



PROJECT MUSE®

Recent Books

Neil Harris

The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society, Volume 24, Number 4, December 2023, pp. 515-523 (Article)

Published by Oxford University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/913788>

D'Annunzio e l'edizione 1911 della Commedia. By LAURA MELOSI. (Biblioteca di bibliografia, 211.) Florence: Olschki. 2019. viii + 107 pp. €20. ISBN 978 88 222 6674 3.

Still primarily an antiquarian bookseller at the top end of the market rather than a publisher, Leo Samuel Olschki chose to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the

unification of Italy in 1911 with the publication of a monumental edition of Dante: 300 copies on hand-made paper from Fabriano, with a watermark showing the portrait of the poet, and six on parchment. According to the binding, the paper copies sold at 500 lire or 250 lire, while the parchment copies were priced at 3,000 lire: the surprising thing is that, despite these prices, the edition sold well (including, as is shown by an early list in the Olschki records reproduced here, British purchasers such as the British Museum, Glasgow University Library and the Rylands), allowing the publisher, who also made gifts of numerous copies for promotional purposes, to break even and perhaps even make a profit. What made the episode interesting was the involvement of the celebrity poet, womanizer, and *vate*, Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938), who at the time, due to his extravagant lifestyle and accumulated debts, was in voluntary exile in France. Olschki requested and paid for an introduction to the volume; D'Annunzio promised and did not deliver, until the very last moment and serious threats to publish without him. Based on documentation in the Olschki archive and in the D'Annunzio villa at Gardone Riviera, the present volume reconstructs the series of events in lavish detail, and in particular corrects the extremely unreliable account provided shortly after D'Annunzio's death by his secretary and long-time helpmeet, Tom Antongini. One patriotic curiosity is that a copy was presented to the battleship Dante Alighieri, launched in 1910 and broken up in 1928: it would be interesting to know where that particular item has ended up, presumably not at the bottom of the sea.