

Review Articles

Charles Evans, American Bibliographer.

By Edward G. Holley. (Illinois Contributions to Librarianship, No. 7.) Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963. 343p. \$7.50.

Here, at last, we have a very full, detailed biography of one of the great figures of American bibliography. The childhood, education, and early influential friendships are investigated, and their relation to the mature and old man pursued.

An orphan at nine, Charles Evans received most of his formal education at the Boston Asylum and Farm School for Indigent Boys. One can hardly imagine a less likely school for a bibliographer. At sixteen he went to work in the Boston Athenaeum as an apprentice in the library presided over by William Frederick Poole and later by Charles A. Cutter. This first job is the key to his whole life. While Poole lived, he continually advised and helped Evans.

Dr. Holley has had the use of all of the important sources for this biography, both published and unpublished, and he has also been careful to interview members of Evans's family as well as others who knew and worked with him. Yet some questions remain unanswered, and may remain so always. Why was Evans so stubborn in sticking to bibliographic practices against which he was constantly warned by those whom he respected and trusted? Why did he invariably antagonize those in authority over the libraries he headed? This cost him his employment not once but several times, until at last he was no longer employable. By then his influential friends were dead.

How did he and his family live? From 1902 until his death in 1935 he held no salaried position but rather devoted his time to his great bibliography. Several times this work was stalled until his friends helped him borrow money to print the next volume. The profits from the venture could not have sustained the family. Dr. Holley has seen the Evans ledgers and bank books but does not tell us much about the family income. Perhaps the sources are unclear.

One rather serious piece of misinforma-

tion is the statement, on page 250, that Evans worked on each volume separately, and that he left, at his death, only a handful of titles for the 1801-1820 period. As a matter of fact, there are seventeen corset boxes full of his manuscript slips, representing many, many thousands of titles of that period, in the possession of the American Antiquarian Society. One explanation of this error is that the slips had not yet been found in an old trunk at the time Dr. Holley was in Worcester, but the reviewer saw and used these slips three years ago.

No one interested in American bibliography can do without this definitive biography of Charles Evans. One can only wish that Dr. Holley were a more felicitous writer and had edited this dissertation more rigorously before its publication. Much important information is relegated to the very voluminous footnotes, while at the same time, a good bit of trivia remains in the text. It probably is not cricket, however, to carp about style when presented with such a thorough, searching biography of an important American librarian and bibliographer. Dr. Holley deserves our thanks for his contribution to library history.—*Richard H. Shoemaker, Rutgers University.*

Joseph Charless, Printer in the Western Country.

By David Kaser. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963. 160p. \$4.50. (63-15011).

With this biography of Joseph Charless of Dublin, Pennsylvania, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis, David Kaser makes another solid contribution to the history of printing and publishing in nineteenth-century America. Charless is best known as the first Missouri printer, indeed, the first printer of the trans-Mississippi west (but not the first printer of the Louisiana Territory, since Braud, Boudousquié, and James Lyon had worked in New Orleans long before Charless saw St. Louis).

The story of Joseph Charless is not much different from that of John Bradford, Elihu Stout, Matthew Duncan, William Maxwell,