

THE WORTHING HERALD
WORTHING, SUSSEX, ENGLAND
28 MARCH 1925
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THE HISTORY OF A SUSSEX PRESS.

The Vine Press, one of the very few Sussex publishing houses, and probably the youngest of them, was founded in Steyning in 1920 by one or two enthusiasts who were so optimistic as to dream of great things beginning in a small way, and of Steyning taking its place among the world's literary centres. A slightly ambitious programme, perhaps; but, after five years' toils and anxieties, in a fair way—actually!—to be realised.

To-day, with an armful of books to its credit, the Vine Press is famous throughout literary England, and in a year or two may be known throughout the world.

The chief aim is to produce beautiful books, and live books, and books that are within reach of poor book-lovers, that shall yet be a delight to the brain and the eye.

The troubles that attend the early years of a young but indomitable "house" will suggest themselves to anyone who has entered "on the ground floor." But—be it noted!—there are no troubles that may not be surmounted. That, at any rate, is the experience of the founders of the Vine Press.

After the greys and drabs of the last few years, the Press aims at giving pleasanter and more coherent literature than we are supposed to have "enjoyed" lately.

The books already issued are an earnest of what the press hopes to do in the next few years. The most characteristic are specifically Sussex books, "Swift Wings," "Songs of a Sussex Tramp" and "The Way of the South Wind," and all these should appeal on all grounds to South Downs people, for these Sussex books are conceived, written and produced entirely in the South country.

Decentralisation is necessary if hand-made, rare, local things are to get a chance; and the Vine Press people "feel" that there is a public large enough to appreciate and—even more important!—to patronise wares in the book-line that are set up by hand, hand-touched, and hand-finished, instead of being produced by machinery and chucked out, all exactly alike, with no touch of individuality, by the million.

Every copy of every edition of every Vine Press is numbered, thus obtaining a separate "life" and individuality. (The same method, by the way, is adopted by the *Mercure de France* publications, in Paris.) The hand-made copies are signed by their authors.

Of each book an *édition de luxe* is issued, printed upon hand-made paper, and in some cases coloured by hand. Only a very limited number are printed in this form.

Wood-cuts have been used so far as illustrations; and these blocks are cut in Steyning by Steyning men. They recall the blocks of three or four centuries ago, being made by exactly the same process. The coloured copies of these are delightful; and the *de luxe* editions are very nearly out of print. The artists—three Steyning brothers—are the Wests, of the "discovery" of whom as wood-cutters the editor of the Vine Press is not a little proud.

Care in production, and a "considered" format, here already secured for the Vine Press books a high and distinctive position amongst present-day publications; and it is intended that the productions of the Sussex publishing house shall be second to none, in beauty and variety, in England or the United States. Profiting by experience, the Press is working towards the perfect book.

In addition to the original works already issued, or to be issued in the future, the Press will publish reprints of scarce, interesting, and more than half forgotten books. Innumerable are the neglected treasures in the bye-paths of literature. Some of them the editor has dug out; he hopes to present them in cheap and beautiful form to book-lovers.

Having unreservedly put both hands to the plough, the promoters of the Vine Press have no intention of looking back; the rate at which they can go forward must depend upon the measure of support accorded them by the public of readers and book-lovers; and especially by that section of it that dwells in the South Country: a word to the wise!