Hopes and Greater Chaos: The Situation Worsens"; and "This Point Whither: The Present Scene and Current Trends."

The Irish reference recalls the sixth century decision of King Diarmuid against St. Columba who, without permission, had copied a psalter. "To every cow her calf; therefore to every book its copy." The tangled webs resulting from that decision have stretched and strengthened through the years and Kaser writes a short, informative background to the understanding of his present concern. He does not overlook the struggles of noted English writers with the vagaries of nineteenth century reprinting in the United States.

The reader is equally well served by a brief description of the status of literary property in the East. Since the American copyright laws had become fairly stable, American publishers found it most unpleasant to be confronted with dwindling sales and a dictum agreed to by China and the United States in 1903: "It is un-

derstood that Chinese subjects shall be at liberty to make, print and sell original translations into Chinese of any works written or of maps compiled by a citizen of the United States." During the 1950s it became apparent that far more than translations into Chinese were being printed; furthermore, the books were being published not only for students in Taiwan but for other centers like Hong Kong and Macao, and finally for sale in the States.

There follows a detailed account of the frustrating efforts of American publishers to come to terms with this flagrant piracy. Misunderstandings on a colossal scale complicated the paths of decency and fairness. "Almost all of the Taiwan reprinters had done exactly what good businessmen have always done everywhere—they operated their activities to the limit of the law in the interest of profits and what they felt to be the public good." The ever-increasing hordes of students needed books; book prices were high; reprinting seemed to be as kindly as it was unauthorized.

Kaser clarifies the maze of negotiation, compromise, and self-interest with a narrative style that untangles and delights. He concludes on a note of subdued optimism, having told a good yarn while increasing the reader's awareness of an important facet of the world's book trade. A satisfying index guarantees the book's usefulness to future students of copyright. The same index comes in handy for more casual readers; it helps them keep track of the names and numbers of the players.—*Philip J. McNiff, Boston Public Library.*

***The Library of The College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1693-1793.*** By John M. Jennings. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1968. xvi, 91 (1) p. \$5.00. (68-59130).

Much of the intellectual history of colonial America has gone up in smoke—literally. One need only recall the fire