

BOOK COVER DESIGNS AND DESIGNING.

It would be interesting to know how many people have ever considered the individuality of book covers. To the casual observer, the cover design is merely a part of the book. It is accepted as a portion of the machinery involved in turning out a saleable article, and, except to notice whether the general effect is pleasing or the reverse, very few people bestow any thought upon the design at all.

The object of this sketch is to give a glimpse of the life of the book cover behind the scenes, before it emerges from obscurity into the publicity involved in a bookseller's window.

From personal observation, it would appear that laymen — so to speak — who take any interest in the matter, have a vague idea that a book cover is bought on the same plan as dry goods, for example. The publisher needs a cover for a new book — novel, essays, or poems, as the case may be; goes to a place where such things are kept, and picks out from a number shown, the article he considers most suitable for the book in question. This is a great mistake. Every cover, except in the case of a design intended for a series (as one publisher said, suitable for everything, from "Thomas a Kempis" to "Alice in Wonderland") is designed on purpose for the particular book on which it appears. In many cases, several persons are trying designs for the same book, and a designer may make as many as five or six sketches for one cover before hitting upon an idea which takes the fancy of the publisher.

Many things have to be considered in designing a cover, originality, suitability, the time of the year, sometimes, the book is to be published, the peculiar style of the publisher even. For to make a light, fanciful sketchy design to a man known to make a specialty of rich conventional covers would be as unsuitable as to take a learned scientific article to Munsey's or any of the other light

monthly magazines. "Beauty" in this as in other things "is in the eye of the beholder," and very much may depend on the individual taste of the publisher.

The two things most considered are originality and suitability. Originality has intentionally been made more important than anything else. A designer remarked to the writer lately: "Above all things be original. Never mind what it is you are drawing, don't copy anyone else. If you draw a cat sitting on a fence, draw it in a way that no one has ever before drawn a cat on a fence, and you have gained more than by copying the style of the best man who ever lived."

Suitability is another very important question, and this includes the colors to be used, the style of the design, the question of whether the book is a dignified costly volume

cover for the story of a penniless duke who marries an American heiress shows a very large dollar sign and a coronet. "Pride and Prejudice" has for a cover design a peacock with wide-spread tail, and it only requires a small amount of thought to see how appropriate this is. A good example of veiled symbolism is shown on the cover of Max Nordau's "Degeneration." It is of brown cloth, and the design, done in darker browns, represents a Roman hanging-lamp with the flame blown downwards, gradually going out. There is always the danger, however, of veiling the symbol so successfully as to make the meaning somewhat obscure.

The style of the book, as already mentioned, affects the design. A strong, powerful book needs not only a strong design, but a strong color scheme as well, while light, dainty, sketchy covers are appropriate to light reading. Conventional designs are popular with some publishers, and pictorial designs are used by others. The latter are not considered very good, being rather illustration applied to design than actual design.

Every year fresh books are published by scores, and though one may give a passing glance at the pretty cover, there is little thought or even known about the men and



First Floor Interior of Warwick Bros. & Rutter's Warehouse, Toronto.

or a light summer novel, and also includes symbolism, more or less veiled.

Having read the book and considered its style, the designer proceeds to think over the salient points, and from these to get an idea for the cover in which symbolism plays an important part. In some cases the idea is at once gained from the title alone, without going any deeper. Crockett's "Lilac Sunbonnet" is an example of this, as well as Richard Le Gallienne's "Quest of the Golden Girl." Harold Frederic's "March Hares" is another instance. To go a step further, the designer may grasp the main idea of the book and embody it in his design without making the latter a mere illustration for the title. This is symbolism, but very plain and easily understood. The

women who give time, talent and originality to the beautifying and attractiveness of the last novel. Sometimes, down in the corner, two or three modest initials tell a tale to those who know the password, but for the most part the book cover designer appears born to blush unseen.

MARY MACLEOD MOORE.

THE ENGLISH BOOKSELLERS.

As the result of a good deal of correspondence which has been going on of late between the English Publishers' Association, the Booksellers' Association, the Authors' Society, and others, it was decided, at the last meeting of the council of the Publishers' Association, to invite representatives of the various bodies interested, including the Scotch associations, to a conference, in the hope of being able to take a definite step in the direction of helping the booksellers.