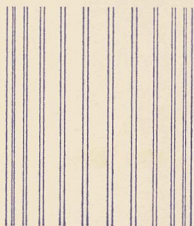


# COLUMBIA LIBRARY COLUMNS



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# Columbia Library Columns

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# Building the House of Books

CAROL Z. ROTHKOPF

WHEN House of Books opened on October 10, 1930, at 52 East 56th Street, it seemed unlikely that it would survive very long, let alone that it would in time become one of the world's foremost sources of modern British and American first editions. After all, neither the year 1930 nor the decade that followed are remembered for such luxuries as book collecting.

Nevertheless, fifty-five years after the opening of House of Books, it is easy to pinpoint why the shop survived the vast economic problems of its early years. The reason, of course, was the absolute dedication of its founder owners, Marguerite ("Margie") and Louis Henry Cohn, to their work, and above all, to their customers. Catering to the needs of that most exigent species, book collectors, was never a nine-to-five job for the Cohns. It was their life.

It is hard to imagine, however, that even the most perceptive fortuneteller would have forecast in 1888, when Louis was born, or in 1897, the year of Margie's birth, that they would someday be known respectively as "the scholarly bookseller" and "the doyenne of the rare book business."

As a young man, Louis was anything but scholarly and, in fact, seems to have spent an inordinate amount of time in trouble with his school teachers. By the time that World War I was threatening, Louis seized the opportunity for real adventure by offering his services to Jules Jusserand, the French ambassador in Washington. His initial services for the French government were in counter-

*Opposite:* House of Books in 1938 at 19 East 55th Street, New York, and its co-founders, Louis Henry and Marguerite A. Cohn.

espionage in the United States. But, he had enough time left over to spend weekends visiting boyhood friends at Harvard where, between bridge games, these better-educated friends gave Louis their required reading list. The list was carefully saved, suggesting that Louis did do this extensive "homework."

By the time World War I began, Louis was in France and asked to be transferred to active duty with the Foreign Legion. His service in the artillery and, later, in the Army of Occupation as an aide to General Mangin, won him a case full of medals, including the *Légion d'honneur*—a lifelong source of pride.

If, as Margie always claimed, the Harvard reading list was the seed from which House of Books sprouted, it was Louis's meeting with Hilaire Belloc while he was still in the army that directly led to his transformation into a collector. Strange as it may seem, the Jewish lieutenant from Brooklyn was fascinated by the notoriously anti-Semitic Belloc's writing. The two men corresponded and, again according to Margie's recollections (in speeches she gave in the 1970s), it was one of these letters from Belloc that changed the direction of Louis's life:

In 1921, Belloc mentioned his new book . . . and Louis went to his Fourth Avenue bookdealer, as a reader and not as a collector, to purchase the book. He was informed that it had not been published in this country and that he should go to James F. Drake and Co., who would have a copy. [Louis] was appalled at the idea of going to a rare book dealer—rare books meant Rosenbach and Gutenberg Bibles, but he went. . . . That day, he purchased not only the Belloc but a copy of Galsworthy's latest book, I think it was *To Let* [1921], in the correct English edition, after it was explained to him why the English edition was priced at \$2.75 instead of the usual \$2.50 for a Scribner edition. From this start, he built up in a few years, one of the great Galsworthy collections of the time. The first time he paid \$35.00 for a then rare Galsworthy, he knew he was hooked as a collector. . . .

It was just a short step from collecting to learning the art of bibliography. Self-taught, Louis first began to work on a supplement to

H. V. Marrot's Galsworthy bibliography, but he soon turned his full attention to the works of a young writer named Ernest Hemingway, on whom Louis was to become an acknowledged authority with the publication by Random House in 1931 of his bibliography of Hemingway's work.

Of the two future owners of House of Books, Margie was the one who seemed more naturally destined toward her future occupation. Although she always claimed to know less about "literature" than anyone to whom she was speaking, this was typical self-deprecation. The truth is that from the time she learned to read, Margie did so with joy and discrimination. In fact, a notebook survives in which she listed all the books that she read each year up to the time when she married Louis. Perhaps as significantly, she was a collector from childhood on, beginning with paper dolls she meticulously cut out of ladies magazines (and saved ever after) to cigar bands that she carefully mounted in a special album. With the zeal and tenacity for which she was to become famous, she wrote cigar smokers of the time to ask for a band for her collection. The greatest prize was a response, with enclosure, from J. P. Morgan.

Unlike Louis, Margie was a good student, a prize-winning essayist, and even had an early "literary" effort (a puzzle) published in *St. Nicholas*. After graduating with honors from the private school she attended in New York City, she went to the Parsons School of Design. Then, for a time, she worked as a designer of costumes for Broadway plays, including one that starred Helen Hayes. To supplement this erratic income, she made and sold silk lampshades and elegant closet fittings. In retrospect, it seems obvious that Margie's talents were a major reason that all the publications of House of Books were as handsome as they were. Her attention to detail, down to the precisely right color for a catalogue cover, are familiar to everyone who knew her.

Since it was bridge that perhaps put Louis on the first step toward the book business, it was appropriately yet another bridge



game in June 1928 that provided the setting in which he met his lifetime partner in that work. The momentousness of the meeting was obvious as Margie almost immediately telegraphed her sister, who was then on her wedding trip, "No time to write, new boyfriend, stayed till 2 A.M."

# HOUSE OF BOOKS, LTD.

52 EAST 56TH STREET

NEW YORK CITY



*House of Books, Ltd. will open on October 10, 1930,  
under the direction of Capt. Louis Henry Cohn.*

*The shop will specialize in Modern First Editions and  
Current Books. Telephone Wickersham 5218.*

The firm opened the month after the Cohns were married.

Margie and "new boyfriend," who were both ardent Francophiles, soon began to plan their life "at leisure" in Paris. But, as Margie said years later, "Nineteen twenty-nine burst that bubble and finally we decided that Louis's avocation must become our vocation." They were married in September 1930, dashed off to Bermuda on their honeymoon (where they managed to squeeze in a visit with Hervey Allen and his wife), returned to New York, and opened House of Books.

Among the most important connections the Cohns had in the book world was Maxwell Perkins, whom Louis had met on his frequent trips to Scribner's, first on behalf of Galsworthy, whose American liaison with the firm he was, and then, of course, in pursuit of his interest in Hemingway. It was through Perkins that Louis met Thomas Wolfe. Perkins asked Louis to introduce Wolfe



to various book dealers in New York. Margie's kindest memories of this tumultuous relationship included these recollections:

Tom was about six foot four and Louis six foot two and a half. Once when they went out together, a couple of little boys ran after them calling out, "Look at the giants! Look at the giants!" We used to take Wolfe out for dinner and when the waiter asked him what he wished to order, he would reply, "Whatever is the largest portion." Early, we invited him to dinner with Bennett Cerf and Harry Hansen and he called up the following day, roaring, why did people always invite him with men instead of some girls!

Louis and Perkins, who were regular luncheon companions, had a far more serene relationship than the Cohns had with the often drunk and always demanding Wolfe. However, Perkins seems to have been somewhat reluctant to put his imprimatur on Louis's choice of bride and partner in the book business. When he met Margie, Perkins asked her where she had gone to college:

I replied that I had gone to art school. He just gazed at me and said, "You mean you are going to work in a bookshop and you did not go to college?" This did not seem possible to him. Well, it might have been a good idea. I remember that then Millay did not mean Edna St. Vincent to me but Millet who had painted "The Angelus."

For years to come, Margie continued to play the role of the innocent who had somehow strayed into the book business. Even by the time she was approaching her fiftieth year in the book business, she told an audience of collectors, "I always said I became a specialist before I became a general practitioner." Of course, in the early days of House of Books, it was the dashing war hero and bibliographer that was at center stage. Carlos Baker, in *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* describes the Cohns as they were in 1931 when they first met Hemingway, who had refused to write something for Louis's bibliography (and, in fact, rather distanced himself from the whole effort). Even so, the noted author

- 101 FAULKNER. THE SOUND AND THE FURY. New York (1929). 12mo, boards, cloth back. \$5.00  
*First Edition. Good copy. Dust-wrapper worn.*
- 102 FAULKNER. AS I LAY DYING. New York (1930). 12mo, cloth. \$7.50  
*First Edition, first issue.*
- 103 FAULKNER. IDYLL IN THE DESERT. New York, 1931. 12mo, boards. \$6.00  
*First Edition, limited to 400 copies signed.*
- 104 FAULKNER. A GREEN BOUGH. New York, 1933. 12mo, linen. \$5.00  
*Large Paper Edition, limited to 360 copies signed.*
- 105 FISHER (Vardis). SONNETS TO AN IMAGINARY MADONNA. New York, 1927. 12mo, boards. \$2.75  
*First Edition.*
- 106 FLACCUS (Kimball). AVALANCHE OF APRIL. New York, 1934. 12mo, cloth. \$3.00  
*First Edition. Autographed by the author.*
- 107 FORD (Ford Madox). WOMEN AND MEN. Paris, 1923. Semi royal 8vo, wrappers. \$3.00  
*First Edition. Only 300 copies on Rives handmade paper, printed by the Three Mountains Press.*
- 108 FORD. A MIRROR TO FRANCE. London (1926). Cr. 8vo, cloth. \$6.50  
*First Edition. Presentation copy. Inscribed by the author: "Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Gorman, Very gratefully, Ford Madox Ford, New York Halloween 1926."*
- 109 FORD. A MAN COULD STAND UP. London (1926). Cr. 8vo, cloth. \$7.50  
*First Edition. Presentation copy. Inscribed by the author: "Herbert Gorman from Ford Madox Ford, Thanksgiving 1926."*
- 110 FORD. NEW YORK ESSAYS. New York, 1927. 8vo, boards, linen back. \$10.00  
*First Edition. Presentation copy inscribed: "Herbert & Jean Gorman from Ford Madox Ford, New York, 6th Oct. 1927."*
- 111 FORD. NEW YORK IS NOT AMERICA. London (1927). Cr. 8vo, cloth. \$10.00  
*First Edition. Presentation copy inscribed: "It is a pity that any one people should be constantly influenced against any other one people. P. 233. For Herbert Gorman, New York Oct. 6th 1927. Ford Madox Ford."*

The firm's first catalog issued in 1934 reveals the modest prices of contemporary first editions.

... invited Captain Louis Cohn, the scholarly bookseller, to bring his bride Marguerite to dinner in the Hemingway's suite at the Brevoort. It was their first meeting after months of sporadic correspondence. Hemingway's latent distrust fell away as he talked with Cohn, a strapping six-footer with a neatly trimmed mustache and a record of distinguished service with the French army.

The petite, chic, but seemingly invisible "bride" had her own special memory of that particular meeting, which she loved to recall, as in this excerpt from a speech she first gave at the University of Tulsa in the 1970s:

Of course we knew Hemingway and sometimes we were on good terms and sometimes not, depending on his mood ... my favorite memory is of when we had dinner with him and his wife, Pauline, at the Brevoort Hotel a few days before they left for Kansas City for the birth of their younger son, Gregory. Patrick was then a few years old and at ten o'clock Hemingway took him out of his crib, put him on the potty, and crooned a French lullaby to him.

Such interludes, however pleasant to recall, did not pay the rent. Making House of Books a money-making enterprise, at the same time that it developed a reputation for excellence, was the work of years. The Cohns, in addition to the usual devices of advertising, issuing catalogues and sending out book announcements, published their own limited editions, the Crown Octavos series, but above all made a fine art of caring for their customers and catering to their desires. No matter where the shop was located (and it moved six times as commanded by the twin banes of New York life, rent increases and building demolitions), it seemed to become a second home for collectors, writers, and publishers. The atmosphere of House of Books was conducive to good talk and long stays. These sometimes led to the sale of what Margie liked to call "treasures" and sometimes not, but in any case seemed always to leave people eager to return again and again. Margie meant it when she said, "Our customers are our friends and our friends are our customers."

In time that list of friends grew increasingly large and included many of the most distinguished individual and institutional collectors of twentieth-century literature. The list of these good friends of House of Books would fill so many pages that they could not possibly be enumerated in this small space. Among these collectors, those for whom the Cohns reserved a special affection were the writer-collectors. A devoted friend was Stephen Vincent Benét, who shared the Cohns' passion for France and all things French, and whom they both considered the gentlest man they had ever known. Another cherished friend was Robert Frost who often stayed with the Cohns when he was in the city for a reading and whose photograph, inscribed "For Margie in the old friendship," always hung proudly in the bedroom he used at their apartment.

Sadly, just as House of Books' reputation and its vast network of friends was growing, Louis became ill. His first heart attack seemed to have been brought on by the fall of France in the early days of World War II. While illness forced him to spend more and more time at home, Margie carried on the business. She never complained then or later at the burden of work or worry she carried. It seemed to be enough for her that Louis somehow came through attack after attack to remain at her side for a little longer.

In 1948, to celebrate the end of yet another war and Louis's survival, the Cohns finally made their long dreamt of trip to Europe together. It was a landmark in both their lives for the lasting contact they established with rare book dealers in London and, most significantly, for their first meeting with T. S. Eliot, which as Margie recalled

... took place at the flat he and John Hayward shared. There was an instant rapport. But I knew him for many years after when I was alone and he was married to Valerie. I have the cable sent to me, "Married T. S. this morning. Letter follows. Love Valerie." Valerie and I had also become good friends over the years before their marriage ... and Valerie and Tom stayed with me a number of times and, as I have a

three-room flat, you can imagine it was all very informal. I was also with them in London, Jamaica, and Nassau. Tom loved to play gin and dinner was no sooner over than the cards came out, wherever we might be together. Valerie and I . . . happily, stayed the best friends. . . .

When Louis died in 1953, Margie's family thought she might close House of Books and settle into graceful retirement. The thought never occurred to her and, for the next thirty-one years, Margie single-handedly not only carried on the business (no one was even allowed to help her wrap a book), but carried it forward into the front ranks of the antiquarian book world. As Anthony Rota summed it up, Margie

. . . resolutely carried on the business alone. In the late 'fifties and early 'sixties this was still a relatively brave thing for a woman to do in what was, in bookselling terms, essentially a man's world. She nurtured several generations of young collectors, saving good things until they could afford them, buying them lunch when they had spent their allowance on books, teaching them the importance of fine condition, and generally and genuinely becoming their friend.

In addition to the individual customers whose special collections she worked so tirelessly to build, there were now the fast-growing university collections, notably at the University of Texas, Austin, to preoccupy her. Another of Margie's delightful stories tells something of the flavor of these days:

Cyril Connolly came into my life quite late, and although I had always heard he was difficult, we became close friends. While he was working on his book, *The Modern Movement*, he sent me a set of annotated galleys to dispose of. . . . I finally disposed of them to Texas. The Library [at Austin] found they were only missing one each of the American and English books but many of the French titles [listed in Connolly's book]. They became so interested in building up the one hundred books, they asked me to try and fill in the collection. When this was accomplished, they planned an exhibition and Cyril came over for the event. We both stopped at a motel [that had] no room service and even Cyril's request could not get me breakfast in my room. Next



morning Cyril was at my door with the morning paper and my breakfast tray. And this continued each morning while we were in Austin. The books he inscribed to me are among my most precious possessions.

Small wonder that Valerie Eliot twitted Margie about her new “boyfriend”! But there were still other writers to enter her life when she was in her seventies—among them the actor and D. H.



“Margie” and T. S. Eliot in Austin, Texas, 1958.

Lawrence expert, Roy Spencer; the novelist Larry Woiwoide; the collector and novelist Michael Thomas; and the man who Margie described as “one of the most thoughtful persons I have ever known,” Tom Stoppard. It is Stoppard who has provided what is surely the finest description of Margie as she was in her later years:

I knew of House of Books before I knew of Margie. In fact, the abstract idea of a House of Books was enough for me because one of the attractions of writing was not merely creating a particular sequence



of thought in particular words, I actually wanted to be responsible for that physical object known as a book. I associated my love of literature with these objects, with leaves and hard covers and, with luck, dust wrappers.

I knew there was this place in New York. I had got the address. I wasn't prepared for the proprietor at all. This was on the ninth floor up on Madison, and there I found this wonderful, bird-like lady who was neat, with an acute eye, a very busy, competent, attractive way of addressing one, looking at one, and I was enchanted by her and I kept going back. But it was very difficult to buy a book off her. I hardly ever succeeded because one didn't feel one could very often sneak a surreptitious look at the shelves. It was like being in somebody's house and finding oneself in the library; it seemed rather rude to examine the person's books. And the idea that one might open some kind of negotiation about buying a book was absolutely impossible. And, in the end, actually quite soon, I realised I wasn't really a customer, I was one of her friends, and that is where I went to see her. . . . Margie was there and you came to find her, and I shall always think it a privilege to have found her.

Stoppard and many of Margie's good friends shared in her joy at the gala parties that were held at the University of Virginia Library and elsewhere in Charlottesville to celebrate her gift of the typescript of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* to the library and the opening of the splendid exhibition of which it was a centerpiece.

Buoyed by this event and, subsequently, by her admission to the Grolier Club, Margie's zest for life and her amazing energy seemed those of a far younger person. In fact, younger people walking on the street with her panted trying to keep up with the pace she set. And, of course, she continued to be a familiar visitor in book shops across the country and in London, to which she traveled almost every year. One of the California book dealers, Ralph Sipper of Joseph the Provider in Santa Barbara, has written that on her last trip to his shop in 1981, "she divided her time in the office between climbing the highest rung of our library ladder

and sitting on the floor with the pile of books she had pulled from the shelves."

In the summer of 1984, despite her now diminished energy and failing health, Margie decided that she must go to London to replenish the stock of House of Books, which had been forced to move again just a few months earlier. Her good friends in London, Valerie Eliot, Bernard Stone, Anthony Rota, and the late Winnie Myers, did all they could to make this gallant voyage a little more comfortable and easier for her. Alone briefly on an errand, Margie was struck and killed by a truck. The horror of the ending was mitigated by the knowledge that Margie had carried on right to the last doing what she loved best—selecting books in a city that was virtually her second home.

In a moving obituary, Anthony Rota described Margie as

... the doyenne of the United States first edition market. She and her husband ... had founded the House of Books in 1930, in the depths of the Depression. Together they made it synonymous with the best standards of condition and with service to the young collectors who gathered around them. ... Hemingway ... Thomas Wolfe, T.S. Eliot, and Robert Frost were among the authors the Cohns specialised in, and some of the finest and most comprehensive collections of their works in existence today were built almost exclusively by House of Books.

The House of Books that Marguerite and Louis Cohn built has moved for the last time. Margie picked the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia as the permanent home for their shop because of its location in the city where her business had flourished and because of her many affectionate ties with several generations of Columbia faculty and students. Looking ahead, as Margie always did, she hoped that booklovers would always be learning something about the unique world of rare books from this very special collection spanning fifty-four years of the twentieth century.

# The Crown Octavos and Their Authors

J. HOWARD WOOLMER

HOUSE of Books Ltd. was founded in 1930 out of necessity by Captain Louis Henry Cohn and his wife Marguerite (always called Margie with a hard 'g'). They had been married only a short while and had planned on living a life of ease in Paris where they had both spent a considerable amount of time, but the stock market crash changed all this, and they had to find a way of earning a living. They decided that, to use Margie's words, "Louis's avocation for collecting books should become his vocation," so they became booksellers, specializing in first editions of contemporary writers because they couldn't afford to stock the older writers such as Dickens and Kipling whose work was commanding high prices.

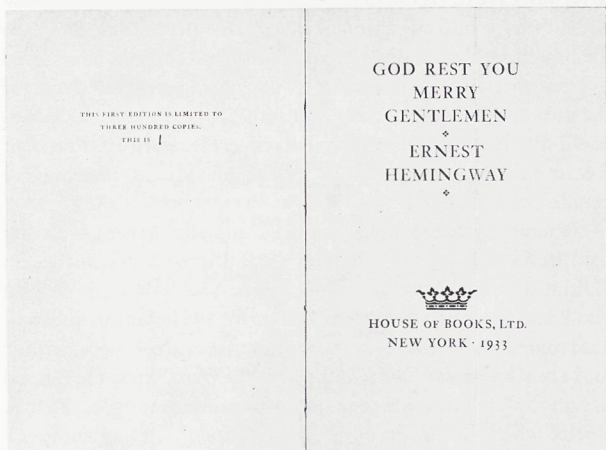
Most of the modern authors prized by collectors during the 1920s had had some, at least, of their books published in limited, signed editions, and the Captain felt that issuing a series of limited editions of his own would not only prove profitable but would also attract attention to the newly established firm. He envisaged a series of books by well-known writers issued in small editions, each signed and each printed by a fine press. The books would measure approximately 7½ x 5 inches, and the series would be called the Crown Octavos, the British term for books of this size.

As the Captain already had the manuscript for L.A.G. Strong's essay *A Defense of Ignorance* in his collection, this seemed like a good place to start. Strong, an author much collected at the time but one whose name is not often encountered today, agreed to let House of Books publish it, and it came out in 1932 in an edition of 200 numbered copies, each signed by Strong, and priced at \$2.00, the first of the Crown Octavos.

During the next thirty-seven years the Cohns together, and Margie alone after the Captain's death in 1953, published sixteen volumes in the series, all in limitations ranging between 200 and 300 copies and at prices that rose from the \$2.00 charged for the Strong book to \$8.50 for the last book published in the series in 1969. Each book in the series also had an extra twenty-six lettered copies that were for the use of the author, for copyright, and for review; these lettered copies were never sold. Many of the leading authors of the past half century were included in the series, and all but three of the books were signed by the authors; the Galsworthy and the Wolfe volumes were issued posthumously, and Hemingway refused to sign his for reasons that are noted below. Following is a complete list of the books published in the series; readers desiring more information should consult George Bixby's checklist in the September/October 1980 issue of *American Book Collector*:

1. 1932: L.A.G. Strong, *A Defense of Ignorance*
2. 1933: Ernest Hemingway, *God Rest You Merry Gentlemen*
3. 1933: John Galsworthy, *Author and Critic*
4. 1939: Stephen Vincent Benét, *Ballad of the Duke's Mercy*
5. 1939: Thomas Wolfe, *A Note on Experts: Dexter Vespasian Joyner*
6. 1940: Robert Nathan, *The Concert*
7. 1940: William Saroyan, *A Special Announcement*
8. 1944: W. Somerset Maugham, *The Unconquered*
9. 1945: Booth Tarkington, *Lady Hamilton and Her Nelson*
10. 1949: James Farrell, *A Misunderstanding*
11. 1951: Robert Frost, *Hard Not to Be King*
12. 1954: T.S. Eliot, *Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern*
13. 1957: Eudora Welty, *A Place in Fiction*
14. 1962: Marianne Moore, *The Absentee*
15. 1964: Tennessee Williams, *Grand*
16. 1969: Robert Duncan, *The Truth & Life of Myth: An Essay in Essential Autobiography*

The second volume in the series was by Ernest Hemingway whose classic of bullfighting, *Death in the Afternoon*, had recently been published by Charles Scribner's Sons. Captain Cohn had been one of the early collectors of Hemingway's work, and he com-



Hemingway refused to sign copies of his short story published as the second of the Crown Octavos.

piled the first Hemingway bibliography in 1931, only eight years after the publication of Hemingway's first book. As Hemingway didn't approve of bibliographies of living authors, he refused to provide a foreword to the book, even though the Captain had offered him \$350 in payment, and he seems to have pretty much ignored its publication. The two eventually met, however, and they got on so well together that Hemingway promised to give the Captain a story for the Crown Octavos series, although things didn't work out quite as the Captain expected.

One day in 1933 Hemingway showed up at House of Books and, explaining that he had just lost a gun and had to have money



to replace it, offered the Captain his short story *God Rest You Merry Gentlemen* for the series, but at a price. He claimed that he could sell it to a magazine and get much more money for it, but that, as he'd promised a story to the Captain, he felt an obligation to let him have it. As Captain Cohn later pointed out, Hemingway couldn't have sold the story to a magazine because in one place the boy masturbates, and in 1933 no magazine would have dared to print that. Margie remembered paying Hemingway \$100 for the story, a not inconsiderable sum at that time, and one the Cohns could ill afford. Amusingly, but not for Hemingway, President Roosevelt closed the banks at that moment, and Hemingway couldn't cash the check.

Hemingway felt that he had been unjustly treated by being paid only \$10 by the publisher Paul Romaine for his poem "Ultimately," which was printed on the back cover of William Faulkner's recently published *Salmagundi*, and he let this unhappiness, together with his anger over the uncashable check, carry over to the publication of *God Rest You Merry Gentlemen*. He refused to sign the book or to let the Cohns charge more than \$2.75 for it, a price which just about covered their expenses. Even without a profit, however, the book added a certain luster to the young Crown Octavos series. Interestingly, it was at this meeting at House of Books that Captain Cohn introduced Hemingway to Arnold Gingrich who was at that time preparing the first issue of *Esquire*, a magazine that published a great deal of Hemingway's writing in the 1930s and later.

Next in the series was John Galsworthy's *Author and Critic*. Long before becoming a bookseller Captain Cohn had built an important Galsworthy collection and had been involved in revising and updating H.V. Marrot's Galsworthy bibliography. His work on this bibliography involved the Captain in visits to Scribner's, Galsworthy's American publishers, and when difficulties arose between author and publisher, Galsworthy appointed the Captain as his liaison with the firm. (It was at Scribner's that the



Captain met and became close friends with the noted editor Max Perkins.) Galsworthy died in January 1933, but his widow gave the Cohns permission to publish her husband's essay, and it was issued in October 1933.

☛ The Ballad of the Duke's Mercy

The horse, the forest, the greybeard sea,  
The brandy come from the apple tree,  
These are the treasure of Normandy.

It is so today. It was even so  
Nine centuries and a half ago  
When Robert the Devil, son of war,  
With squire and huntsman and servitor,  
Rode at eve on the hard, packed sand  
That lay like a piece of no man's land  
Between the forest and the white foam,  
Bringing the spoils of his hunting home:  
Four great herons of silver plume,  
Slain by his falcon, My Joyous Doom,  
Snipe and mallard and one wild swan  
And a poacher with ears already gone.  
The raw stumps dripped as he ran along,  
Bound to a horse with a leather thong,  
Three parts naked and smelling foul,  
With the wild, dazed stare of a netted owl,  
But he did not trip and he did not fall  
Though the Duke had judged him, once for all.  
His breath came easy as he ran

Margie Cohn regarded Stephen Vincent Benét's  
*Ballad*, 1939, to be the handsomest of the  
Crown Octavos.

In the mid-1930s Captain Cohn, with his bent for things bibliographical, was investigating John Dos Passos's novel *Three Soldiers*, published by Doran in 1921. It was Doran's practice to place their *GHD* monogram on the copyright page of their books to indicate a first printing, but the Captain suspected that they had neglected to do this on the earliest copies of *Three Soldiers*. John Farrar, Dos Passos's editor at Doran, couldn't remember whether or not this was so, but he recalled that he had sent one of the first copies to his friend Stephen Vincent Benét and suggested that the

Captain get in touch with Benét in an attempt to examine his copy. The Captain's letter to Benét, however, went unanswered. Then one day a stooped, very unimpressive looking man, walked into House of Books with a small package under his arm and announced "I'm Steve Benét and I understand you want to see my copy of *Three Soldiers*. Here it is."

Benét and the Cohns became close friends. Margie Cohn described him as "the mildest, gentlest, most wonderful person—he wouldn't speak badly about anyone. He was such a gentle person, just so gentle. . . ." When Captain Cohn suffered his first heart attack at the time of the fall of France and had to spend a great deal of time at home in bed, Benét used to send him gifts, boxes of candy and other things, and one time he sent yellow primroses with a note saying "they used to have these in Paris and of course they will have them again." In due course Benét gave the Cohns a poem, *Ballad of the Duke's Mercy*, which was published in May 1939 as number four of the Crown Octavos. Margie always felt that this was the handsomest book in the series. "It was printed by Hawthorn House with specially cut type. There were too few 'H's available so whenever the printer had done a page or so he had to stop and move the 'H's so he could do a few more pages." This is still one of the scarcest of the Crown Octavos, probably because it is collected both as a first edition and as an example of fine printing. Benét was paid a flat fee of \$100 for the poem, but he refused a check, preferring to have a credit against which he could buy books.

The Cohns also published another work by Benét, a poem called *Tuesday November 5, 1942*, which was written in reply to a scurrilous anti-Roosevelt poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay that had appeared in a New York newspaper. Benét's poem appeared in *The New York Times* on Election Day and then had separate publication by House of Books, but it was not part of the Crown Octavos series. The manuscript and copy #1 were donated to the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, New York.

The Captain, incidentally, was right about *Three Soldiers*. Doran *had* neglected to put their monogram on the copyright page of the earliest copies issued. The story is told of book forgers, not knowing this, meticulously removing monograms from other Doran books and pasting them into *Three Soldiers*, thereby creating instant second issues.

Max Perkins had introduced Captain Cohn to Thomas Wolfe in the late 1920s, when he was editing Wolfe's first novel, *Look Homeward, Angel*, for Scribner's. The Captain had been asked to introduce Wolfe to various booksellers in New York City, and the two had become quite friendly. Wolfe, however, had a strain of anti-Semitism, always resenting the fact that his name, Wolfe, might be construed to be Jewish. He could also be a very obnoxious drunk. One summer evening, Margie couldn't remember the exact date, Wolfe turned up smashed at the Cohns apartment on East 56th Street after attending a baseball game. He demanded more to drink and became more and more difficult as the evening wore on. The Captain tried to placate him because, as he later said, he didn't want the furniture to get broken (both he and Wolfe were well over six feet tall). Wolfe kept eyeing the Cohns collection of inscribed first editions, apparently trying to determine if they had sold any of his, and finally the Captain, in disgust, handed him one of them, saying, "Here, take this Tom, this is the only book you ever gave me. I paid for all the rest of them and I don't want anything that you gave me." Wolfe stalked out, throwing the book into the hallway outside the apartment, where it was retrieved by the Captain once Wolfe had left the building. Wolfe telephoned his apologies the next morning, but they weren't accepted, and this seems to have been their last meeting.

Wolfe had earlier promised to give the Cohns something for the Crown Octavos series, but when he brought them a manuscript it was found to be too long and each revision only made it longer, till it began to seem like another *Look Homeward, Angel*. They never got anything during his lifetime (he died in 1938), but Per-

kins later gave them an essay, *A Note on Experts: Dexter Vespasian Joyner*, and it was published in June 1939, only one month after their Benét volume.

Robert Nathan who had been introduced to the Cohns by Benét, provided them with *The Concert*, an excerpt from an early unpublished novel, which the Cohns published in March 1940. Nathan always said that he was honored at being included as one of the Crown Octavos authors, but that after signing his name 276 times he'd never sign a book again. "I feel like a little boy who's kept after school and has to write lines." He kept his word and never again had a limited, signed edition.

I've found no record of how the Cohns met William Saroyan, but they published his *A Special Announcement* in September 1940. It was a radio play that Saroyan wanted published in book form, but as it didn't fit into any of his collections, the Cohns were asked to publish it.

Nothing else appeared in the series until December 1944 when W. Somerset Maugham's short story *The Unconquered* was published. It had originally been printed in expurgated form in *Collier's* in April 1943. There's an amusing anecdote about this book, but I'll let Margie tell it in her own words: "Only once did I try to edit one of the sixteen volumes we published but the results made me never try again. When we did Somerset Maugham's *The Unconquered*, a story of World War II, where a German soldier billeted with a French family rapes the daughter of the house, she realizes her plight when she misses her period. Books were not quite so frank in the forties and I was rather squeamish about that description. When Louis next saw Maugham he mentioned this to him whereupon Maugham replied 'Tell Mrs. Cohn if she knows a better way to describe this I will gladly put her name on the title page as co-author!' I was properly put in my place . . . but I thought that it was rather amusing."

Booth Tarkington had the same problem with his play *Lady Hamilton and Her Nelson* that Saroyan had had with his; he want-



ed it in a book, but it didn't fit into any of his collections, so he asked House of Books to publish it. They did, in December 1945. Tarkington was so taken with the finished book that he wanted to buy the whole edition and use it as a Christmas greeting, but the Cohns had their own obligations and restricted him to a small quantity.

The only failure in the whole Crown Octavos series was James Farrell's short story *A Misunderstanding*, published in 1949. Margie felt that it may have been issued at a bad time but, whatever the reason, copies were still available at the list price of \$3.50 until late in the 1970s.

The Cohns had been close friends of Robert Frost for a number of years before he gave them his play *Hard Not to Be King* for the series. They had wanted a small collection of poems, but Frost's publisher objected so they had to settle for a play. It was published in June 1951. Margie told the story of the time she and Louis were visiting Frost in his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Frost, getting on in years at this time, sent Margie out of the room on a made-up errand so that he could ask the Captain, "I sent Margie out of the room because I wanted to ask you something; do you still have sexual urges?" She also said that whenever Frost left anyone alone in his study he would put them on their honor not to retrieve anything from the wastepaper basket. She had never known anyone, she said, who liked the good things in life the way that Frost did but made believe what a simple person he was.

The next book in the series was T.S. Eliot's *Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern*, published in May 1954. The Cohns had met Eliot on a trip to England in the early 1950s, and he had promised at that time to send them something for the series. In 1953, however, Captain Cohn died, and Margie wrote to Eliot asking if he would allow her to publish something on her own. Eliot agreed and sent the typescript of this lecture, which had been delivered to the Friends of Rochester Cathedral in 1937. Margie was upset because there was no return address on the package, and she chided

Eliot for his secretary's carelessness. "I would never have had the nerve to ask for another copy if this one had got lost," she complained. The secretary, Valerie Fletcher, later became Mrs. T.S. Eliot and provided him with what Eliot called the happiest years of his life. The Eliots became close friends of Margie's in later years and often stayed with her when visiting New York.

THIS FIRST EDITION IS LIMITED TO  
THREE HUNDRED NUMBERED COPIES

SIGNED BY THE AUTHOR

THIS IS NO. 1

Marianne Moore  
is a grateful author,  
Marguerite  
(Author? part-author)  
and whole beneficiary, of a long-cherished  
publisher.  
May 17, 1962

Marianne Moore's publishers refused permission to House of Books to publish a selection of her poems, so her play *The Absentee* became the fourteenth of the Crown Octavos.

The most disastrous of the Crown Octavos was the thirteenth, Eudora Welty's *A Place in Fiction*. Margie, who had met Welty several years earlier, attended one of her readings at the YMHA on upper Lexington Avenue and afterwards asked her if she would contribute something to the series. The result was this essay, which



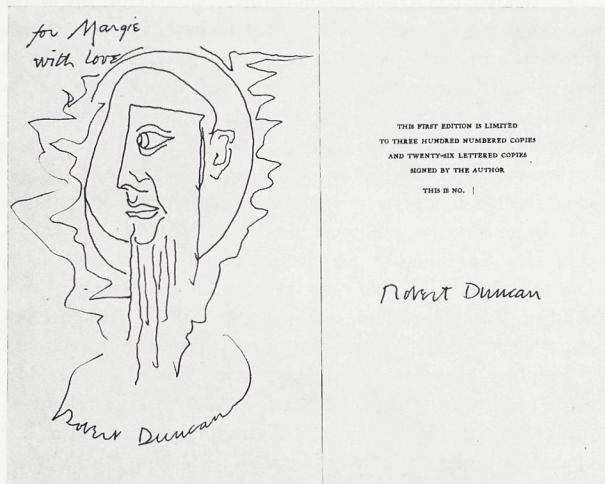
was published in October 1957. Margie sent the typescript off to the printer and immediately departed on a visit to Japan. When she returned she was horrified at the appearance of the book awaiting her. It was printed on white paper and had cream endpapers which Margie felt looked terrible. Not only that, but many of the books were ink smudged, and she refused to accept a number of them, returning them to the printer. She had no idea what happened to these returned copies, but they were never replaced. Some time later a water pipe in her office broke, and a number of the remaining copies were dampstained and had to be discarded. Small wonder then that this is one of the scarcer books in the series. Margie had no records of how many copies were actually signed and sold.

Marianne Moore's publisher, like Robert Frost's, objected to letting House of Books have a selection of poems as it would have taken too much out of her next book, so once again a play was published, *The Absentee*. It was issued in May 1962, almost five years after the Welty volume. Margie said that she enjoyed working with Miss Moore, "but she always acted as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, and I never knew anyone as astute about finances in my life, never. It was all right, though, and I liked her tremendously; she was a great person." Miss Moore took a large part of the edition herself, to be used as place markers at a luncheon given for her in Rochester.

The fifteenth book in the series wasn't solicited by House of Books at all, but was offered to them by a friend of Tennessee Williams who had at one time been his literary agent. Again, it didn't fit into any collection that Williams planned, and he was looking for a suitable place for permanent publication. It was a memoir of Williams's grandmother in the guise of a short story called *Grand*, and Margie published it in December 1964. Williams was the only one of the Crown Octavos authors that Margie never met, and she said she hadn't the slightest desire to do so.

The sixteenth and last of the Crown Octavos was Robert Duncan's essay *The Truth & Life of Myth: An Essay in Essential*

*Autobiography*. Margie had met Lawrence Durrell at a cocktail party some time before and had asked him to let her publish a piece on Provence that had appeared in *Holiday Magazine*. He couldn't give it to her as it was to appear as part of a series in a book of



Margie Cohn's copy of the last publication of the Crown Octavos, *The Truth & Life of Myth*, 1969, is inscribed to her by the author, Robert Duncan, with a pen and ink self-portrait.

travel essays, but he did promise to send her something else. While she was waiting for Durrell's piece (it never arrived), Duncan dropped into her office on his way to England, and she asked him if he was ever going to have anything for her. He handed her this essay. She read it, couldn't make head nor tail of it, but decided to publish it anyway. It came out in January 1969.

Someone once said that House of Books had the best list of authors that any publisher had ever had with the possible exception of Horace Liveright. Margie Cohn was proud of the books that she published, and she had good reason to be proud of them.

Photographs Inscribed to  
Marguerite and Louis Cohn

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HILAIRE BELLOC

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

RHYS DAVIES

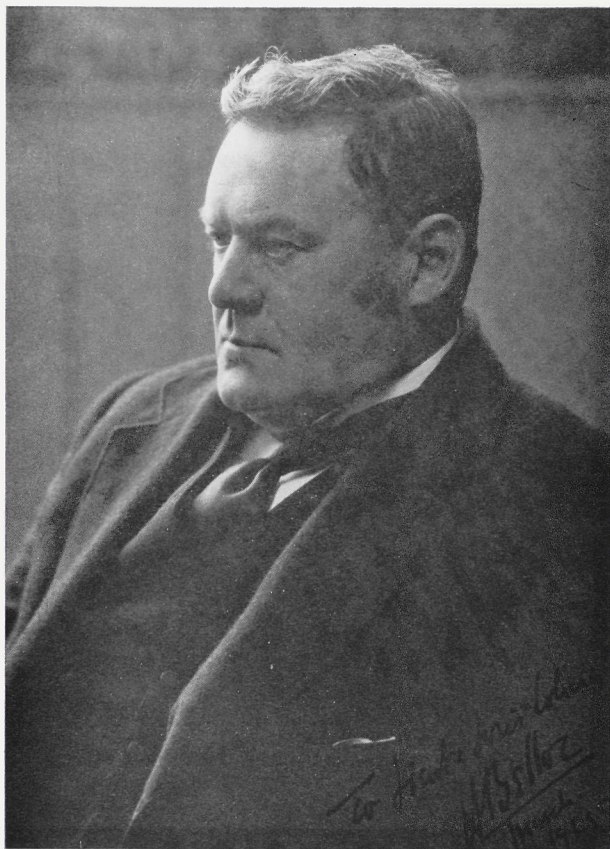
T.S. ELIOT

ROBERT FROST

JOHN GALSWORTHY

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

MARIANNE MOORE





*Pinckney*

For Louis and Margaret Colin  
with all the best from  
Stephen Vincent Benét





*Alfred Davis*

For Louis Henry Cohn  
from Rups Davies

21. 4. 32.



for Marguerite Louis Henry Cohen  
with regards from  
one of their dramatic  
cast

T. S. Eliot



Voltaire and his  
book Robert

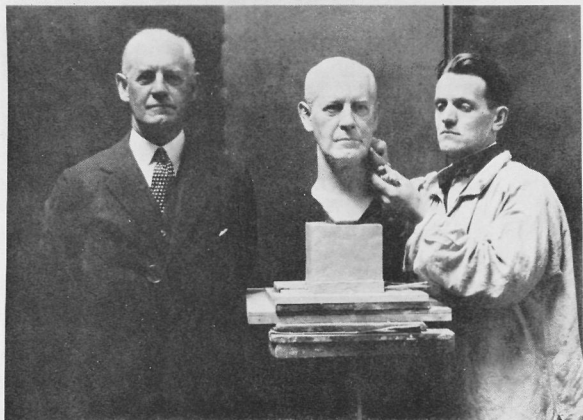
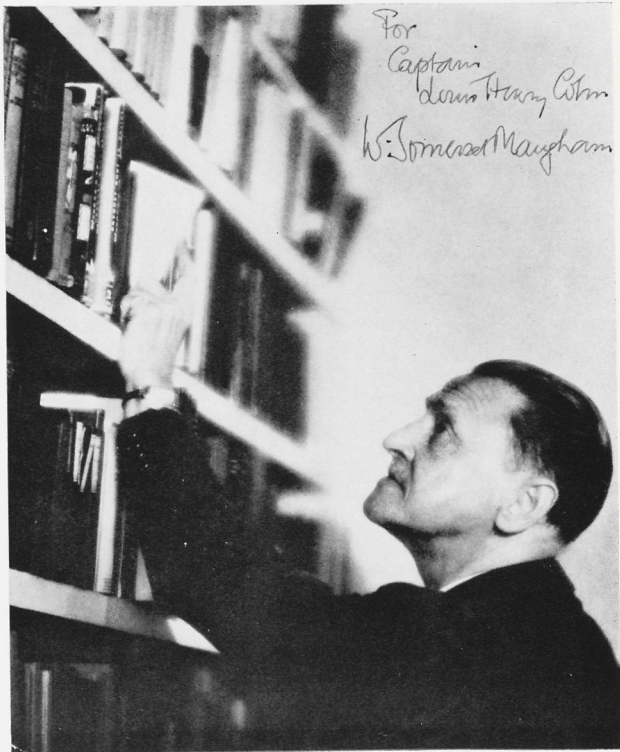


Exhibit for Louis Henry Galt: with friends:

Wm. E. Galtworthy April 1931

For  
Captain  
Lewis Henry Cohn  
W. Somerset Maugham







from Lawrence Scott  
and Marjorie Moore  
for kind, ingenious  
Marguerite Coker.  
April 1, 1964

(Verso)

# Our Growing Collections

KENNETH A. LOHF

*Anderson Gift.* Mr. Lewis N. Anderson, Jr., (A.B., 1926) has presented three letters written to his grandfather Samuel Cowdrey Anderson by Charles Francis Adams; dated February 2, March 18, and April 23, 1876, the letters were written at the time Adams was editing and publishing *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, and they concern his views of public life, Republican party politics, and his friends, notably Carl Schurz. Also donated by Mr. Anderson are two manuscript items relating to his great-grandfather Peter Anderson (1800-1881): his commission as Captain in the New York State 97th Infantry, signed by DeWitt Clinton, dated January 8, 1828; and a handwritten copy of an 1857 letter which he wrote to the Hungarian patriot Louis Kossuth, at the time visiting in New York, in which he presented to Kossuth a sword crafted by his father, James Anderson.

*Andrews (Mildred) Fund gift.* The Mildred Andrews Fund, through the courtesy of Mr. Peter Putnam, has presented the bronze maquette of the statue of Hart Crane, done by the American sculptor William M. McVey in 1984. Measuring approximately 16 inches in height, the statue depicts the poet in three-quarters length in the same stance as he appears in the now-famous photograph of him on the roof of his apartment house in Brooklyn Heights with the Bridge in the background.

*Butcher gift.* An album containing seventy-eight manuscript and printed items relating to George Washington Cable and Adelene Moffat has been presented by Professor Philip Butcher (Ph.D., 1956). Included are four letters and a manuscript written by Cable, seventeen letters and manuscripts by and relating to Moffat,

eight photographs, and forty-eight printed items, such as leaflets, brochures, and clippings, documenting their various activities.

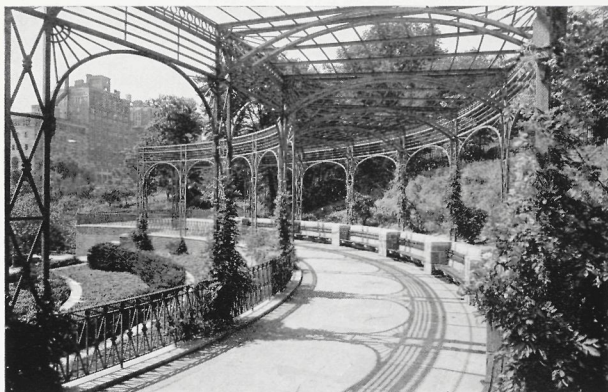
*Clarke bequest.* The papers of the landscape architect Gilmore D. Clarke, received by bequest, include more than two thousand pieces of correspondence, manuscripts, photographs, and memorabilia. There are files relating to Clarke's works on city planning, the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair, and parkways and gardens in the New York City area. There are letters in the collection from Dwight D. Eisenhower, Herbert Hoover, Archibald MacLeish, Paul Manship, Robert Moses, Lewis Mumford, Richard M. Nixon, Nelson A. Rockefeller, Franklin D. and Eleanor Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman.

*Curtis Brown, Ltd., gift.* The papers of Curtis Brown, Ltd., have been considerably enriched with the recent gift from the literary agency of approximately 110,000 letters, manuscripts, and publishing documents, dating from the 1950s through the 1970s. The author files contain extensive correspondence with numerous American and English writers, including, among others, Michael J. Arlen, W.H. Auden, Saul Bellow, Elizabeth Bowen, John Cheever, Frederic Dannay, Lawrence Durrell, Erle Stanley Gardner, Christopher Isherwood, Robert Graves, Ogden Nash, Julian Symons, and Eudora Welty.

*Dannay gift.* Messrs. Richard and Douglas Dannay have presented a collection of 2,681 volumes from the library of their late father, Frederic Dannay, co-creator and co-author of the Ellery Queen mystery stories, a gift which establishes at the Libraries a resource for the study of the modern detective story. There is a unique file of 159 volumes of Frederic Dannay's own copies of the Queen books which he signed with his two pseudonyms, Ellery Queen and Barnaby Ross. Also included among the collection are: 223 books by Queen, comprising primarily first American and English editions; 302 detective story anthologies edited by Queen; 113 first and early foreign editions of Queen's books; and a set of *Ellery*







Henry Hudson Parkway, the Conservatory Garden in Central Park, and a bridge over the Saw Mill River Parkway; work by the landscape architect, Gilmore D. Clarke, in the New York metropolitan area.  
(Clarke bequest)



*Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 51 volumes, dating from 1947 to 1975. More than one thousand volumes of twentieth century books in the field of detective fiction by various other authors, nearly all first editions, published in England and America from the 1920s to the 1970s, form another important component of the



Sylvia Beach and James Joyce at Shakespeare and Company, Paris, 1921 or 1922. (Halper gift)

collection; included are works by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Phoebe Atwood Taylor, Ngaio Marsh, Margery Allingham, and Dashiell Hammett, among numerous others. Finally, there are 151 volumes of reference works, bibliography, and critical works in the field of detective literature, as well as several hundred volumes of general literature.

*Fuld gift.* More than two thousand letters and other materials were recently added by Judge Stanley Howells Fuld (LL.B.,

1926) to the collection of his papers. Among the gift are letters from Warren E. Burger, Thomas E. Dewey, William O. Douglas, John Foster Dulles, Felix Frankfurter, Herbert H. Lehman, Nelson A. Rockefeller, and other jurists and public figures.

*Halper gift.* The papers and library of the writer and James Joyce authority, Nathan Halper (A.B., 1927; Ph.D., 1973), have been presented by his widow, Mrs. Marjorie Windust Halper. There are correspondence files and manuscripts for his numerous books and articles on Joyce, translations from Yiddish poetry and fiction, writings on chess, short stories and essays on literary topics, and research files on Jewish family names, local history, and Provincetown, Massachusetts, where he had his summer home. The library contains works in the same fields, and most notable among the nearly three hundred volumes are Halper's heavily annotated copies of *Finnegan's Wake* and other works by and about Joyce.

*Higginbotham gift.* Mr. Hal Ford Higginbotham and Mrs. Barbra Buckner Higginbotham (M.S. in L.S., 1969) have presented funds in memory of Mrs. Higginbotham's father, Professor Zeak Monroe Buckner, for the purchase of the 1554 edition of John Gower's *De confessione amantis*, printed in London by Thomas Berthellette. The memorial book, reflecting Professor Buckner's special interest in the literature of the age of Chaucer, is the third edition of one of the classics of Middle English, and it is the first sixteenth century edition of the work to enter the rare book collection. One of the renowned treasures of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library is the late fourteenth century manuscript of Gower's work in the George Arthur Plimpton Collection, and the presence of an early printed edition will assist the researches of scholars in this period of English literature. The distinguished copy presented by Mr. and Mrs. Higginbotham bears bookplates and ownership marks of George Daniel, Mark Masterman Sykes, Robert Hoe, and Beverly Chew.



Corliss Lamont (left) with John and Constance Masefield, ca. 1938.  
(Lamont gift)

*Lamont gift.* Among the several gifts recently received from Dr. Corliss Lamont (Ph.D., 1932) are two photographs relating to John Masefield, one of which depicts the poet's home at Pinbury Park, Cirencester, and the other a group portrait of the donor with John and Constance Masefield, ca. 1938, taken at the same location.

*Marquart gift.* Ms. Phyllis Marquart (formerly Phyllis Yuill; M.S., 1973) has presented a collection of fifty-four editions of *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, written in 1898 by Helen Bannerman, who described a darkskinned child's adventures with four tigers. Written while the author lived in India, the book became phenomenally popular in both England and the United States. The editions in Ms. Marquart's gift, dating from one published by Frederick A. Stokes in New York early in the century to one published in the early 1980s, include reprints, foreign editions, adaptations, and stories by other authors using characters from the original work.

*Nachmansohn gift.* The papers of the late Professor David Nachmansohn have been presented by his widow, Mrs. Edith Nachmansohn. There are more than 1,300 letters, manuscripts, photographs, and printed materials spanning his entire professional career as a professor of biochemistry at Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin, 1926-30, the Sorbonne, 1933-39, Yale University, 1939-42, and Columbia University, 1942-82. Primarily concerned with biochemistry, the collection includes correspondence from some twenty Nobel Prize winners, foremost among them, Otto Meyerhof, director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, Archibald Vivian Hill, Feodor Lynen, and Severo Ochoa. Professor Nachmansohn's concern with the Jewish question appears throughout the collection, especially in material concerning the Weizmann Institute and other academic institutions in Israel.

*Rothkopf gift.* Mrs. Carol Z. Rothkopf (A.M., 1952) has recently presented for addition to the House of Books Collection the files





This seventeenth century bookplate, among the largest in the collection, is over thirteen inches tall. (Schaeffer gift)



of inscribed books, manuscripts, and autograph letters which the playwright Tom Stoppard had sent to Marguerite A. Cohn, the co-founder of the firm. There are inscribed copies of both limited and trade editions of *Dogg's Hamlet*, *Caboot's Macbeth*, 1979, the mimeographed playscript of *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, 1977, and twenty-one folio pages of holograph drafts of the 1981 play *On the Razzle*, along with an autograph letter relating to the manuscript. Mrs. Rothkopf's gift also included a series of snapshots of T.S. and Valerie Eliot at a dinner party which the donor gave at her apartment in March 1959.

*Schaefer gift.* The holdings of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library have been considerably enriched by the recent gift made by Mr. and Mrs. Sam Schaefer of a collection of more than ten thousand bookplates, ranging from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries and including extensive holdings of examples printed in America, England, France, Germany, and other European countries. There are also special files of bookplates of libraries, members of royalty, ecclesiastical figures, Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and authors, as well as the work of notable engravers, such as John Pyne, Alexander Anderson, Edwin Davis French, Joseph Callender, and Peter Maverick. The Schaefer's have also donated a number of other notable items: a group of eleven manuscripts relating to the French Revolution, among which is a letter of October 23, 1789, signed by the commander of the National Guard at Versailles in which he explains the behavior of the Guard during the attack on the palace; a group of thirteen letters written by members of the French court in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; the manuscript of a poem by the noted Danish scientist, H.C. Oersted, addressed to the English astronomer Sir Frederic Herschel; a late eighteenth century pen and ink portrait of Jonathan Swift; three eighteenth century Burmese palm leaf manuscripts; important single autograph letters written by Romain Rolland and Henry W. Longfellow, the latter with a

contemporary photographic portrait; the 1940 poster printed in London, "A tous les Français," containing quotations from General Charles de Gaulle's famous radio address; a manuscript resolution of the Artist's Society, Philadelphia, 1846, on the death of the painter Henry Inman; and Henry Ward Beecher's copy of James A. Shearman's *Illustrations of a Ramble Abroad*, 1884, inscribed to Beecher with a watercolor drawing by the author.

*Scott gift.* Barbara Howe's *Wild Geese Flying*, a poem privately issued as a Christmas greeting in 1966, has been donated by Mr. Barry Scott; the four page leaflet, printed in red, is inscribed by the poet on the verso of the title leaf. Mr. Scott also donated Melville Cane's copy of the first edition of *Annie Allen* by Gwendolyn Brooks, autographed by Cane on the inside front cover.

*Starr gift.* Mrs. Mary Belle Starr has presented a group of papers of her late husband, Professor Louis M. Starr (A.M., 1953; Ph.D., 1954), relating to his researches on Joseph Pulitzer. The more than two thousand items in the gift include annotated photocopies of Pulitzer letters and transcriptions of the publisher's shorthand notebooks which Professor Starr had gathered in connection with his proposed biography.

*Swanberg gift.* The biographer and historian William Andrew Swanberg has presented papers, manuscripts, and correspondence pertaining to his notable and award-winning books, *Citizen Hearst*, *Jim Fisk: The Career of an Improbable Rascal*, *Luce and His Empire*, *Norman Thomas: The Last Idealist*, *Pulitzer*, *The Rector and the Rogue*, *Sickles the Incredible*, and *Whitney Father*, *Whitney Heiress*. There is extensive correspondence with publishers and agents, as well as with numerous authors and public figures, including William Benton, James M. Cain, Bruce Catton, John Hersey, Margaret Leech, Archibald MacLeish, Carey McWilliams, Reinhold Niebuhr, Mrs. Fremont Older, Dick Powell, Adela Rogers St. Johns, Thornton Wilder, and members of the Whitney family.

*Van Doren gift.* In memory of George Van Doren, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Van Doren and Miss Mary Van Doren have presented the Van Doren family bible. Printed in Dordrecht, Holland, in 1730 by Pieter and Jacob Keur, the volume, illustrated with handsome engravings of Biblical scenes, contains genealogical records of the Van Doren family for the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

## Activities of the Friends

*Finances.* General purpose contributions during the twelve month period ended on June 30, 1985, totaled \$31,044. Special purpose gifts, primarily designated for the Rare Book and Manuscript Library building fund, totaled \$194,403. Gifts in kind reached the all time high of \$511,768. The total of all gifts and contributions since the establishment of the association in 1951 now stands at \$5,747,736. The Council also approved a transfer of \$10,000 to the Rare Book and Manuscript Library furnishings fund, the fifth annual gift made by the Friends to this project.

*New Council Members.* Mrs. Pearl London and Mr. George Lowry have been elected to serve on the Council of the Friends.

*Fall reception.* A reception to open the exhibition "The House of Books that Marguerite and Louis Cohn Built" will be held on Thursday afternoon, December 5, in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. On display will be a selection of first editions, photographs, manuscripts, autograph letters, and memorabilia received by bequest from the late Marguerite A. Cohn.

*Future Meetings.* The winter exhibition, "Genius and Madman Baron Corvo," will open with a member's preview on Thursday, March 6, 1986, in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library; and the annual Bancroft Awards Dinner will be held in the Rotunda of Low Memorial Library on Thursday evening, April 3, 1986.

*Note:* In the May issue of *Columns*, p. 37, the donor of the James G. Phelps Stokes papers should have been given as Mrs. Lettice S. Phelps Stokes.

# THE FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA LIBRARIES

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The Friends assist the Columbia Libraries in several direct ways: first, through their active interest in the institution and its ideals and through promoting public interest in the role of a research library in education; second, through gifts of books, manuscripts and other useful materials; and third, through financial contributions.

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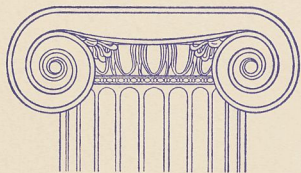
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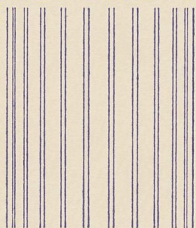
RUDOLPH ELLENBOGEN, *Assistant Editor*







# COLUMBIA LIBRARY COLUMNS



## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

KENNETH A. LOHF is Librarian for Rare Books and Manuscripts.

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# Columbia Library Columns

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# First You Dream, Then You Die

FRANCIS M. NEVINS, JR.

N September 25, 1968, a 64-year-old man, one-legged and wheelchair-bound and looking almost ninety, died of a stroke in his room at Manhattan's Sheraton Russell Hotel. His name was Cornell Woolrich. He was the greatest writer of suspense fiction that ever lived. His two dozen novels and more than two hundred stories and novelettes had the same wrenching impact, the same resonations of terror and anguish and loneliness and despair, as the darkest films of his cinematic soul-brother, Alfred Hitchcock. He had lived as a recluse with his mother in a series of New York residential hotels, trapped in a bizarre love-hate relationship with her and in the quicksand of his own homosexual self-contempt. When she died, he cracked, and began his own long descent to the grave. He had the most wretched life of any American writer since Poe, and his funeral was attended by exactly five people. He left no survivors but did leave a rich legacy of fiction whose principal beneficiary since his death has been Columbia University. Under his will, virtually all his literary properties were placed in a trust fund, named for Woolrich's mother, to provide scholarships for Columbia students.

The Columbia connection with the Woolrich family goes back to before the author's birth. Woolrich's mother (1874-1957) was born Claire Attalie Tarler, and one of her brothers, George Cornell Tarler (1876-1945) graduated from Columbia Law School in 1899 and went on to a distinguished legal and diplomatic career. Shortly after the turn of the century, Claire married Genaro Hop-

*Opposite:* Artist Larry Schwinger's rendition of the amnesiac hero searching the city for his lost self in Cornell Woolrich's 1941 novel *The Black Curtain*.

ley-Woolrich, a civil engineer apparently of Latin American descent. Their only child, Cornell George Hopley-Woolrich, was born in New York City on December 4, 1903. The marriage quickly fell apart, and Woolrich spent much of his childhood in Mexico with his bridge-building father.

At the age of eight he was taken by his maternal grandfather to Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts to see a traveling French company perform Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, and the experience gave him a sudden sharp insight into color and drama, and his first sense of tragedy. Three years later, on a night when he looked up at the stars from the valley of Anahuac, he understood that someday, like Cio-Cio-San, he too would have to die. From that moment on he was haunted by a sense of doom. "I had that trapped feeling," he wrote in his unfinished and unpublished autobiography, "like some sort of a poor insect that you've put inside a down-turned glass, and it tries to climb up the sides, and it can't, and it can't, and it can't."

During his adolescence he returned to New York and lived with his grandfather and aunt and mother in the grandfather's house on 113th Street, near Morningside Park, a short walk from the Columbia campus. In 1921 he enrolled as a Columbia undergraduate, with his father paying the tuition from Mexico City. His major was journalism but his idol, like that of many young men his age, was F. Scott Fitzgerald, and his dream was to become an author or a professional dancer, for these were the most romantic occupations in the world. In two of his courses, one on creative writing and another on the novel, he got to know another student of about his age, a man who went on to win international eminence as an historian of ideas, and to hold the most prestigious academic position Columbia offered.

In the summer of 1970 Jacques Barzun still held the title of University Professor, with responsibility for a generous assortment of pedagogic and administrative work. The afternoon I visited his office in Low Library, he took more than an hour out of his sched-

ule to reminisce about the young Woolrich. Then he had to leave for a meeting, but said that if I cared to wait till he returned we could continue our talk for the rest of the afternoon. I know an unrefuseable offer when I hear one. I waited. Barzun admitted that he hadn't known Woolrich at all well, but his memories of a shy and introspective youth with a keen interest in literature and under the complete domination of his mother squared with everything I had learned about that haunted man.

During an illness in his junior year—either a foot infection or jaundice, depending on which autobiographical account you believe—Woolrich fought boredom by toying with the first draft of a novel, writing in pencil on sheets of loose yellow paper he'd scrounged from around the 113th Street house, with a cardboard wedge from one of his laundered shirts as a support. From the first he was a rapid writer. "The stream of words was like an electric arc leaping across the intervening space from pole to opposite pole, from me to paper. . . . It was tiring and it wouldn't let go. . . . You couldn't stop it, it had to stop by itself. Then it fizzled out again at last, as unpredictably as it had begun. It left me feeling spent. . . ." By the time he was well enough to return to school he'd become a writing addict. Every evening after supper, from nine till midnight, he'd sit in a second-floor room, the door closed, the family out of hearing, a Burmese elephant-head lamp lit on a pedestal in the corner behind him, and scribble furiously. By late spring of 1924 his first draft was done, and he borrowed a friend's typewriter to turn it into readable form. Almost before he knew it that novel sold, and Woolrich quit Columbia to pursue his Fitzgeraldesque dream of bright lights and gay music and a meteoric literary career.

Woolrich's early mainstream fiction is saturated with the Fitzgerald influence, especially that first novel, *Cover Charge* (Boni & Liveright, 1926), which chronicles the lives and loves of the Jazz Age's gilded youth, the child-people, flitting from thrill to thrill, conversing in a mannered slang which, sixty years later, reads like

the gibberings of creatures from another galaxy. But if nothing else, the novel is eerily prophetic in the way its protagonist's fate foreshadows Woolrich's own. Ballroom dancer Alan Walker winds up alone, in a cheap hotel room, his legs all but useless after



Woolrich in his hotel room in the late 1950s, posing with the dust jackets of several of his novels and story collections.

a drunken auto smash-up, abandoned by the women he at various times loved, contemplating suicide. "I hate the world," he cries out. "Everything comes into it so clean and goes out so dirty."

This debut novel was followed by *Children of the Ritz* (Boni & Liveright, 1927), a frothy concoction about a spoiled heiress's marriage to her chauffeur, which won Woolrich a \$10,000 prize and a contract from First National Pictures for the movie rights. He was invited to Hollywood to help with the adaptation and stayed on as a staff writer. Besides his movie chores and an occasional story or article for magazines like *College Humor* and *Smart Set*, he completed three more novels during these years. Early in



1931, after a brief, inexplicable and disastrous marriage with a producer's daughter, Woolrich fled back to Manhattan and his mother. His last mainstream novel, *Manhattan Love Song* (Godwin, 1932) anticipates the motifs of his later fiction with its love-struck young couple cursed by a malignant fate which leaves one dead and the other desolate. But over the next two years he sold next to nothing and was soon deep in debt, reduced to sneaking into movie palaces by the fire doors. What he didn't know was that he was on the brink of a new life as a writer, a life so different from his earlier literary career that in his autobiography he said he wished his previous fiction "had been written in invisible ink and the reagent had been thrown away." He was about to become the foremost suspense writer of all time.

It was in 1934 that Woolrich decided to abandon his hopes of mainstream literary prestige and concentrate on the lowly genre of mystery fiction. He sold three stories to pulp magazines that year, ten more in 1935, and was soon an established professional whose name was a fixture on the covers of *Black Mask*, *Detective Fiction Weekly*, *Dime Detective* and other pulps. The more than 100 stories and novelettes which he sold to the pulps during the Thirties are richly varied in type, including quasi police procedurals, rapid-action whizbangs, and encounters with the occult. But the best and the best-known of them are the tales of pure edge-of-the-seat suspense, and even their titles signal their predominant mood of bleakness and despair. "I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes." "Speak to Me of Death." "All at Once, No Alice." "Dusk to Dawn." "Men Must Die." "If I Should Die Before I Wake." "The Living Lie Down with the Dead." "Charlie Won't Be Home Tonight." "You'll Never See Me Again." These and dozens of other Woolrich suspense stories evoke with awesome power the desperation of those who walk the city's darkened streets and the terror that lurks at noonday in commonplace settings. In his hands even such clichéd storylines as the race to save the innocent man from the electric chair and the amnesiac searching for his lost self resonate



with human anguish. Woolrich's world is a feverish place where the prevailing emotions are loneliness and fear and the prevailing action a race against time and death. His most characteristic detective stories end with the discovery that no rational account of events is possible, and his suspense stories tend to close with the terror not dissipated but omnipresent, like God.

The typical Woolrich settings are the seedy hotel, the cheap dance hall, the rundown movie house and the precinct station backroom. The overwhelming reality in his world, at least during the Thirties, is the Depression, and Woolrich has no peers at putting us inside the life of a frightened little guy in a tiny apartment with no money, no job, a hungry wife and children, and anxiety eating him like a cancer. If a Woolrich protagonist is in love, the beloved is likely to vanish in such a way that the protagonist not only can't find her but can't convince anyone she ever existed. Or, in another classic Woolrich situation, the protagonist comes to after a blackout—the result of amnesia, drugs, hypnosis or whatever—and little by little becomes certain that he committed a murder or other crime while out of himself. The police are rarely sympathetic, in fact they are the earthly counterparts of the malignant powers above; and their main function is to torment the helpless.

All we can do about this nightmare we live in is to create, if we are very lucky, a few islands of love and trust to sustain us and help us forget. But love dies while the lovers go on living, and Woolrich excels at portraying the corrosion of a once beautiful relationship. Yet he created very few irredeemably evil characters; for if one loves or needs love, Woolrich makes us identify with that person, all of his or her dark side notwithstanding.

Purely as technical exercises, many of Woolrich's novels and stories are awful. They don't make the slightest bit of sense. And that's the point: neither does life. Nevertheless some of his tales, usually thanks to outlandish coincidence, manage to end quite happily. But since he never used a series character, the reader can never know in advance whether a particular Woolrich story will be light

or dark, will end in triumph or despair, which is one of many reasons why his work is so hauntingly suspenseful.

In 1940 Woolrich joined the migration of pulp mystery writers from lurid-covered magazines to hardcover books, but his sus-



Artist Larry Schwinger's rendition of the Third Avenue El sequence from Woolrich's classic 1942 novel *Phantom Lady*.

pense novels carry over the same motifs, beliefs and devices that energized his shorter fiction. The eleven novels he published during the Forties, six under his own byline, four as William Irish and one as George Hopley, are unsurpassable classics in the poetry of terror. *The Bride Wore Black*, *The Black Curtain*, *Black Alibi*, *Phantom Lady*, *The Black Angel*, *Deadline at Dawn*, *The Black Path of Fear*, *Night Has a Thousand Eyes*, *Waltz into Darkness*, *Rendezvous in Black*, *I Married a Dead Man*, these titles, all pub-

lished between 1940 and 1948, make up the finest group of suspense novels ever written.

Those were his peak years, in which he became a wealthy man and a superstar of his genre. Publishers began issuing hardcover and paperback collections of his shorter fiction, which then came to the attention of the story editors of the great dramatic radio series of the Forties, leading to dozens of Woolrich-based dramas on *Suspense* and *Mollé Mystery Theatre* and similar programs. Meanwhile Hollywood rediscovered the boy wonder of the Twenties and paid him handsomely for the right to make movies out of large numbers of his novels and stories. These pictures helped shape the uniquely Forties brand of suspense movies known today as *film noir*. But all the money and adulation didn't make Woolrich happy. In a letter of February 2, 1947 to Columbia's poet and professor Mark Van Doren, he seemed to blame his unhappiness on the fact that he was revered only as a mystery writer, not as a literary figure. "I don't like to look back on the Columbia days for that reason; the gap between expectation and accomplishment is too wide." On the other hand, impenetrable as the shield of self-contempt was with which Woolrich had surrounded himself, it's unlikely he would have been any happier if he *had* been acclaimed as another Scott Fitzgerald.

Around the end of the Forties Woolrich's mother became seriously ill, and that combined with his personal problems seemed to paralyze his ability and desire to write. During the Fifties he published very little, but he and his mother continued to live in their comfortable isolation, for his magazine stories proved to be as adaptable to television as they'd been to radio a decade earlier, and almost all the classic TV dramatic series—*Ford Theater*, *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Climax!*, even the prestigious *Playhouse 90*—presented live or filmed versions of his fiction.

The day his mother died, in 1957, was the day he began to die himself, but in his case the process dragged on for more than ten

years. Diabetic, alcoholic, wracked by self-hate and loneliness, he dragged out the last years of his life. He continued to write but left unfinished much more than he completed, and the only new work that saw print in the Sixties was a handful of final "tales of love and despair." He developed gangrene in his leg and let it go untended for so long that when he finally sought medical help the doctor had no choice but to amputate. After the operation he lived in a wheelchair, unable to learn how to walk on an artificial leg. On September 25, 1968, he died of a stroke, leaving unfinished two novels, a collection of short stories and an autobiography, the typescripts of all of which can be seen in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. He had prepared a long list of titles for stories he'd never even begun, and one of these captures the essence of his life and world in a single perfect phrase: *First You Dream, Then You Die*.

"I was only trying to cheat death," he wrote in a fragment found among his papers. "I was only trying to surmount for a little while the darkness that all my life I surely knew was going to come rolling in on me some day and obliterate me. I was only trying to stay alive a little brief while longer, after I was already gone." In the end, of course, he had to die as we all do; but as long as there are readers to be haunted by the fruit of his life, by the way he took his wretched psychological environment and his sense of entrapment and solitude and turned them into poetry of the shadows, the world Woolrich imagined lives.

# Sherlock Holmes: The Detective As Hero

MARY WERTHEIM

IN November, 1886 when, after several rejections, Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle's novelette, *A Study in Scarlet*, was finally accepted for publication by Ward, Lock and Company in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, 1887, no one involved suspected that Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John H. Watson were destined to become two of the most popular figures in literary history. The lack of fanfare surrounding their debut is illustrated by the fact that, although the publishers liked the tale, they had no inclination to rush its appearance or to increase their original offer of £25 for the story and all rights to it. Doyle, eager for ready money, accepted the terms and never earned another penny from it. But Doyle did not remain an impecunious author for long. Over the next forty years, the doings of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson provided him with an enormous, steady income.

*A Study in Scarlet*, not the most carefully plotted of the four novelettes and fifty-six stories that comprise the Canon, the term used for the complete collection by ardent admirers, served to introduce Holmes and Watson to their adoring public. The publication of "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place" in the *Strand Magazine* for January 1927 brought the Sherlockian saga to a close. The universal appeal these works achieved is obvious in the light of a report issued in 1958 by the Doyle Estate stipulating that it was drawing royalties in seventy-two currencies. More recently, Ronald Burt De Waal, in *The World Bibliography of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson* (1974), lists 920 foreign editions in fifty languages, thirty of which are English language readers published in Japan for use by students. Editions are available in Braille and shorthand as well.



When works of literature endure cross-culturally, are read in French, Telugu and Uzbek, and survive the cataclysmic social changes that occurred during the years between the disintegration of the British Empire with its comforting Victorian certainties and the development of the chaotic technocracy that is the modern world, it is reasonable to assume that readers are responding to the intrapsychic similarities between people which outweigh differences caused by widely disparate national backgrounds. For certain readers, immersion in the world of Sherlock Holmes and the good doctor extends beyond simply reading the works. Since the establishment of the Baker Street Irregulars in 1934, a club exclusively for male devotees of the Canon, other clubs called Scion Societies have been formed all over the world. In Denmark, Burma, and New Zealand, the Sherlockian can find a congenial environment in which to enjoy what for many people has become a major hobby. For those who wish more than occasional club meetings, commercial ventures based upon the characters of Holmes and Watson abound as well. Conventions, cruises, mystery weekends, even international tours that feature sites mentioned in the Canon, are among the travel industry's perennial offerings. Innumerable other businesses have cashed in on the public's awareness of these two characters, pointing up their importance as universal symbols.

The world Doyle created in the Sherlockian saga conveys an aura of verisimilitude convincing in its recreation of the social fabric of Holmes's time. Richness of detail and intriguing characterizations are Doyle's strengths. To his dedicated readers, it hardly matters that his plots are sometimes rather thin. In "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first of the Holmesian short stories, Holmes fails to recover a photograph that reveals Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismund von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein and hereditary king of Bohemia, in the company of Irene Adler, a retired prima donna from New Jersey. Holmes, rarely described in especially positive terms, perhaps because Doyle retained a lifelong

ambivalence toward his most enduring character, experiences a flash of attraction for Miss Adler. Lest the reader mistakenly assume that Holmes is susceptible to the temptations of the flesh, Watson is quick to explain that Holmes does not dabble in love.



Arthur Conan Doyle at his desk in Southsea  
at the time he was writing *A Study in Scarlet*.

He asserts, "It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen; but, as a lover, he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a

gibe and a sneer." In the same story, we learn that Holmes is a cocaine addict given to the mood swings induced by this still popular drug. Doyle, always a keen observer, used his medical knowledge to add realistic touches to the narrative, even basing Holmes's methods of circumstantial and inferential deduction upon techniques employed by Dr. Joseph Bell, one of his professors at Edinburgh University.

Holmes is a mythic figure, larger than life, unencumbered with the intellectual, moral, and emotional clutter that prevents lesser mortals from dealing with the world objectively and controlling their own destinies. Holmes is presented to the reader as a demigod, deriving power from undisclosed sources, yet mortal. He bleeds. Literally without peer, he is one of a kind, an awesome figure at the service of the public, yet in a class by himself. The need to engage in the kind of personal discourse that cements relationships between people is absent from his character, and he is apparently unaware of his patronizing attitude toward Watson. The reader accepts the inferior position of Watson as just, acknowledging that Holmes cannot be expected to behave as ordinary people do. Watson must be satisfied with whatever pleases Holmes and relinquish his desire for what Holmes cannot supply. Occasionally his patience is rewarded, and he is singled out for praise. In "The Five Orange Pips," for example, during one of Watson's many visits to Baker Street, the downstairs doorbell rings. "Who could come to-night? Some friend of yours, perhaps?" Watson asks. "Except yourself I have none," he answered. "I do not encourage visitors."

In spite of his unattractive exclusiveness, Holmes wins the reader's confidence by enunciating certain truths about the perceptual limitations of most people from which he is undeniably exempt. In "A Scandal in Bohemia" he chastises Watson for failing to recall how many steps lead up to their second-floor rooms at 221 Baker Street, even though he has ascended the staircase many times. "'Quite so!'" Sherlock declares. "'You have not observed. And

yet you have seen. That is just my point. Now I know that there are seventeen steps, because I have both seen and observed.' ” The reader recognizes the difference between active observation and passive seeing, having incurred the consequences of the latter many times, and is relieved that Sherlock Holmes does not suffer from this intellectual shortcoming.

Yet, from the outset of the Canon, Holmes is such a reptilian individual that his visual acuity, supreme rationality, and passion to rid society of its criminal element hardly mitigate the limitations of his ruthless intellectualism. When in *A Study in Scarlet* young Stamford brings Holmes and Watson together, having learned that both men wish to share rooms in order to reduce expenses, his remarks make it clear that human considerations do not prevent Holmes from pursuing his goals: “ ‘It is not easy to express the inexpressible. . . . Holmes is a little too scientific for my tastes—it approaches to cold-bloodedness. I could imagine his giving a friend a little pinch of the latest vegetable alkaloid, not out of malevolence, you understand, but simply out of a spirit of inquiry in order to have an accurate idea of the effects. To do him justice, I think that he would take it himself with the same readiness. He appears to have a passion for definite and exact knowledge.’ ” The scientist in Watson approves of Holmes’s search for accuracy. He is, nevertheless, shocked to learn that Holmes beat cadavers in the dissecting room with sticks in order to verify the extent to which bruises might be produced after death. Watson is a physician, so his squeamishness is somewhat surprising, especially when one considers the treatment usually afforded corpses by medical students. However, he speaks with the voice of a Victorian public simultaneously attracted and repelled by gruesome incidents and imagery. Doyle, well aware of the appetite of horror, wrote several grisly tales, including “Lot No. 249,” “The Case of Lady Sannox,” and “The Brazilian Cat.”

At the initial meeting between Holmes and Watson, Holmes expresses enthusiasm about a reagent he has discovered that is pre-



precipitated exclusively by hemoglobin. Since the presence of blood at the scene of a crime is sometimes difficult to detect, Holmes is excited by the implications of his find for police work and anxious to demonstrate its effectiveness to Watson and Stamford. He digs a bodkin into his finger and draws some blood into a pipette and then transfers it to a liter of water. For a time the solution remains clear, but suddenly it changes color and a brown dust filters to the bottom of the vessel. In a symbolic sense, the incident parallels Watson's relationship to Holmes. In his inert state Holmes appears cold and distant, but his personality contains elements that are activated by the needs of clients for his services. Thus Watson learns at the onset of their relationship that no matter how concealed Holmes's humanity may appear to be, its current runs deep beneath his aloof facade.

In contrast to Holmes, Watson is a very fallible mortal who tends toward the commonplace. One of his primary functions in the tales is to be wrong, to be a foil for Holmes's almost invariable rightness. Watson's blunders in logic and bewilderment in the face of tangled circumstances provide contrast to Holmes's superior reasoning. Twice married, engaged in the prosaic effort to earn a living as a moderately successful physician with a not too devoted practice, and discomfited by inept servants, Watson accepts his subservient position in Holmes's life, although he sometimes complains about it. In "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter," he tells us that Holmes's self-containment makes him uncomfortable at times: "This reticence upon his part had increased the somewhat inhuman effect which he produced upon me, until sometimes I found myself regarding him as an isolated phenomenon, a brain without a heart, as deficient in human sympathy as he was preeminent in intelligence. His aversion to women, and his disinclination to form new friendships were both typical of his unemotional character, but not more so than his suppression of every reference to his own people." As the representative of Doyle's readership, Watson knows from experience the problems





“The Death of Sherlock Holmes”; Sydney Paget’s illustration of the detective and his arch-enemy, Moriarity, struggling over the Reichbach Falls.

STATION:  
NORWOOD JUNCTION.

12, TENNISON ROAD,  
SOUTH NORWOOD.

Dear Miss Price

Many thanks for your very kind  
note. I am glad the story had so happy an  
ending. Holmes died in the Xmas number  
so there is an end to his adventures, but I  
was none the less very interested to hear  
your curious experience.

Thanking you again

Yours faithfully

Alonan Doyle.

Letter written in early 1894 to a Miss Price mentioning the death  
of Sherlock Holmes. (Author's collection)

attendant upon living in an imperfect world, subjected to random events which often have fateful consequences. He met Holmes as an indirect consequence of his adventures in Afghanistan. Severely injured, by a Jezail bullet that shattered his shoulder bone and damaged the subclavian artery, Watson barely escaped capture by the murderous Ghazis. His orderly, Murray, who makes only a brief appearance in *A Study in Scarlet*, saved the young doctor's life by throwing him across a pack horse and bringing him to the British lines. Unfortunately, his troubles were not yet over. In the base hospital at Peshawar, the already weakened Watson contracted enteric fever, clung to life for months, and ultimately returned to England an emaciated shadow of his former self. It was during his convalescence that the meeting with Holmes took place. Consequently, Watson has a sincere appreciation for the role other people play in ameliorating the harsh effects of random happenings. After all, if it had not been for Murray and his selfless courage, it is doubtful that he could have survived to meet Holmes.

While resolving criminal cases, Sherlock Holmes and his cronies occasionally fail to prevent casualties from occurring. Knowing what can be achieved through the intervention of others, Watson is not at all surprised to learn, as he relates in "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter," that Holmes's brother, Mycroft, a corpulent, lazy and solipsistic caricature of Sherlock, who belongs to the Diogenes Club, an organization devoted to the elimination of conversation, has been consulted by Mr. Melas, a Greek interpreter who has become entangled in a precarious situation. Because of his knowledge of the Greek language, Melas is induced to go to a strange house where he meets a fellow Greek, a Mr. Kratides who has been unlawfully imprisoned. At great risk to his safety, Melas learns that Kratides is being starved to death. Although he has every reason to fear for his life, his conscience dictates that an immediate attempt must be made to save Kratides before his vile captors succeed in killing him. In the course of the narrative, Melas is forced to return to the scene of the crime for

a second time. He is locked into a gas-filled room with the unfortunate Kratides. The Holmes brothers arrive too late to save Kratides, but Melas survives and explains that the torturers intended to force Kratides to forfeit his family's property. Similarly, in "The Adventure of the Dancing Men," Holmes solves the mystery of the cryptogram brought to him by Mr. Hilton Cubitt, but despite the aid of Watson and the police, he is too late to prevent the murder of his client and the attempted suicide of his wife.

Surely the degree of success achieved by Holmes and his support team in tales such as these is not sufficient to validate Sherlock's reputation as a great detective; it is not what Holmes and Watson actually do that accounts for their enduring popularity. There are other factors inducing addicts of these characters in particular and detective fiction in general to return compulsively for more. Adults know that they cannot tear those who offend them limb from limb. Hostile wishes pervade everyday life, but they must routinely be consigned to the level of fantasy. Residual rage and feelings of helplessness are sublimated through art. Detectives in fiction act as intermediaries between what society dictates and what the individual really desires. They move freely between upper and underworlds, often having closer ties to the lower echelons than they do to the forces of law and order. Sherlock Holmes has the highest respect for Professor Moriarity, "the Napoleon of crime," and head of a vastly successful criminal organization. Then, as now, contrary to the adage, crime pays very well, and the public knows it. The detective acts in fantasy as the reader's surrogate; the aberrations of his personality and the mythic charisma that surround him encourage the reader's identification. But the detective is also accepted because he differs from the reader. If he were too similar, it might be necessary to reject him as threatening. After all, if the reader were forced into a direct confrontation with his own wishes for vengeance, perhaps mixed with sadistic overtones, without considerable personal insight, the suddenly acquired self-awareness might lead to consumer rejection.

tion—a kind of modern “kill the messenger” reaction. Surely, with Holmes and Watson such an eventuality is unthinkable.

Since Holmes and Watson were forced into eternal retirement in 1927, many other detectives have been introduced to the public.



Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Dr. Watson in the 1939 Twentieth Century-Fox film version of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

As society changed so did the character of the detective. The weakening of social ties obviated the need for an associate like Watson to provide a kind of Greek chorus reinforcing moral values and offering a popular interpretation of the action. Readers of the hard-boiled American detective story prefer protagonists who work alone, administering justice according to idiosyncratic codes. Focusing on weak areas in the social fabric, they address issues that are related to the public's dissatisfactions as well



as their own. As an expression of the modern fantasy, Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op is an embodiment of the angry individual's dream; anything can be done without necessarily incurring penalties. The Op is judge, jury, and executioner. In the story "The Golden Horseshoe," he mercilessly fulfills his destiny when he sends Ed Bohannon to the gallows for a crime he did not commit:

"I can't put you up for the murders you engineered in San Francisco; but I can sock you with the one you didn't do in Seattle—so justice won't be cheated. You're going to Seattle, Ed, to hang for Ashcraft's suicide."

And he did.

Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe in *The High Window* (1942), speaking to two police officers, stands between the establishment and the public: "'Until you guys own your own souls you don't own mine. Until you guys can be trusted every time and always, in all times and conditions, to seek the truth out and find it and let the chips fall where they may—until that time comes, I have a right to listen to my conscience, and protect my client the best way I can. Until I'm sure you won't do him more harm than you'll do the truth good. Or until I'm hauled before somebody that can make me talk.'" Marlowe's remarks echo the tenets of the Hippocratic oath and express the basic philosophy of the modern detective. Unlike Holmes, he is uncomfortable with middle-class values, although he never finds a satisfactory alternative to them. He is typified by Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer in *The Blue Hammer* (1976). Archer is a sensitive isolate unable to retain his objectivity: "There were times when I almost wished I was a priest. I was growing weary of other people's pain and wondered if a black suit and a white collar might serve as armor against it. I'd never know. My grandmother in Contra Costa County had marked me for the priesthood, but I had slipped away under the fence." Archer is admirable because he persists in the face of his

weakness.

Yet, none of the detectives created after Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson have ever come close to achieving the kind of distinction earned by these illustrious predecessors. Watson's uncritical adulation of Holmes's ratiocinative abilities is echoed by the world's acceptance of him. In a sense, Sherlock is an embodiment of the mythic hero whose mission is to bring order out of chaos. Among fictional sleuths he and Dr. Watson, his alter ego, continue to occupy their unique place in the hearts and minds of readers everywhere.

# Whatever Happened to Ellery Queen?

ANTHONY J. MAZZELLA

## Parenthesis and Challenge

[Since] I have often found it a stimulating exercise in my own reading of murder fiction . . . [to try] to determine . . . the identity of the criminal[,] . . . I submit . . . an amiable challenge to the reader[:] Without reading the concluding pages, Reader—Who Killed Mrs. French? . . . A certain amount of [guessing] is inevitable, . . . but the application of logic and common sense is the important thing, the source of the greater enjoyment. . . .

[from Ch. 36, *The French Powder Mystery*, 1930]

Ellery sat down at the desk and wrote earnestly on the fly leaf of his sadly abused little book.

[from Ch. 18]

THE statistics are impressive: John M. Reilly's *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers* (1980) lists some forty-one novels and omnibuses, all but two featuring Ellery Queen and his father, Inspector Richard Queen; five novels under the pseudonym Barnaby Ross, featuring retired Shakespearean actor Drury Lane; eight short story collections plus six uncollected stories; and nearly 100 other listings for plays, radio scripts, and edited publications. Since then the list has expanded.

The credentials also comprise five Mystery Writers of America Edgars, the top award for mystery fiction, including one for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (begun in the fall of 1941 and still continuing), as well as a Grand Master, the highest accolade. In addition, Ellery Queen was awarded the organization's special prize, the Raven. He won the Silver Gertrude for selling a million copies of a single title, and the Golden Gertrude for selling over

five million copies in combined sales. He had his own critical journal, *The Queen Canon Bibliophile*, renamed the *Ellery Queen Review* (1968–71); was subject of a full-length study, *Royal Bloodline: Ellery Queen, Author and Detective* (1974) by Francis



Frederic Dannay (right) reading an Ellery Queen radio script to his co-author, Manfred Lee, ca. 1942.

M. Nevins, Jr., itself the recipient of an Edgar; and was described as follows by Anthony Boucher, author of the “Criminal at Large” column of *The New York Times Book Review* in the 50s and 60s: “Ellery Queen is the American Detective Story.” Not bad for someone who did not exist.

“Ellery Queen” was created when two Brooklyn-born cousins decided to enter a mystery-novel contest sponsored by *McClure’s* magazine in 1928. The first prize was \$7,500, and the rules required that an entry be submitted under a pseudonym. Thus, Ellery Queen was born as both author and series detective, the cousins

believing that readers would remember an author if the name also appeared throughout that author's book. Had the publication not gone bankrupt, the entry would have been awarded first prize. As it was, the Frederick A. Stokes Company published the entry as a book, and with *The Roman Hat Mystery* (1929) the career of Ellery Queen was launched, eventually amassing a reported 120 million readers.

The launchers were Frederic Dannay (1905–1982) and Manfred B. Lee (1905–1971), these names also pseudonyms—of Daniel Nathan and Manford Lepofsky. (Similarly, Anthony Boucher is a pseudonym of William Anthony Parker White. The world of the mystery moves in pseudonymous ways.) The Ellery Queen partnership, as recorded in *The Whodunit* (1981) by Stefano Benvenuti and Gianni Rizzoni, was occasionally acrimonious: “Their lives . . . were spent arguing, so much so that they were sometimes competitors rather than collaborators.”

Ellery Queen's adventures arose from casual conversation, newspaper stories, real-life events. One woman's accidental transposition of the initial sounds of words, as in “a blushing crow” for “a crushing blow,” according to *Whodunit*, even “inspired a story in which the solution to the mystery lay in reversing the sense of a series of words.” Also influencing Queen's career was Philo Vance, created by S. S. Van Dine (yes, a pseudonym, of Willard Huntington Wright), erudite, sophisticated, wealthy, and, as New York District Attorney John F.-X. Markham called him in *The Scarob Murder Case*, a “confounded aesthete.” But all his own is the Ellery Queen hallmark: that special mix of complexity, logic, and fair play. In the enthusiastic words of Francis Nevins, the early Ellery Queen books “are richly plotted specimens of the Golden Age deductive puzzle at its zenith, full of bizarre circumstances, conflicting testimony, enigmatic clues, alternative solutions, fireworks displays of virtuoso reasoning and a constant crackle of intellectual excitement.” The fictional character who evinced this power of ratiocination was tall, slim, and



athletic, dressed in tweedy elegance, and he ferreted out clues with “devastingly” silver eyes.

For William Kittredge and Steven M. Kauzer in *The Great American Detective* (1978), “No one has done more for the American detective story than Ellery Queen.” They cite his contributions as novelist and short-story writer, as anthologist, bibliophile (a massive collection of mystery and detective short stories is housed in the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin), editor, and radio scriptwriter. (In addition, Dannay’s copies of his own novels, inscribed “Ellery Queen/Barnaby Ross” have been deposited in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia, a gift of the Dannay family).

Generally agreed to is the division of Queen’s detective fiction into four periods, as formulated by Nevins:

(1) 1929–1935: nine novels, all with geographical place names in the titles—from the aforementioned *Roman Hat Mystery* and *French Powder Mystery* to *The Spanish Cape Mystery*—and published at the rate of one or two a year. From the negative clue and dying message to the lagoon murderer, patterned clues at the crime, and false solution followed by the right one as Nevins points out—all the distinctive Ellery Queen traits tended to originate in these novels.

(2) 1936–1939: from *Halfway House* to *The Dragon’s Teeth*. This was the period of Dannay and Lee’s brief foray as screen writers in Hollywood. *Halfway House* marked the end of the geographical place-name titles and may be read as a psychological novel. *The Four of Hearts* and *The Devil to Pay* (both 1938) have a Tinseltown setting, reflecting the cousins’ struggles in the film capital.

(3) 1942–1958: following an interim in 1940–41 during which the radio scripts were written for the weekly series *Adventures of Ellery Queen*, this is the longest period, starting with *Calamity Town* and ending with *The Finishing Stroke*, the latter harking back to Ellery Queen’s youth in 1929, and the former providing

the pseudonymous Ellery Queen with a pseudonym (Ellery Smith), an intricate puzzle, and a love interest.

(4) 1963–1971: although *The Finishing Stroke* seemed intended to end the series, Ellery Queen returned in a fourth stage, from *The Player on the Other Side* to *A Fine and Private Place*. The death of Lee in 1971 marked the end of the series. And a formidable series it is.

And yet . . .

A recent visit to the Woodbridge Shopping Center in New Jersey in order to make a random check of Waldenbooks and B. Dalton Booksellers, the two largest bookstore chains in the country, revealed not a single Ellery Queen title on the shelves, whereas Agatha Christie, perhaps the champion of the puzzle story, had as many as four shelves devoted to her mystery books. Asked if they could special-order some Ellery Queen titles for me, the bookstore managers stated that their suppliers did not carry the Ellery Queen books, although at least thirty-two titles are currently in print, published by New American Library. A spot check at Doubleday's on Fifth Avenue at 57th Street in Manhattan similarly revealed that the cupboard was bare. The Mysterious Bookshop on West 56th Street carried but two titles: the 1971 *A Fine and Private Place* published by Hamlyn, and a Signet Double Mystery—*The Killer Touch* (1965) and *The Devil's Cook* (1966), neither of the latter listed in *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers* or in Chris Steinbrunner and Otto Penzler's *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection* (1976). Ellery Queen's major literary antecedent, Philo Vance, is meanwhile enjoying a renaissance, with more than a half dozen titles placed back in print by Scribner's and on the bookstore shelves.

Where has Ellery Queen gone? Perhaps an examination of *The French Powder Mystery* may offer some clues. This is the second Ellery Queen novel. It is set in Manhattan—the major scene of the crime being French's department store on Fifth Avenue and 39th Street. And it deals with several murders, those of Mrs. Winifred

French and her daughter Bernice Carmody, both of whom were ensnared in the deadly machinations of a notorious drug ring. The novel has an "annotated" cast of characters, a map, and the familiar "Challenge to the Reader" given as the first headnote to this arti-

"Barnaby Ross"  
 "Ellery Queen"

### TEN DAYS' WONDER

Frederick Dannay signed his own copies of the Ellery Queen books with both of his pseudonyms.

cle. It also plays scrupulously fair with the reader. And that may be the chief problem. When I worked with this novel in my "Mystery Story" course during a recent semester, every student in class had deduced the identity of the killer, some having done so fairly early in the novel, whereas virtually no one had been as successful with Agatha Christie's classic, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. The clues, the action of the novel, the progression of the plot, the details of characterization—all led to one person. Indeed, some students cited merely a single piece of evidence as conclusive, evidence pointedly alluded to in the title. If the revelation at the end of the novel is to prove anticlimactic (the very last words are the name of the killer), then the rest of the novel must consequently be rewarding. Students, however, felt that the novel was padded, a criticism they also leveled at Dorothy Sayers' *Clouds of Witness*. If the denouement isn't startling, and the novel feels padded, perhaps a redeeming feature is its style, much as Raymond Chandler's use of words, described as having a "raw richness of simile seldom seen in a detective yarn" by Will Cuppy in the *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*, helped readers through his convoluted plots, so convoluted that not even Chandler knew who killed

Owen Taylor, the Sternwoods' chauffeur, in *The Big Sleep*.

An analysis of several sections of *The French Powder Mystery* reveals a weakness in style as well. Consider the discovery of the corpse of Mrs. French in the store's window on Fifth Avenue:

What they [the onlookers] saw was a marvel indeed—so unexpected, so horrible, so grotesque that at the instant of its occurrence faces froze into masks of stunned incredulity. It was like a moment snatched out of an unbelievable nightmare. . . . For, as the model pushed the ivory button, a section of the wall slid outward and downward with a swift noiseless movement, two small wooden legs unfolded and shot out of the forepart of the bedstead, the bed settled to a horizontal position—and the body of a woman, pale-faced, crumpled, distorted, her clothes bloody in two places, fell from the silken sheet to the floor at the model's feet.

The unexpected setting for the murder is a brilliant stroke, but the adjectives in triplicate vitiate the excitement: "unexpected," "horrible," "grotesque"; "two," "small," "wooden"; "pale-faced," "crumpled," "distorted." The clichés, "unbelievable nightmare," "faces froze into masks," detract as well.

Similarly, the following passage, describing the response to Inspector Queen's questioning of a suspect, is overwrought:

There was a naked silence in the room—a raw pulsing quiet that beat invisible against the atmosphere. Ellery heard quick breaths drawn, saw bodies tense, eyes sharpen, hand twitch as, to a man, the occupants of the room with the exception of Cyrus French leaned forward, watching Marion French as she stood there, facing them.

Equally melodramatic is the following brief passage: "The maid lifted the lid from the third box [containing hats]. She uttered a little choked cry and reeled backward, touching Ellery. The contact seemed to burn her skin. She jumped away, fumbled for a handkerchief." Choking, reeling, burning, fumbling seem excessive actions to accompany the sight of Bernice Carmody's hat.

Also excessive are the italicized passages. For example, in Chap-

T-398

ELLERY QUEEN

# The French Powder Mystery



Morgan

A BEAUTIFUL CORPSE, A CLEVER KILLER—AND  
ELLERY QUEEN IN ANOTHER SHUDDERY CASE

Dust jacket of the World Book edition of the second Ellery Queen novel.



ter 24 alone there were at least thirty. Ellery Queen, discussing with his father Bernice's disappearance, asks, "*But was she in the store?*" and answers that she "*was not. . .*" He notes that while she *always* smoked her cigarettes part way through those found were smoked completely *without exception*, that "*Somebody wanted her key badly enough to risk a call and a messenger,*" his father adding that "*She was a drug fiend*" and that if they should *nab* the drug ringleaders that would be a valuable achievement.

Similarly disturbing for a contemporary audience may be *The Roman Hat Mystery*. In this novel about the murder of a noisome blackmailer in the middle of a performance at the Roman Theatre in New York, a novel dominated by Inspector Queen, who is endearing but comes across as doddering, the murderer's history is described at the climax of the novel as "a sordid story. . . to make it short and ugly, [the killer] has a strain of negroid blood in his veins."

*The Greek Coffin Mystery*, another early novel and the first Ellery Queen adventure chronologically, has acrostic chapter titles and suffers from similar difficulties. In this novel about the repercussions attendant upon the death in New York of a Greek art dealer, Georg Khalkis, there are four solutions to the mystery, each more startling than the one before but each contributing to the novel's long-windedness. It takes two pages, for example, to explain a rather obvious clue. Furthermore, it's not the least likely person who finally turns out to be guilty; it's the most *unlikely* person. The correct solution following the misleading, incorrect solutions, strains credulity. Moreover, there are the usual stylistic concerns, as well as some new problems. There is the triplicate terminology: "They gaped at him [Assistant District Attorney Pepper]: a stupefaction of indecision, of mystery, of bewilderment had crept over them." There is the infelicitous phrase: "[Detective Sergeant Thomas] Velie swung a horny finger at Woodruff [Khalkis's attorney]." And there is a note of sexism: When the "broad and ample police matron" (not named, unlike her

male counterparts) is given a line of dialogue, she first “trudged back with a laconic grunt of negation; then: “ “The fat dame upstairs—housekeeper?—she’s okay too,’ said the matron.”

But if you consider *Ten Days’ Wonder* (1948), a novel from the third period, you get a glimpse of what all the excitement was about: though 224 pages in the current Signet Double Mystery edition, it seems lean and spare. It has enough enigmatic clues to satisfy the most tireless searcher. Its characters—from powerful Diedrich Van Horn and his officious brother Wolfert to the doomed Phaedra-Hippolytus lovers—are psychologically compelling and genuinely interesting. Its double solution, startling. Its Decalogue construction, ingenious and yet not strained. Its logic nearly impeccable (the Pygmalion reversal isn’t entirely satisfactory, but that is a minor cavil). Ellery Queen dominates this parable of intellectual hubris—his own—to good effect. And the book’s style is free from the mannerisms of the early novels. There is even a Chanderlesque simile: “. . . someone had turned the lights on in the guest house and it poked fingers into the garden like a woman exploring her hair.”

Perhaps inadvertently then, the combination of scruples and style, of playing too fair and saying too much, led to Ellery Queen’s untimely demise on the popular bookstore shelves. Also, the prized Queen logic may be lost in a terrorist age. The second headnote, then, takes on the aura of a kind of prescient epitaph. It may also contain, however, the promise of a resurrection.

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*Addendum:* The promise may already be partly fulfilled. A recent return visit to the Mysterious Bookshop led to the discovery of twenty-four titles on the shelves, including *The Greek Coffin Mystery*, *The Roman Hat Mystery*, and *Ten Days’ Wonder*.

# Our Growing Collections

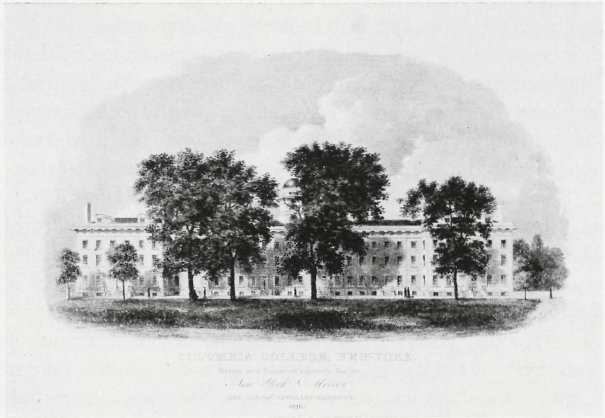
KENNETH A. LOHF

*Chrystie gift.* Mr. Thomas L. Chrystie (A.B., 1955) has presented a notable group of Chrystie family portraits and a collection of papers relating to the family. The six oil paintings, executed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, include portraits of: Major James Chrystie, the forebear of the prominent New York Chrystie family which was to be closely associated with the University; Colonel John Chrystie, a member of the College Class of 1806 who was killed in the War of 1812; Thomas Witter Chrystie (1808–1888), a member of the Class of 1828; the Reverend James Chrystie (1786–1863), son of Major James Chrystie and father of Thomas Witter, James, and John Chrystie, all of whom graduated from the College; Thomas Witter (1713–1786), grandfather of the Reverend James Chrystie; and Thomas Mackaness (1736–1807), forebear of Thomas Mackaness Ludlow Chrystie who was in the Class of 1867. The approximately 150 letters, manuscripts, documents, and memorabilia comprising the family papers include correspondence of many of the above, as well as letters and documents of John Adams, Nicholas Murray Butler, Benjamin N. Cardozo, Thomas E. Dewey, David Glasgow Farragut, Seth Low, and James Monroe, among others. There are also files of photographs pertaining to the family and its associations with the University, thirty volumes from the libraries of various members of the family, framed etchings and engravings of views of the University, and the copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*, London, 1760, containing genealogical records of the Ludlow and the Chrystie families.

*Durgin gift.* Mrs. James H. Durgin has donated a copy of the handsomely illustrated 1827 edition of *Journey from Riga to the Crimea, with Some Account of the Manners and Customs of the*

*Colonists of New Russia*, written by the noted early nineteenth century travel writer Mary Holderness.

*Faatz gift.* Dr. Anita J. Faatz has presented three important items for addition to the Otto Rank Collection: the framed pastel por-



An 1828 engraving of Columbia College. (Chrystie gift)

trait of Dr. Jessie Taft, Rank's biographer and the donor of the Rank Papers, drawn by Catharine Grant; and first editions of Rank's *Art and Artist*, 1932, and *The Trauma of Birth*, 1929, warmly inscribed by Rank to Dr. Taft.

*Feinberg gift.* Mr. Charles E. Feinberg has donated the following Walt Whitman items: an original wood-engraving of a Whitman portrait by William James Linton, 1871, framed with a proof of the title page of the 1876 edition of *Leaves of Grass*; and a framed 1860 engraved frontispiece portrait from the third edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

*Galpin gift.* Mrs. Isabella P. Galpin has added to the papers of her late husband, Professor Alfred M. Galpin, the pen and ink portrait of him drawn by his friend Samuel Loveman on July 22, 1922.

Measuring approximately 12 by 6 inches, the drawing is signed, dated, and inscribed by the artist to Professor Galpin.

*Gitlin gift.* Mr. Paul Gitlin has presented, for addition to the Melville Cane Papers, a group of twenty-three issues of periodicals containing contributions by and about the poet, a framed tribute to Mr. Cane from the directors of Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich on the occasion of his one hundredth birthday, and the typewritten manuscripts of two poems by Hiram Haydn, "Athwart, We Beg You," 1969, and "Presence of Cane," 1971, signed by the poet and members of the publishing firm.

*Halsband gift.* Professor Robert Halsband (A.M., 1936) has presented three impressive pen drawings by John Kettelwell for the edition of Sir Richard Burton's translation of *The Kasidah of Haji Addu el-Yezdi*, published in London in 1925 by Philip Allan. Two of the drawings, titled "When swift the Camel-rider spans" and "There is no Good, there is no Bad," appeared in the volume, and the third is a version of the former and not published in the book. Accompanying the gift is a first edition of *The Kasidah*, inscribed by the artist at the time of publication.

*Haywood gift.* Professor Charles Haywood (Ph.D., 1949) has presented a fine group of first editions and illustrated books, among which are: Alexander Blok, *The Twelve*, New York, 1931, one of one hundred numbered copies with original lithographs by George Biddle; James Joyce, *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, New York, 1928, one of eight hundred copies signed by the author; William Little, *The Easy Instructor*, Albany, 1798; Rudolph Lothar, *Das Wiener Burgtheater*, Vienna, 1934, one of one hundred copies signed by all the members of the Burgtheater; Ezra Pound, *Provença*, Boston, 1910; and E.G. Squier, *The Serpent Symbol*, New York, 1851, with an autograph letter from the author to John C.B. Davis, presenting the volume. Also donated by Professor Haywood is a group of autograph letters and manuscripts, primarily German and dating from the seventeenth cen-



tury through the nineteenth centuries, which includes a drama by Wilhelm Von Spazy, 1827.

*Horowitz gift.* In memory of the late Dr. Isidore S. Schapiro (M.D., 1927), Mrs. Helen S. Horowitz has presented his extensive collection of nearly one hundred books by and about George Santayana, including first editions of *The Genteel Tradition at Bay*, 1931, *A Hermit of Carmel, and Other Poems*, 1901, *The Last Puritan*, 1935, *The Life of Reason*, 1905–1906, *The Sense of Beauty*, 1896, and *Sonnets and Other Verses*, 1896. There is also a fine set of the philosopher's collected works, one of 940 sets, numbered and signed, published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1936–1937.

*Hotelling gift.* The papers of the late Professor Harold Hotelling, mathematical statistician and economist, have been received as a gift from Mrs. Hotelling. Professor Hotelling taught at Columbia from 1931 until he left in 1946 to establish the statistics department at the University of North Carolina. During World War II he did research in Columbia's Statistical Research Group, and he was later involved with research for the Office of Naval Research at Chapel Hill. The papers include correspondence with colleagues and materials relating to the various universities, professional associations, and other institutions with which he was affiliated. There are also teaching materials, research notes, and drafts of articles and books, including those for his important work *The Teaching of Statistics*. The files of correspondence with colleagues and economists include letters from Alfred Cowles, 3rd, Milton Friedman, Ragnar Frisch, Helen Walker, Warren Weaver, and Samuel S. Wilks.

*Kruger gift.* Mrs. Linda Kruger (M.S., 1965; D.L.S., 1980) has added to the collections a children's card game, entitled "Star Authors," published in 1888 by McLoughlin Brothers of New York, and a group of 68 pieces of sheet music, dating from the

late nineteenth century to 1920, and including such popular songs as "Silver Threads Among the Gold," "Dear Old Pal of Mine," and "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary."



Original pen drawing by John Kettlewell for  
Richard Burton's translation of *The Kasidah*.  
(Halsband gift)

*Lengyel gift.* A collection of the papers of the noted journalist and scholar, the late Professor Emil Lengyel, has been established by his widow, Mrs. Livia Lengyel, with the recent gift of more than one thousand of his manuscripts and correspondence. Born in Hungary, Professor Lengyel came to the United States in 1922,

and was the author of more than forty books on the politics of Europe and Asia, most notably the European theater of World War II and the rise of Nazism. The papers presented by Mrs. Lengyel include scrapbooks of clippings of Professor Lengyel's articles, manuscripts of several of his historical works, outlines for books and screenplays, and drafts of autobiographical writings. The correspondence file contains letters from numerous writers and public figures, among them, John Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser, Count and Countess Karolyi, Robert F. Kennedy, Fiorello La Guardia, Thomas Mann, H. L. Mencken, and Ferenc Molnar.

*Miller gift.* Mrs. Carolyn R. Miller (B.S., 1931) has presented the copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*, London, 1850, which had been owned by her father, the Reverend Daniel Russell, who was for many years the minister of Rutgers Presbyterian Church in New York City. Bound in full crimson morocco, the book, printed and engraved by Vizetelly Brothers, has chromolithographed illuminations and illustrations throughout, and has an attractive fore-edge painting of the Last Supper.

*Myers gift.* In memory of James Gilvarry, Professor Andrew B. Myers (A.M., 1947; Ph.D., 1964) has presented a group of autograph letters and association copies of books by Irish authors, including: six autograph letters written by Lord Dunsany to Thomas Brown Rudmose-Brown and others, dated 1910-1946, a signed photograph of Lord Dunsany, and a first edition of the author's *The Old Folk of the Centuries*, 1930; inscribed first editions of Liam O'Flaherty's *The Assassin*, 1928, *The Black Soul*, 1924, and *Spring Sowing*, 1924; and first editions of James Stephens's *The Insurrection in Dublin*, 1916, and *Theme and Variations*, 1930, each autographed by the author.

*Parsons gift.* The resources in Scottish literature and history have been considerably strengthened by the recent gift from Professor Coleman O. Parsons (A.B., 1928) of 368 titles in 427 volumes,

ranging in date from the mid-seventeenth century to the 1980s. The volumes in the gift represent first editions, significant reprints, and illustrated editions of the writing of numerous authors, including, Joanna Baillie, J.M. Barrie, Thomas Bewick, John Buchan, George Crabbe, R.B. Cunninghame Graham, Daniel Defoe, James Hogg, John Home, Andrew Lang, Hugh Macdiarmid, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Among the earliest volumes are a first edition of *Eikon Basilike: The Pourtraicture of His Sacred Maiestie in His Solitudes and Sufferings*, London, 1648, and a copy in contemporary calf of the first edition in English of George Buchanan's *The History of Scotland*, printed in London in 1690.

*Propper de Callejon gift.* Mr. Felipe Propper de Callejon has presented the collection of books relating to the First World War and World War II which were collected by his father, Ambassador Eduardo Propper de Callejon, the Spanish diplomat who served as Ambassador to France and the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. The subjects covered by the more than two hundred volumes in the collection are the events of the Wars and the political movements surrounding them, military intelligence, and memoirs of the principal figures of the times. There are notable books by numerous public figures and authors, among them, Georges Clemenceau, Maréchal Foch, Alexander Kerensky, Vladimir Lenin, Carlo Sforza, Jules Romains, Léon Blum, Charles de Gaulle, Jean Giraudoux, Jacques Maritain, Leon Trotsky, and Winston S. Churchill.

*Rapoport gift.* Thirty-four illustrated books, primarily French, have been presented by Dr. Kenneth D. Rapoport (A.B., 1958) for addition to the Book Arts Collection. Of special importance is the limited edition on Holland paper of Anatole France's *L'Ile des Pingouins*, published in Paris in 1926, and illustrated by the designer and artist Louis Jou with twenty full-page etchings and 131 smaller illustrations in color throughout the text; the folio is handsomely bound by Lavaux in full blue morocco with inlaid

figures of penguins on the covers and spine. Other authors and artists represented in Dr. Rapoport's gift include Georges Duhamel, Paul Eluard, André Maurois, Henry Moore, Pablo Picasso, Georges Rouault, and Philippe Soupault, among others. There is

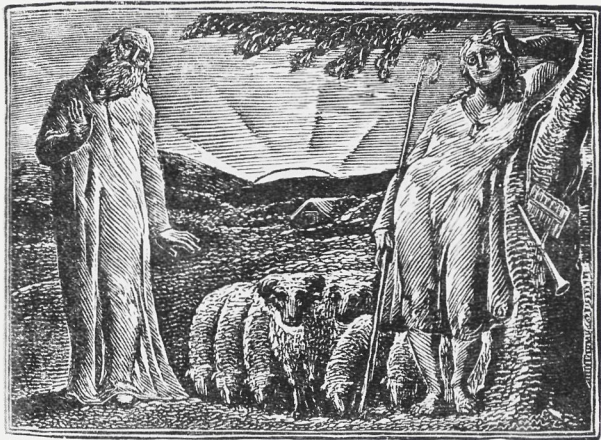


Etching by Louis Jou for Anatole France's  
*L'Île de Pingouins*. (Rapoport gift)

also a fine copy of *The Earth Fiend*, a ballad written and illustrated by the painter and etcher William Strang, and published by Elkin Mathews and John Lane in London in 1892; one of 150 copies signed by the author, the work contains some of the best of Strang's earlier etchings.



*Ray gift.* The volume containing William Blake's only wood engravings, Robert John Thornton's school text edition of *The Pastorals of Virgil*, published in London in 1821, has been presented by Mr. Gordon N. Ray (LL.D., 1969). Designed and en-



One of Blake's seventeen woodblock illustrations for Robert Thornton's edition of *The Pastorals of Virgil*, the artist's only known wood engravings. (Ray gift)

graved by Blake as illustrations to the first eclogue, the remarkable series of seventeen woodcuts comprises four groups of four cuts, each on a full page, and a larger frontispiece. Because the illustrations marked a departure from the ordinary methods of the wood-engraver of the period, Thornton felt it necessary to apologise in the volume for their bold style by stating that "they display less of art than genius, and are much admired by some eminent painters"; influencing the work of later artists, notably Samuel Palmer and Edward Calvert, they are today widely recognized for their extraordinary merit, and the volume is a most welcome addition to the Book Arts Collection.

*Seixas gift.* Dr. Frank A. Seixas (A.M., 1945; M.D., 1951) has presented the printed eulogy that was delivered by Naphtali Phillips at the funeral of his ancestor, the Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas (1746-1816), the first native-born American rabbi, the first rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City, and the acknowledged spokesman for American Jewry during his fifty-year ministry. The eulogy was delivered at the Synagogue by the President of the Congregation on July 13, 1816, and was subsequently printed by J.H. Sherman at No. 10 Broad-street. The rare and fragile pamphlet has special importance for the University as Reverend Seixas served as regent and charter trustee of Columbia College from 1784 until 1815.

*Sypher gift.* A group of twelve English and American literary editions has been donated by Mr. Frank J. Sypher (A.B., 1963; A.M., 1964; Ph.D., 1968), including: Philip James Bailey's *Festus: A Poem*, London, William Pickering, 1939; Joseph Rodman Drake's *The Culprit Fay*, New York, 1859; Algernon C. Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*, London, 1866, and *Love's Cross-Currents*, London, 1905; and Lewis Wallace's *Ben-Hur*, New York, 1880.

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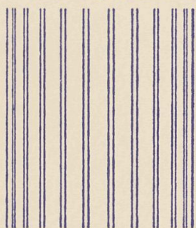
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# COLUMBIA LIBRARY COLUMNS





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# Columbia Library Columns

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# Corvo's Death in Venice

MIRIAM J. BENKOVITZ

FREDERICK Rolfe, self-styled Baron Corvo, first went to Venice in early August 1908. A former schoolmaster, a failed priest, failed photographer and inventor, failed artist, but a writer of considerable ability, Rolfe had spent much of the two preceding years as guest of Harry Pirie-Gordon and his parents, the Edward Pirie-Gordons, at their home Gwernvale near Crickhowell, in Wales. There Rolfe met Richard Dawkins, eleven years younger, Director of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, a distinguished scholar, and a man of means. Dawkins suggested the trip and offered to pay for it. Rolfe spoke of repaying Dawkins at some later time with money he said he could earn from descriptive writing and artistic photographs. After some light-hearted planning, the two men set forth by train for Venice.

Rolfe left behind him in England debts to a former landlady, Mrs. Griffiths; a lost lawsuit and the shame which, in his eyes, it entailed; as well as uneasy relations with his solicitors Barnard & Taylor and expectations of more money from them than they were willing or had any cause to provide. He left as well an acute awareness of his "penniless condition" and resentment bordering on enmity towards the priest Robert Hugh Benson.

When Dawkins and Rolfe arrived in Venice, with Rolfe carrying his possessions in a large laundry hamper, they settled into the Hotel Belle Vue et de Russie, a modest hotel on the Piazzetta del Leoncini, an extension of the Piazza San Marco. Almost at once they hired a small boat, a *sandola pupparin*, and two boys to row it. Soon Rolfe was helping the boys, and the group ventured farther and farther onto the lagoon.

*Opposite:* Rolfe's final residence was on the Grand Canal in Venice; at the far left in this 1913 photograph is the Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi where Wagner died, to the right of which is Rolfe's Palazzo Marcello.

But Dawkins and Rolfe did not get on. Rolfe expected his host to relish "loafing elaborately" and to relish paying for it, but Dawkins was a modest, prudent man with simple tastes. Within a month the two quarreled, and Dawkins, leaving £30 with Rolfe to enable him to complete his holiday and return to England, went to Rome. The two men never met again, nor did Rolfe go back to England. Instead, he commenced the rest of his life, some five years of struggle to live at anyone's and everyone's expense.

Within a month, the £30 Dawkins had given Rolfe was gone and his debts were mounting daily. He appealed first to Dawkins and finally managed to extract another £15 from him. Meanwhile, before October ended, Rolfe had got £25 from Barnard & Taylor in keeping with an agreement they had with him about life insurance. That same month he received £12.10 from Harry Pirie-Gordon, sent so that Rolfe could return to England. There, he said, he meant to finish his book *Hubert's Arthur* and work with the priest Robert Hugh Benson on one about Thomas à Beckett. Then, having acquired cash, Corvo said he could return to Venice and open a photography business. But of course he never left Venice. By mid-November he had spent every thing sent him, he owed more than £30, and he was busy maintaining his status with his landlord Evaristo Barbieri at the Hotel Belle Vue.

Corvo's writing contributed most to his credibility. In summer and early autumn, he took his papers and notes with him aboard the *sandolo* and there seated in a cane arm chair, put his huge Waterman fountain pen to use. When the weather worsened, Rolfe worked after dinner, that is, from about eight in the evening to one in the morning, in the *salone* of the hotel. He was composing a diatribe against the cheap journalism of Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe, and preparing a fair copy of *Hubert's Arthur*.

While he labored on these two projects, Rolfe attracted the notice of Canon and Mrs. Lonsdale Ragg, also English residents at the Hotel Belle Vue. In a letter to Pirie-Gordon, Rolfe lumped the Raggs with "a pack of English" who, he said, were running



after him. To avoid such pursuit from both the Raggs and Lady Layard, whom Rolfe designated as the Queen of England in Venice, he warned them of his financial "disabilities" and urged them to "drop" him.

Once again Rolfe appealed to Barnard & Taylor for a loan or an allowance. But he had failed to send back corrected proofs of *Don Renato* as he had agreed to do, and the solicitors held the rights to that book owing to a pre-Venetian transaction. Now they denied his request.

At almost the same time, Rolfe turned down help from Benson and Pirie-Gordon. They offered £15 for travel expenses and asked Barnard & Taylor to arrange for the British consul to send Rolfe home. He objected to transactions through the Consulate, however, and urged Pirie-Gordon to leave everything in the hands of Barnard & Taylor. Even though his position was deteriorating rapidly, Rolfe meant to appear solvent to Barbieri and to the English in Venice. Rolfe even asked Dawkins to expose none of his lies.

By mid-December, however, Barbieri had grown suspicious, and he could no longer ignore the hotel bills Rolfe had simply destroyed because he could not pay them. Barbieri consulted Ragg, who tried to reassure the hotel keeper with talk of Rolfe's books and then agreed to pay for Rolfe's meals over the Christmas season. Since the room Rolfe occupied was without heat and generally undesirable, Barbieri decided to take no action, but he told Rolfe what had happened.

Almost at once, Rolfe gave Ragg an impassioned account of the sufferings Dawkins and Benson had caused him. Thereafter relations between the Raggs and Rolfe expanded. They often had their after-dinner coffee together, and Rolfe helped Ragg correct and revise his book *The Church of the Apostles*. When he and Mrs. Ragg urged Rolfe to accept invitations from the British, however, Rolfe held back. He offered his services to the English Hospital, Lady Layard's special charity, and he boasted to Pirie-

Gordon of the convalescents' regard for him. But in answer to invitations from numerous people, Lady Layard, the Taplins, the Frederick Edens, and others, Rolfe insisted that he be left alone.

Eventually, of course, Rolfe gave in. He went with Ragg to one of Horatio Brown's Monday nights at Ca'Torresella. Rolfe pretended disdain for the whole evening: for Ragg's rendition of the lament for Aïda, for the other guests, and for the host with a "bluish smack-of-cheek-red face . . . a pursed mouth, a tight waistcoat splayed over a pudding . . . and longish knock-kneed shanks." Still, Rolfe continued his friendship with the Raggs and his activities for the deprived, especially the survivors of a massive earthquake which devastated Calabria and Sicily on December 28, 1908.

At the same time he finished the two volumes of *Hubert's Arthur* and sent them off to Pirie-Gordon, urging him to accept the book in friendship. After all, Rolfe said, he had done nothing worse than fling "his drawers over the windmills."

*Hubert's Arthur* along with *The Weird of the Wanderer* constituted a lavish gift. Rolfe instructed Pirie-Gordon to market both books on his own and to pay Rolfe whatever seemed fair. The fact that he owed Barnard & Taylor whatever he might get from the books for money already spent, bothered him not at all. Apparently neither did the fact that he also owed Barbieri close to £100.

Rolfe could have evaded the entire situation by going back to England as the guest of either Benson or the Pirie-Gordons, but he could not leave Venice. Harry Pirie-Gordon had begun to recognize that fact. He sent Rolfe's winter clothing to him and through Barnard & Taylor arranged for a reasonable monthly payment to Barbieri so that Rolfe could stay at the Belle Vue. Barbieri was pleased enough with the situation to tell Rolfe about it.

Rolfe acted at once. He was determined that money spent in his behalf go through his hands. Insisting that Barbieri did not understand English adequately enough to know what Pirie-Gor-

don planned, Rolfe destroyed the entire arrangement. Even so, Barbieri let him stay on at the hotel for a time, but on April 14, 1909, he forced Rolfe to leave. Thereafter, until his death in late October 1913, despite occasional but fleeting periods of comfort, even luxury, Frederick Rolfe's life was one of disaster and pain.

Rolfe walked throughout many nights to avoid wintry cold or the attack, when he slept on a boat, of either hungry crabs or rats. He was little better off on the bare bed springs in the flat which had once been that of the Raggs's. As his discomfort and hopelessness grew, so did his mistrust of Benson and Pirie-Gordon. He accused them, with Barnard & Taylor, of trickery aimed at their own benefit and his financial loss from his books.

From time to time, Rolfe acquired small sums of money which he almost invariably misspent. One most blatantly wasted was a sum which came from Lord Roseberry, whom Rolfe had encountered when he went looking for food at Horatio Brown's. Roseberry's gift served to ally Rolfe for a short time with a slovenly, drunken artist named George Demain Cooke, but that relationship ended after Rolfe's money was used up and he had plastered Cooke's face with a double-handful of rice and had broken a plate over his head.

Another time of comfort commenced at the end of July 1909 when he went to live at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Ernest van Someren. Corvo had met these two through the Raggs ("Ragg and Raggage," he had come to call them), and he expressed admiration for the doctor's courage in dealing with Lady Layard. A month later, Rolfe exposed his situation to Van Someren, who promptly acted out of sheer kindness by offering Rolfe a room, his meals, and £10 a week in return for a few menial, household tasks. So Rolfe moved into a small room on the first-floor landing of the doctor's home, the Palazzo Mocenigo-Corner. Except for his few chores, Rolfe was a guest in the household. He had his meals with the Van Somerens and often sat after dinner with Mrs. Van Som-

There is such a lot of it said in this book, that one must get at the heart of explanations as to how it all happened without undue delay. It is not my fault that things occurred in the order in which they did occur. I am not the regulator of this universe. If he chooses to design a consecutive series of events or energies or for the bringing together of a man or a maid, Demarcus to his said design ought to be addressed to him: not to me. I am merely the recorder. Personally I am not so sure that the object of his design was to bring this particular maid to this singular man. He does things so subtly as a general rule; ~~that~~ I scarcely imagine that he could have done this business without marring two hundred thousand people for the purpose. So I do not propose to inquire into reasons which neither I nor anyone else can possibly understand. I shall not attempt to explain coincidences, or to say why these things happened as they did. On the contrary I shall simply write down the bare facts concerning <sup>my friend</sup> Nicholas or <sup>friend</sup> ~~him~~, as they were told by them to me. If the said facts seem unusually categorical, that (of course) is my fault, as a bad story-teller; & I don't refuse to bear the blame of it. All I say is that these amazing things were so. I find them amusing. Perhaps there are some other fools who will find them amusing too.

ΤΟΥ ΤΟΛΟΥ ΟΥΝ ΤΗ  
ΕΠΙΒΥΜΙΑΙ ΤΑΙ ΔΙΩΞΕΙ  
ΕΡΟΣ ΟΝΟΜΑ

The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole  
is called Love, says Plato. It  
is the love

In the Symposium of Plato 193, you  
will find these words

In the Name of the Public & the Public  
& of the Publishers (London). And

My dear darling is

The words of my first response  
such a blooming lot of explanation that  
The text which I have chosen as a pig  
whisper to bring the story of Nicholas  
& Julia for your admiration will  
require such a blooming lot of  
explaining that we must

Rolfe's Venetian letter book, kept during 1909-1910, contains a draft of the first chapter of *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*.



eren while she played the piano. But as might be expected, the household tasks soon became a burden to Rolfe, and his room, not heated for the winter, became a source of discomfort.

Meanwhile, Baron Corvo was a busy man. He continued to ac-



Gael Covelli painting Rolfe's portrait in Venice, 1913.

cuse Barnard & Taylor of contributing to his literary impotence and Benson and Pirie-Gordon of trying to rob him of his career. At the same time, with his clothes piled on his blankets to help keep him warm, Rolfe was writing a novel. It was *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*, and he worked at it almost without pause so that he came to resent his household chores as interruptions and to blame the doctor for anything which slowed the writing.

Corvo wrote one version of the first chapter of *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* on the rectos of the last pages of his Venetian letter book, a manuscript from the Martyr Worthy Collection now in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*, not published until 1934, was complete in some form by early March 1910. But Corvo rewrote it more than



once; four versions are at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The fact that *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* existed in part in its author's Venetian letter book is singularly appropriate, for the matter of the novel is in the contents of the letter book.

The novel tells of the adventures and misadventures of Nicholas Crabbe, by whom is meant Rolfe, during a stay in Venice. Crabbe, a magnificent boatman who rows his *topo* in the Venetian manner, is a worthy hero who can suffer hardship and deprivation with enormous stoicism. He is a man of principle who is the innocent victim of people he has left behind in England and of new acquaintances made in Venice. His aim is simply to survive despite endless financial problems which haunt him night and day, and he is convinced that he has the property with which to do so, a number of books already written but unpublished. To publish these books will open the way to his enemies, given fictitious names in the book. These include both English and Venetians who were once his friends but are now feared as traitors. Crabbe's problems are mitigated by Zilda, his young gondolier working in the guise of the boy Zildo, who eventually assuages all with love, the desire and pursuit of the whole. Ultimately, Nicholas Crabbe's problems are solved by his wisdom and the nobility of his character.

The letter book tells a different story. Except for the exclusion of the character Zildo and the use of real names rather than fictitious ones, the letter book generally recounts the same events. The difference between the novel and the letter book is in the character of Nicholas Crabbe, who appears in the letter book as Baron Corvo at his most Corvine, unvarnished and unbearable.

The novel was often the subject of conversation when Ivy Van Someren and Rolfe had their after-dinner coffee while the doctor made his rounds. More than once she asked to read it, but Rolfe insisted that she await publication. Then suddenly in early March 1910, he offered Mrs. Van Someren the manuscript to read on condition that she tell her husband nothing about it.

Mrs. Van Someren read with much pleasure until she began to

recognize both people and places in the book, almost all a part of "modern Venice." She identified the Albergo Bellavista as the Belle Vue and the Universal Infirmary at once. Similarly, characters came alive for her despite their altered names. Most apparent was Rolfe as Nicholas Crabbe, but there was no problem with



Rolfe as gondolier on his boat, photographed by  
Thomas Wade-Brown in 1913.

other identifications: Lady Layard as Lady Pash, the Raggs as the Wardens, Harry Pirie-Gordon as Harricus Peary-Butlaws, and Robert Hugh Benson as Bobugo Bonsen.

Ivy Van Someren withdrew her promise to Rolfe and told her husband what she had read. He, in turn, confronted Rolfe that same night with a first lien on the book torn to shreds and stated that "Christ had recently been forbidding him not to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." Rolfe left the next morning,

March 5, 1910, without breakfast, declaring that he could not stay at the Palazzo Mocenigo as an object of charity.

That Rolfe survived the next ten days was a miracle. To stay alive at night, he had to keep moving. In fact he had no place to sleep day or night, and his food was scant and uncertain. At last, on March 15, 1910, he returned to the Hotel Belle Vue. Barbieri allowed him to live in the Clock Tower which was being converted as an annex to the hotel. In less than a week, Rolfe had recovered his papers left with Van Someren and settled down to his preoccupations. A major one was sharp enmity for Dr. Van Someren. Another was the hypocrisy of which he accused the "egregious Ragg and Raggage." And Barnard & Taylor were a "lacerating sore" in Rolfe's breast. On March 19, he quoted Caliban of *The Tempest* to Pirie-Gordon: "Remember to possess his books, for without them he's a sot as I am."

But Rolfe's existence on a penny loaf each day and only an occasional meal took its toll. By April 22 he was seriously ill, and on the next day he was delivered to the English Hospital where he was given the last sacrament. But he recovered, and when Rolfe was discharged from the hospital on May 11, the consul reinstalled him at the Hotel Belle Vue. From there Rolfe immediately informed Dawkins, Ragg, and Pirie-Gordon of his recent illness and blamed each one for it. Whoever was to blame, and it was certainly none of those three, Rolfe's situation was precarious and his position at the Belle Vue with Barbieri was steadily deteriorating.

Then, for once, Rolfe had unexpected help from an unexpected source. The Reverend Justus Stephen Serjeant, en route from Rome to his rectory in Huntingdonshire, spent August at the Belle Vue and during that time developed real confidence in Rolfe and his affairs. Serjeant even saw him as a good financial risk. The two men agreed to become partners, a decision based largely on an inheritance which Serjeant expected momentarily. As soon as he received it, Serjeant was to negotiate with Barnard & Taylor and

in due time finance Rolfe, who could then devote himself to his books, those already written and those yet to come.

The wait was grueling, and Rolfe underwent what he described as an "unspeakably awful time" after Serjeant left Venice. It reached a climax on January 27, 1911, when Barbieri evicted Rolfe once more. At first he walked his way through the cold nights. Then by some unexplained means, Rolfe secured use of a *topo* and survived by living on the boat with a large tarpaulin as protection against rats, crabs and winter storms.

By April 2, 1912, however, he received his first remittance from Serjeant and established himself in a small square room at the top of the stairs on the first floor of the Albergo Cavaletto. It is a pleasant, well-run, small hotel which started operations centuries ago. Rolfe began to take care with his appearance, dressing himself in a dark blue, double-breasted suit similar to that of a naval officer and a peaked cap over his hair, now kept a youthful, auburn color. His clothes and his boats, a gondola and two more elaborate vessels, were the glories of his new affluence. He set to work at once on proofs of *The Weird of the Wanderer* as well as on other literary projects, including a new novel "Amico di Sandro" and a number of short pieces. He kept his manuscripts moving from publisher to publisher, always with the hope of acceptance and large sales.

As usual, Rolfe's financial situation began to decline. From early April to early December, Rolfe had about £1000 from Serjeant, and the legacy from which the remittances had come was almost exhausted. Apart from a few short pieces and *The Weird of the Wanderer*, Rolfe had managed to get nothing published, and his financial return was meager. Furthermore, his account at the Cavaletto was long overdue and Antonio Arban, the innkeeper, could see nothing ahead but eviction. Owing to his liking for Rolfe, Arban arranged for a flat which Rolfe's shrinking resources might handle; so in late March, Rolfe left the hotel for a top-floor flat in the Palazzo Marcello.

By May, Rolfe could pay no more. He had sold nothing, and he had no prospects. He was living on meals which Arban provided and on credit. Most of Rolfe's time was spent on the water, but he lacked enthusiasm even for that. He was older, exhausted by failure, and weakened by illness. Arban, aware of Rolfe's despondency, convinced him that sharing his flat with another poverty-stricken Englishman named Thomas Pennefather Wade-Brown might prove serviceable, and Wade-Brown moved in.

As they often did, these two dined together at the Cavaletto on the evening of October 25, 1913, and returned to their flat. After a brief chat, each went to his bedroom. The next day Wade-Brown found Rolfe lying fully dressed on his bed where he had fallen with a final heart seizure. Let it be hoped that Rolfe had come at last to the fulfillment of the desire and pursuit of the whole, that is, that he had found love.



# Masefield, Ricketts, and *The Coming of Christ*

CARL WOODRING

IT is generally known that T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* of 1935 was neither the first nor the last modern liturgical play to be performed in Canterbury. Dorothy Sayers followed Eliot in the Canterbury Festival of 1937 with *The Zeal of Thy House*, produced by Harcourt Williams with Laurence Irving as designer. It is less well known that the only play actually performed in the Cathedral was the first, John Masefield's *The Coming of Christ*, in 1928. Subsequent plays, including Eliot's, were banished to the Chapter House.

The chief instigator of the Canterbury pageant at Whitsuntide in 1928 was the Dean, the Rev. George K. A. Bell. When he asked Masefield in July 1927 to write the play it may have been in the nick of time; in October Masefield wrote to Florence Lamont that theologians were "suddenly aghast" over his religious drama of 1925, *The Trial of Jesus*, now found "rotten with Arianism, toucht with the worst kind of Pelagianism, a bit Socinian, and just reeking with Monophysitism."

Among the holdings of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library regarding *The Coming of Christ* are production notes by Masefield, a tableau-photograph of the cast, a rare Christmas card derived from Laurence Irving's painting from memory of the final tableau, three printed announcements from the Precentor, similar materials from a later production at Wittersham, and items from Charles Ricketts, stage designer for the work. Ricketts had created the sets and costumes for Masefield's *Philip the King* at Covent Garden (to raise money for war charities) in 1914.

Masefield's Nativity drama differs from the usual Christmas pageant in its combination of medieval mystery or miracle play,

based on the Biblical narrative, and allegorical morality, a form of drama common in the fifteenth century. The preluding music closed with the entrance of two Trumpeters of the Host of Heaven, followed by the angels Power, Sword, Mercy, Light, and Anima Christi. Masfield named his three shepherds—worldlings—Rocky, Earthy, and Sandy.

Gustav Holst was asked to compose incidental music. It was Laurence Irving, O.B.E., artist and author, grandson and biographer of Henry Irving, who suggested to Dean Bell that Ricketts be asked to design the costumes and whatever sets or screens found necessary. Irving, who lived nearby in Wittersham, was to be involved in each subsequent Canterbury Festival—an involvement including the choice of Eliot in 1935. He had illustrated a limited edition, signed by author and artist, of Masfield's *Philip the King* published the previous year, 1927. (The collection includes a copy given by Corliss Lamont.)

Ricketts wrote from London to one of his avid disciples, Count Antonio Cippico: "Years ago the idea would have thrilled me to the very toe-nails; to-day—such is the effect of years—I do not feel very enthusiastic. It probably means a great deal of work, for nothing—by that I do not mean money, but the curious 'lack-lustre' of the English mind and its lack of appreciation." Along with others involved, Ricketts underestimated the attention the event would receive from *The Times* and the press generally. To another admirer, Cecil French, he wrote on March 23: "I have crowns, jewels, and the Holy Child to make with my own hands; this is my third distinguished infant in the last two years, which is a good record for a bachelor." To still another disciple, Cecil Lewis, he deepened the jest on the day of the first performance, May 28: "I made the Holy Child without the assistance of a Virgin—Winston calls it Ricketts' Immaculate Conception. . . . My activities have included some hundred ermine tails and a huge shepherd's hat made out of a fish-basket." He had attended at least one rehearsal, for he reported, "Some of the persons look

splendid, others like Mrs Grundy.” He concluded: “I have bought a Rubens for Canada.”

Masefield and Ricketts corresponded mostly about the costumes but also about the use of the cathedral as setting. Ricketts, who



Charles Ricketts in his studio, ca. 1926.

had designed for the Abbey Theater of Yeats and Lady Gregory, for Shaw (most notably *Saint Joan*), for Granville-Barker, for the D'Oyly Carte Company (*The Mikado*, *The Gondoliers*), and for the Casson-Thorndike company, procured from his usual sources in London the needed properties, armor, wigs, beards, and fabrics even for lesser members of the cast who were required for economy to sew their own costumes. As the date of the first performance approached, he corresponded on such matters directly with

Dr. Bell's wife, "Mrs. Dean," who had assumed most of the chores of production. Having misunderstood the scope of Masefield's estimate of costs, Ricketts "scrapped expensive wings" for the angels. "I think he exaggerates the number of persons required . . . & the cathedral steps will not hold too many." He worried lest it take so many men to carry the litter of the Virgin that his beautiful dress for her not be visible to the audience. Irving, not incidentally, played Gaspar, the best-dressed of the three kings. Masefield developed the character more fully in "The Song of Gaspar," of which there is an autograph in the Lamont-Masefield collection. As Ricketts and Charles Shannon had a second residence in the keep of Chilham Castle, about five miles from Canterbury, costumes and properties could be driven over in one of the chauffeured cars of Sir Edmund Davis, owner of the castle and patron of Ricketts, Shannon, and other artists.

It is not clear whether any of the designer's and the playwright's visits to Canterbury (Masefield's from Boar's Hill, Oxford) coincided. Because of his responsibilities as adviser on purchases of art in Canada, Ricketts was in Ottawa and New York in October and November, 1927, during the earliest preparations, and later absent from the chief rehearsal because of a meeting in London: ". . . the Holford Sale was unforeseen, & my share in the Canterbury Mystery is only that of the dresser or man concerned that the persons should look right." Before and after this mock-modesty, he quarreled with what he regarded as excessive movement required by the playwright's instructions and asked that his warning be read to Masefield.

On May 13, 1928, Masefield wrote to Florence Lamont: "I am off betimes tomorrow to rehearse the play at Canterbury. . . . As usual, when it comes to a rehearsal, I wish it were some other play, but there will be a certain rest in having abundant actors, who will all know their lines, and who will be sackt and miraculously replaced if they cut rehearsals. This will probably halve the woes of rehearsal at the very least. To think of being able to sack an actor



instead of having to woo him all the time & comfort him with flagons: golly.”

Working in an era before the institution of directors—absolute, authoritarian, and, when granted possession of classical plays and



Tableau arranged by Ricketts of the 1928 production of  
*The Coming of Christ at Canterbury*.

operas, often self-indulgent—Ricketts and Masefield each had become accustomed to intervening between playwrights and actors. Lillah McCarthy, acting under Harley Granville-Barker, and living with him, was glad to have Ricketts tell her when to raise a sleeve or fan that he had designed for her. For at least ten years Masefield had been in charge of his own theater and his own company of amateurs, the Boar's Hill Players. Shaw, like Ricketts and Masefield accustomed to ordering actors about, warned Sybil Thorndike that Ricketts's elaborate costumes and sets for *Saint Joan* were part of Ricketts's effort to override actress and playwright. It was inevitable that Ricketts and Masefield would have a conflict of authority over the details of staging.

George Bell dated May 8 his invitation to “Actors, Singers, and

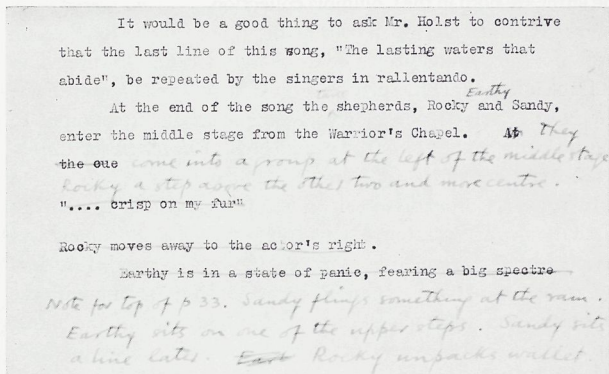


other Helpers" to tell the Precentor how many tickets they desired for friends. He expected the greatest demand to be for Whit Monday afternoon. Members of the public who responded to announcements in the newspapers were asked to read the play before the production in editions published by William Heinemann Ltd.—three shillings sixpence, ordinary edition; one shilling text obtainable only in Canterbury—because "the acoustics of the Cathedral present special difficulties." Despite the generosity of the principals and much voluntary help, cost was a difficulty that could be alleviated, the Dean explained, by contributions from all who attended. A second printed announcement, on blue paper to signify disappointment, notified enquirers that "every available ticket for each of the four performances of the Mystery Play had been disposed of." Demand led to an additional, fifth performance.

The great centerpiece of the Columbia collection is a typescript of eighteen pages, given by Corliss Lamont in 1969, containing Masefield's notes on the production, with corrections in Masefield's hand. The play as published by Heinemann contains brief stage directions, referring to transepts and a designated number of steps from nave to choir, but easily adaptable for performance in almost any church. Masefield's notes, keyed to the page numbers of the published editions, instruct the actors and others in various ways: "The three Kings need not give any impression of being companions. Their speeches, no less than their costumes, suggest that they are mainly interested in themselves and in their quest, not in each other." He recommends that the property-master attach chains to the butts of spears, "so that the clashing of the butts might ring aloud." As the three kings complete their song in unison (page 28), "It would be a good thing to ask Mr. Holst to contrive that the last line of this song, 'The lasting waters that abide', be repeated by the singers in *rallentando*."

Internal evidence shows that Masefield corrected these detailed instructions after the five performances, with the expectation that the play would be repeated in Canterbury on later occasions: "Af-

ter the Power has entered the Quire the Trumpeter and the Gate-Closers enter. This year, as the Trumpeter was somewhat short-sighted, he entered from the Warriors' Chapel between the two Gate-Closers. It would have a look of greater symmetry if he were



A page of Masefield's manuscript notes for the 1928 production of *The Coming of Christ*.

to enter from the centre of the nave..." (The projected two trumpeters have become one.) Masefield decided to shorten future performances from their average in 1928 of "one hour, twenty-five and a half minutes" to one hour and fifteen minutes. He wondered if each audience thereafter should not be limited to seven hundred. In the event, the production was far too successful, brought too large an audience with too little piety and too much debris, for the Archbishop of Canterbury who forbade any further performances in the nave of the cathedral.

As Corliss Lamont records in *Remembering John Masefield*, verses by Masefield in tribute to Dr. Lamont's parents were later engraved on a tablet in the Great Cloister of Canterbury Cathedral, in honor of their aid in restoration after the bombings of World War II.

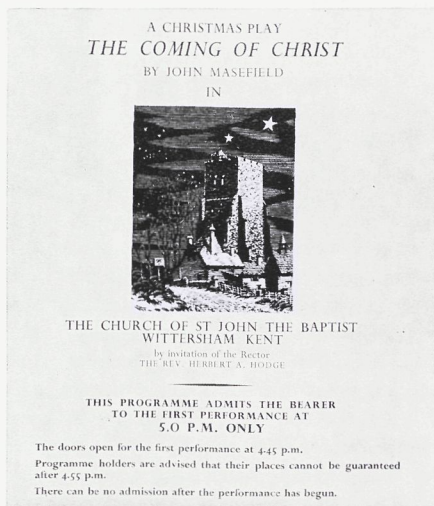
Masefield inscribed a copy of the limited edition of *The Coming of Christ* to Ricketts, with an accompanying note: "If you would not mind, I should be glad if you would accept from me this copy of the play which you made so lovely to look at." The book and the letter are both in the Columbia collection.

In 1929, when Dean Bell became Bishop of Chichester, he took with him the costumes for *The Coming of Christ*. On three days in December, 1931, the play was given a full production in the chapel of Lancing College, Chichester, under the direction of E. Martin Browne, not only the producer of *Murder in the Cathedral* but the director also of Eliot's subsequent plays.

In 1953, a Coronation year, it was proposed that Masefield's Nativity play be repeated at Canterbury. When that proposal was rejected by the then Dean, performances were arranged by Irving at the Church of St. John the Baptist at Wittersham, with the musician Alan Jefferson as director for rehearsals of the actors resident in London. Attendance was at the invitation of the Rector, the Rev. Herbert A. Hodge. Dr. Bell lent the costumes for Wittersham and attended as guest of honor the first performance, at 5 p.m. on December 12th. Jefferson succeeded Irving as director of the production. Irving designed new screens. Christopher Hassall preceded the performances with "an offering of verse." The cast was to have included E. Martin Browne, Peter Finch, Robert Speaight, and Harcourt Williams, but of these busy stars only Williams (First Shepherd) and Speaight (whose wonderful speaking of verse can still be heard in various recordings) were able in fact to appear, the more readily because they were "locals" who lived nearby. Irving once more took the role of Gaspar. Choral support came from the Wittersham Male Voice Choir and the Tenterden Choral Society.

Alan Jefferson described the occasion in a letter to *Theatre Notebook* in 1967: "At the start of the play four angels (one of whom was played by John Schlesinger) debate at some length. They stood between the choir stalls in the little church, in Rick-

etts's costumes of blazing gold, with their pointed ornamentation filling the air with light and something almost holy. There was no possibility of an audience's relaxation—both houses on this December evening sat completely spellbound at Masefield's verse,



Cover of the program for the 1953 performance.

at Gustav Holst's music, and especially at Charles Ricketts's costumes." (Jefferson's draft of the letter, it was not published, is in the Columbia collection.) Masefield, Poet Laureate from 1930, sent a letter that was reproduced in the program in facsimile: "In thanking all these unseen Helpers, let me say to them what Sir Francis Drake said to the men of his Fleet:—'God send such another Company, when there be need.' All happy fortune to you all. John Masefield."

The collection includes also, as gifts from Alan Jefferson to the present author in 1972, a plan of the acting site drawn by Irving,

mimeographed "Final Arrangements" for the performers, and Jefferson's copy of the personalized circular letter expressing the appreciation of Irving and the Rector for "magnificent team work." "Actually," wrote Jefferson, the Rector "was so unhelpful as to be almost opposed to it." Bishop Bell, by then weighted with international honors, preached a sermon at Wittersham on December 13, 1953, the Sunday after the performance: "A wonderful deed has just been done in Wittersham Church. A poetic play . . . an act of worship in which poet, producer, composer, players, singers, trumpeter, organist, accompanist, stage directors, wardrobe mistress, electrician, secretaries, ushers, audience and Rector have all played their part."



# Letters from Lynn Fontanne

ERIK BARNOUW

CORRESPONDENCE with Lynn Fontanne in my papers in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library piqued the interest of its director, and he asked me to write some words for *Columns* about the correspondence and what had occasioned it. I am glad to do this; it stirs many memories and involves a curious chapter in literary history.

About the time I joined the Columbia faculty soon after World War II, I also began intermittent work for the Theatre Guild, adapting plays, sometimes novels, for its one-hour broadcasts sponsored by U. S. Steel. The series had started on radio in September 1945, became a television series a few years later, and lasted until 1962. Various writers did the adapting; each assignment involved a separate call from the Theatre Guild and a separate contract. The adapter was expected to attend rehearsals and make script adjustments as needed.

The playing time of a *Theatre Guild on the Air* script was at first limited to 54 minutes, later to shorter periods as commercials grew longer. The adapter was inevitably faced with severe cutting problems. Other drastic changes might be made if the transfer from one medium to another seemed to demand it. There was often tension between those on the production staff who wanted the closest possible adherence to the original, and those who wanted to take advantage of the fluid possibilities of the broadcast media.

I did radio adaptations for three appearances by Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. The second of these set off memorable events. It involved the Arnold Bennett play *The Great Adventure*, which was based on his novel *Buried Alive*. When I was called for the assignment, it was emphasized to me that Lynn

Fontanne had a special interest in this venture. As a young girl in England, just starting her career, she had seen *The Great Adventure* in a celebrated performance starring the music-hall idol Miss Wish Wynne, who must have been extraordinary. Arnold Bennett, in his journal, called her a "genius." The event made an indelible impression on the young Fontanne, and she had long planned to do the play herself, some day. Now was to be the time. Lunt would be the shy, world-renowned painter Carve, an excellent role for him. The Theatre Guild wanted me to know the importance of the occasion; I would have several months to work on the script.

On reading the play, my first reaction was consternation: it seemed creaky and static. On reading the novel *Buried Alive*, I felt better. It had action missing from the play and, moreover, an entirely different ending. In both versions of the story the great painter (called Farrl in the novel) is thought to be buried amid suitable pageantry in Westminster Abbey; actually his valet, who happened to have a heart attack in his master's bedroom, is interred in the Abbey while the painter himself, fleeing the dreaded hubbub, is sheltered by a warm-hearted widow in Putney, who begins to cure him of his shyness. The artist now lives in blissful obscurity. Eventually, enterprising reporters get wind of what has happened; in the play the scandal is successfully quashed to avoid embarrassment to the British Empire, but in the novel it is not and leads on to a far more amusing climax. I asked the Theatre Guild if I could use material from the novel. The first answer was no; it would involve a different copyright owner and new, probably difficult negotiations. However, I happened to notice in the copy of *Buried Alive* that I drew from the Columbia library that it carried no copyright notice. The novel had apparently been published in the United States without copyright and was in the public domain so far as the United States was concerned. Theatre Guild counsel looked into this and finally gave me a go-ahead to use both play and novel.

What evolved was an adaptation that used passages from the

play but a structure more like that of the novel, a loose structure suitable to radio. I even used a characteristic radio device seldom used on the stage, first-person narration passages for both Lunt and Fontanne, so that parts of the story would be experienced from his point of view, others from hers. I realized it would be a new departure for the Lunts.

Some weeks after I delivered the script to the Theatre Guild, an urgent call came from Homer Fickett, director of the *Theatre Guild on the Air* broadcasts. He came straight to the point: "I think we're in trouble." The Lunts, just back from Genesee Depot, their Wisconsin retreat, had read the script. Lynn Fontanne wanted to discuss it with us. We were to go for a breakfast meeting the following Sunday at the Lunts' East Side apartment.

Homer Fickett was accustomed to crises and approached the Sunday meeting with bonhomie. Breakfast was served on a low table in front of a fireplace, with a fire going. Homer and I sat on a couch facing the Lunts, who occupied a similar couch. We had orange juice, poached eggs, English muffins, jam, and coffee. Homer quickly got the Lunts reminiscing, and this became what seemed to me a dazzling performance, not unlike the Lunts' stage performances. They constantly interrupted each other, teased each other, talked through each other's speeches (as they did on the stage) but always allowing the other's key lines to come through clearly. They constantly supplemented (and amended) each other's accounts in a way that evolved both rivalry and partnership, and always wit and warmth. It was unforgettable.

As I watched, hardly saying a word, I kept wondering about the script. After more than an hour of performance, it seemed we should either talk business or leave. So I asked Lynn Fontanne if there was something she wanted to say about the script. She shook her head and smiled reminiscently. She mentioned having reread the original play. After a while she said: "I was wrong: I thought I remembered a play. I didn't at all. I remembered a performance." She then said my script would do very well.

On that note we departed. The Lunts seemed, to our astonish-

ment, to be accepting the script as written. And that is how it went into rehearsal. With the Lunts approving, no one at the Theatre Guild dared tamper with it. During the following week I had the amazing experience of seeing it take shape in the Lunt-



Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in *O, Mistress Mine*  
at the Empire Theatre, New York, 1946.

Fontanne manner. On the first day, when lesser members of the cast tended to give their all, to show what they could do, the Lunts held back, seeming to *think* their way through the scenes rather than to act. A U. S. Steel representative always came on the first day to sit in the sponsor's booth and listen to a run-through, and was inevitably annoyed at this, and had to be reassured that the

Lunts would indeed be magnificent when the time came. The reassuring was done by one of the Theatre Guild partners, Lawrence Langner, Armina Marshall, or Teresa Helburn, one of whom was always on hand for this high-level liaison, along with representatives of the Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn advertising agency. At later rehearsals, without the gallery of observers, it would be clear that the Lunts were working things out in minute detail at home. Especially in the Lunt-Fontanne scenes, a marvelously intricate interlacing of their performances evolved day by day. When the broadcast came, it seemed to me the most brilliant radio acting I had ever heard. The Lunts themselves decided to repeat the program a year later—live. At this time, the major networks never broadcast from recordings.

Meanwhile, the Lunts were appearing on Broadway in *O Mistress Mine* (which I would later adapt for radio, after the Broadway run). One day, much to my surprise I received a letter with EMPIRE THEATER on the back. That is where *O Mistress Mine* was playing. The impeccably typed letter, signed by Lynn Fontanne (did she have the services of a secretary in her dressing room?) read:

Empire Theatre  
New York City  
May 5, 1947

Dear Mr. Barnouw:

We have often received a letter from Mrs. Bennett over the years asking if we wouldn't care to revive "The Great Adventure" and it has always seemed to us as it did when we came to do the radio script, that it was a little anemic for the kind of thing that is expected now in the theatre. But since your wonderful revision of the script and your knowledge of exactly what to do with it, I have been thinking ever since that if you would consent to try and write a whole new play, ignoring Bennett's dramatization and tak-



ing your play directly from the book, you could do a magnificent job of it for present consumption.

If this would interest you *and we get the consent of Mrs. Bennett*, then you can see Mr. John C. Wilson and have a talk with him about what financial arrangements you would like to make. If you do agree to it, I would be very much obliged if you will keep the proposition a secret, as I am doing this off my own bat without mentioning it to my husband, the idea being to delightfully surprise him. So don't even mention it to the Guild or anybody. It will be between us and John C. Wilson.

Yours sincerely,  
Lynn Fontanne

To a young university instructor, the arrival of such a letter from a reigning queen of the theater was indeed an event. While overwhelming, it stirred also a confusing mixture of thoughts. What was the meaning of the secrecy request? Was Alfred Lunt likely, or not likely, to share her enthusiasm for the idea? More serious was my own doubt that the idea was feasible, at least for me. For over a decade I had lived and breathed radio. I had begun to dabble with television, and the advent of the tape recorder had made me deeply interested in the possibility of the documentary. The theater was no longer on my mind; I was headed elsewhere. And I was sure that what I had contributed to the broadcast had a lot to do with my knowledge of radio, and that very little of it was applicable to the theater. In fact, I had not the slightest notion of how to approach the project. Still, I was sure that to anyone in the broadcasting or theater worlds it would seem insane if I did anything other than what I proceeded to do. I wrote to Miss Lynn Fontanne, c/o Empire Theater, expressing my delight and saying I looked forward to hearing from Mr. John C. Wilson. A reply came promptly.

130 East 75th Street  
New York 21  
May 16, 1947

Dear Mr. Barnouw,

I was so delighted that you are interested.

Mr. Wilson is, at the moment, in London but we are expecting him back any day and as soon as he comes I will tell him of your willingness to try a script.

Meanwhile I am sending you a copy of a letter I have had from Mrs. Bennett, which I cannot make head or tail of. Perhaps you can but I do hope that when deciphered it is not discouraging.

We are off to the country on June 1st and shall stay there all summer long, but you will hear from Mr. Wilson soon after he lands.

Yours sincerely,

Lynn Fontanne

The enclosed letter from Dorothy Bennett was long. The first thing I noticed about it was the surprising address from which it came: 606 West 116th Street, New York 27, across the street from my office in General Studies. I had recently taken a graduate course in modern English literature with Prof. William Y. Tyn-dall, who had devoted a lecture to Arnold Bennett and had made references to Dorothy Bennett. But he too, I learned, was unaware that Dorothy Bennett was living at the edge of the Columbia campus. Her letter began:

606 West 116th Street  
New York, 27  
May 11th '47

Dear Miss Fontanne,

Thank you so much for your very nice letter. As to what you say of "The Great Adventure," in the first place I am most interested to learn that you and Mr. Lunt have always thought the play would suit you. I could not agree more fully. You would be merely perfect, and would re-create the characters in fullest richness and the story with its vital truth—given the right script.

To me it seems an inescapable fact that the play needs considerable revision in various places, and a new treatment of act iv, to be drawn more closely from the book, "Buried Alive." I know the author regarded act iv as less than satisfactory, but as the best solution, at the time, to a practical problem which, due to modern techniques and equipment, is now no longer so crucial.

But respecting the idea of making an entirely new script: would not this have the very serious disadvantage of losing many of the facets of the characters as revealed in the existing dialogue, and also much of their "basic essence"; and of blurring, or changing, the play's intellectual theme and argument? . . .

There was more urging of this sort. She fervently hoped the Lunts would consider doing the original play, with needed revisions, and drop the idea of commissioning a new work. Finally she raised the serious technical obstacles to Lynn Fontanne's plan:

Now I must explain that, although I own the play (which by the way was written by Mr. Bennett alone) by a deed of gift, the book ("Buried Alive") belongs to the

Bennett Estate. Due to the fact that another legatee has a life interest in it, the Estate is managed at present by the Public Trustee, London. Therefore, authorization for a new dramatization of the book would have to be given by him; although he, no doubt, would have first to consult me, as owner of the existing dramatization. . . .

Dorothy Bennett, though referred to by Lynn Fontanne as Mrs. Bennett, was not Bennett's wife. She was the actress long known as Dorothy Cheston, who had legally changed her name to Dorothy Bennett so that she and Arnold Bennett could travel together without embarrassment. The arrangement had been established in punctilious fashion, as described in Margaret Drabble's fine biography of Bennett. Bennett's interest in Dorothy had begun years after his legal separation from his wife. After discreet teas and dinners with the actress, he had explained to her his agonizing dilemma. His wife had adamantly refused a divorce, and there seemed no legal way to dissolve the marriage. But Bennett declared to Dorothy his love and devotion. He could not offer her a ritually sanctioned marriage, but if she could accept a less formal relationship, he would do all he could to make her happy. She had thought it over for a time, then agreed. They had honeymooned in Paris, and lived there much of the time. Among their literary friends the arrangement was readily accepted, and meanwhile the couple led a very domestic life. One of Bennett's chief worries concerned Dorothy's future. In the legal separation from his wife, it was stipulated that the income from all his literary properties would go to her after his death. Bennett, interpreting this as applying only to his books, decided to deed to Dorothy the very successful play *The Great Adventure*. This was contested in court by the wife, who became increasingly vindictive after Bennett settled down with Dorothy, but the arrangement survived the legal challenge, and the play became Dorothy's property. Understandably it remained a crucial value to her, and not only

for financial reasons. She herself had appeared in a 1923 revival of the play. To press the Lunts, she soon followed her first letter with another. It began:

May 26, 1947

Dear Miss Fontanne:

An offer has come up from a manager who wants to do "The Great Adventure" for a week at the Greenwich summer theatre, but who is asking for an option on a N. Y. production of the play. He wanted my answer at once, but I replied that I cannot let him know before the beginning of the week as to the N. Y. option. . . .

Dorothy Bennett therefore asked the Lunts for a firm commitment of some sort. Could she be assured they would do the play, with whatever revisions might be needed, "in about 2 years time"? If so, she would "refuse to grant any options elsewhere." A copy of this came to me with another Lynn Fontanne letter from the Empire Theater:

May 27, 1947

Dear Mr. Barnouw:

I have tonight received another letter from Mrs. Bennett, a copy of which I enclose.

So I think perhaps we had better let it go, as she seems on the tiresome side, don't you think? I have written her, telling her it is impossible for us to make a decision at the moment and advising her to take the offer from the manager of the Greenwich summer theatre, including the New York option.

I am so terribly sorry. And I am very grateful to you for your kindness and willingness to work on it.

Yours sincerely,  
Lynn Fontanne



This seemed, at the moment, to end matters to my simultaneous relief and disappointment. However, Dorothy Bennett quickly wrote again, reversing direction. "As long as you have started things rolling," she wrote Lynn Fontanne on May 28, "I beg you to go on, or rather to let them stay rolling. I shall not grant any option elsewhere for a New York production." This brought me another Empire Theater letter.

Dear Mr. Barnouw:

It looks a little bit now as if Mrs. Bennett was being a bit too business-like and trying to hurry us. I am enclosing her letter.

Please do whatever you think about it. I will be with you either way.

I am sorry to be so shilly-shallying, but I was impatient with Mrs. Bennett for trying to pin me down.

My address after Saturday of this week will be Genesee Depot, Wisconsin.

Yours sincerely,  
Lynn Fontanne

P.S. John C. Wilson will write you—and you can talk it over with him.

Instead of John C. Wilson, manager of the Lunts, I heard from the Theatre Guild. Its attorney, H. William Fitelson, was taking charge; the matter had become a Theatre Guild venture. His first problem was to clear the rights. He wrote me to say: "That is going to be a problem because it not only concerns the Estate and Mrs. Bennett, but also Twentieth Century-Fox." I had a series of meetings with Fitelson. It was the first time I had breathed of the matter to any one but my wife.

The problem was that a film titled *Holy Matrimony*, starring Monte Woolley and based on *Buried Alive* and *The Great Adven-*

ture, had been made by Twentieth Century-Fox, and that its lien on the screen rights still had years to run. Clearing this problem was essential. One of the rewards of a Broadway success, for its producer, writer, and sometimes others, was a share in the large sum that might come from the sale of screen rights to a Hollywood studio. A Broadway production was not likely to materialize without this possibility. And the relevant rights must be available internationally. *Buried Alive*, in spite of its dubious copyright status in the United States, was still fully covered in Europe and elsewhere; screen rights to *Buried Alive* must be included in the package. The difficulties seemed immense but Fitelson was prepared to explore them with Twentieth Century-Fox.

It was many months before I heard more, and had another meeting with Fitelson. Amazingly, he had obtained an agreement, but with many provisos. Twentieth Century-Fox had accepted the idea of "merging" the screen rights in my unwritten play with the screen rights in the script written for *Holy Matrimony* and owned by the studio. This meant that the author's share of a film sale would go partly to me, partly to Twentieth Century-Fox. Since the total author's share might be substantial, this did not seem too serious. But there were other conditions. The deal would be void unless, before a stipulated deadline about two years away, the play was approved by the Lunts and accepted for a Broadway run in a Theatre Guild production starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

Fitelson helped me review the risks. If I had trouble getting the necessary acceptances before the tight time limit, my efforts would have been wasted. If either of the Lunts fell ill, my efforts would also have been wasted. If the deal lapsed, I would have on my hands a script without underlying rights, and virtually unmarketable. Worse yet, was it not likely that the Lunts might meanwhile be offered some other script much to their liking? Lunt-Fontanne successes tended to have three-year cycles, a season on Broadway, another on the road, another in England. At this time I was be-

coming very busy in broadcasting, raising a family, and paying off a mortgage. I told Fitelson: "I don't think I can afford to do this." He agreed. "It had to be your decision." He would inform Lynn Fontanne.



Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt (right) with William Hansen in *The Visit*, the acting couple's final major theatrical appearance.

It turned out that the Lunts did find a script that launched them on a new three-year cycle, a final major theatrical triumph. Ironically, it came to them from another Columbia faculty member. *The Visit*, adapted by Professor Maurice Valency from the work of Friedrich Duerrenmatt, became the next Lunt-Fontanne vehicle.

Near the end of the Broadway run my wife and I went to see *The Visit*. I had not seen the Lunts for some years. Afterwards we went to the stage door and I sent in my card, without any idea of what to expect. Almost at once, word came that we were to be admitted. As we went in, both Lunts came bursting from their dressing rooms and greeted us as if we were old friends. It seemed astonishing, as our relationship had always been so formal: the famous couple and the young instructor, Mr. Lunt, Miss Fontanne, Mr. Barnouw. But we chatted gaily, and reminisced. Then Lunt made an extraordinary statement. He said something along this line: "You know, that thing you did for us, *The Great Adventure*—we listen to that now and then, in Wisconsin. We have a recording of it. The theatre is a very strange business. You work in it for half a century, and you have nothing to show for it. Oh, we have clippings, and stills, and posters, things like that. But that recording, that gives us an idea of what we were like. I'm going to have an LP made of it."

Today great performances can be preserved via magnetic tape or numerous other processes, but the career of the Lunts belonged largely to an earlier era when performances indeed vanished into thin air. I don't know if Lunt had an LP made from his recording; I hope so. It was an off-the-air acetate recording, very perishable, on sixteen-inch discs, now obsolete. I had such a recording too, and deposited it for preservation in the National Archives.

# Our Growing Collections

KENNETH A. LOHF

*Backer gift.* The papers of John H. Backer (A.M., 1955), foreign service officer, author, and biographer of General Lucius D. Clay, have been presented by Mrs. Backer. The more than 17,000 pieces of correspondence, reports, audiotapes, and photographs in the collection relate to Mr. Backer's research and writing on General Clay and post-war German affairs; they also document his service in the Economic Division of General Clay's Military Government in Germany, as a member of the Foreign Service in Germany and the Soviet Union, and as the supervisor of U. S. Information Agency offices in several German cities. In the researching of his three books *Priming the Germany Economy: American Occupational Policies*, *The Decision to Divide Germany: American Foreign Policy in Transition*, and *Winds of History: The German Years of Lucius DuBignon Clay*, Mr. Backer interviewed public and military figures on audiotapes, and Mrs. Backer has included this extensive file in her gift. There are also important letters in the papers from General Clay, W. Averell Harriman, Charles E. Bohlen, Jacob K. Javits, John Kenneth Galbraith, and John J. McCloy.

*Borchardt gift.* Mr. and Mrs. George Borchardt have established a collection of the papers of their literary agency with recent gifts of more than 70,000 letters, manuscripts, and publishing documents. Mr. Borchardt began representing French publishing firms in New York during the early 1950s, and later he acted for individual French authors who were seeking American publication; he formed the literary agency with his wife Anne in 1968. The files which date from 1952 to the early 1980s, include extensive correspondence with authors, publishers, and other literary agents, including, Mme. Guillaume Apollinaire, Hervé Bazin,



Laurent de Brunhoff, Michel Butor, Albert Camus, Marguerite Duras, Jean Giraudoux, Henry Michaux, Henri Troyat, and Marguerite Yourcenar. Among English and American authors represented in the collection are John Ashberry, Eric Bentley,



BEARDED TITMICE are inhabitants of the Norfolk reed-beds. At one time they were fairly numerous, but with continual drainage and reclamation of marsh land and the greed of collectors, numbers were much reduced; however they are increasing. The male bird can be easily recognised by the black beard.

One of the handsomely calligraphed and hand-painted leaves from Margaret Adams's *Twelve English Birds*, 1970. (Cohen gift)

Paul Carroll, Caresse Crosby, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, John Gardner, Meyer Levin, Mary McCarthy, Anaïs Nin, Alan Sillitoe, and Ruth Rendell.

*Brown gift.* Ms. Kristen Cole Brown has donated a group of eleven letters written by her step-grandmother, Sue Jenkins Brown, to Peggy Baird, the friend of Hart Crane and the wife of the critic Malcolm Cowley. Dated 1956–1962, the letters relate to numerous personal matters and mention Crane, the John Untermyer biography of the poet, the poet's mother Grace Hart Crane, and public readings of Crane's poetry.

*Clifford gift.* Mrs. Virginia Clifford has added to the papers of her late husband, Professor James L. Clifford, the file of correspondence, notes, and reviews pertaining to the edition of Dr. Thomas Campbell's *Diary of a Visit to England in 1775*, which he edited and published in 1947 with an introduction by S. C. Roberts. A friend of Samuel Johnson and the Thrales, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Campbell originally published his *Diary* in Sydney, Australia, in 1854, and Mrs. Clifford has included a copy of this rare edition in her gift.

*Cohen gift.* The Book Arts Collection has been considerably enriched by the gift from Mr. and Mrs. Herman Cohen of nineteen works notable for the distinction of their printers and publishers. Outstanding among them are: Henry Morris's *A Visit to Hayle Mill*, Bird & Bull Press, 1970, in a trial binding, inscribed by the author-printer; R. Hunter Middleton's *A Portfolio of Thomas Bewick Wood Engravings*, published by The Newberry Library in a limited edition in 1970 and comprising one hundred prints of birds and quadrupeds from the blocks at the Library; George Orwell's *Politics & the English Language*, printed in 1947 by Herbert W. Simpson for The Typophiles, with proofs, variant issues, and correspondence with the author and the printer; Herman Zapf's *Manuale Typographicum*, 1954, and *Typographischer*

*Variationem*, 1969, both limited and signed editions, published in Frankfurt am Main, and inscribed to Mr. Cohen; John Dreyfus's *Giovanni Mardersteig: An Account of His Work*, printed in Verona at the Officina Bodoni in 1966 for Gallery 303, one of 135 copies signed by the author; and *From a Letter of T. E. Lawrence*, designed and printed in 1959 by Giovanni Mardersteig at the Officina Bodoni for presentation to the members of the Double Crown Club, one of about 60 copies. Of special importance in Mr. and Mrs. Cohen's gift is the manuscript book, *Twelve English Birds*, lettered and illuminated by Margaret Adams after water-colour drawings by C. Harry Adams, Malvern, England, 1970; this exquisitely executed manuscript is on sixteen vellum leaves, lettered in black and red and illuminated in gold, and is bound by George Percival in full crushed levant morocco.

*Coover gift.* Mr. Christopher Coover (M.S., 1983) has donated eight first editions of literary works published in London and Geneva from 1737 to 1906, among which are three volumes of association interest: Mrs. John Lane's *Kitwyk*, London, 1903, inscribed by the publisher John Lane; Maarten Maarten's *My Lady Nobody*, London, 1895, inscribed by the author to Arthur T. Quiller-Couch; and Guy Thorne's *First It Was Ordained*, London, 1906, inscribed with a self-caricature and a long account of the circumstances relating to the writing of the novel.

*Dzierbicki gift.* In memory of Marguerite A. Cohn, Mr. Ronald L. Dzierbicki has presented a group of six rare editions and four drawings by twentieth century authors, including: Charles Bukowski's *At Terror Street and Agony Way*, 1968, and *The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hill*, 1969, both published by Black Sparrow Press, the former one of seventy-five copies with an original watercolor drawing by the author, and the latter a presentation copy inscribed to fellow-poet Jack Micheline; the Cummington Press edition of *The Book of Job*, 1944, with wood engravings by Gustav Wolf; Clayton Eshleman's *Brother Stones*,

Kyoto, 1968, with six woodcuts numbered and signed by William Paden; the Kanthos Press edition of Rico Lebrun's *Drawings for Dante's Inferno*, 1963, designed by Leonard Baskin, with four original lithographs laid in; George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, New York, 1946, the first American edition; and four abstract ink drawings by James Purdy, signed and dated 1963.



One of four original lithographs by Rico Lebrun for  
*Dante's Inferno*, 1963. (Dzierbicki gift)

*Granat gift.* Mr. Jerry Granat has presented an important series of forty-six letters written by the inventor of frequency modulation (FM), Edwin H. Armstrong (Sc.D., 1929), to Captain H. J. Round, a prolific inventor in the electronics industry who was associated with the Marconi Company. Ranging in date from 1936 to 1953, the letters, aggregating some seventy pages, discuss numerous subjects of mutual interest, including FM transmitters, various radio companies and models, the development of televi-

sion, radar, the Marconi Company, and other inventors. Mr. Granat's gift also includes several letters from Marion Armstrong and miscellaneous printed items and patents.

*Haeberle gift.* In memory of Professor Frances Henne, Ms. Florence Haeberle has presented an unusual and attractive reward of merit for addition to the collection established by Professor Henne. Dating from the early 1840s, the reward is illustrated with a stencil of a rose and an oak leaf, with additional details in pencil, inscribed at the bottom by one S. A. Sawyer.

*Henne gift.* Shortly before her death on December 21 of last year, Professor Frances Henne presented the final installment of her collection of children's books. Nearly 1,400 volumes comprise the gift and include works published from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1970s. Among the eighteenth century books are: Franklin Delano Roosevelt's copy of W. D. Cooper's *The History of North America*, London, E. Newbery, 1789; John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, Worcester, Isaiah Thomas, 1796; and Philip Doddridge's *Principles of Christian Religion*, Hartford, John Babcock, 1798, the earliest of many Babcock imprints in the collection, and a publisher in which Professor Henne was particularly interested. The chapbooks in the gift published by Mahlon Day include *The Affecting Story of Mary Davis*, 1830, and *Blind Susan; or, The Affectionate Family*, 1835. Other well-known nineteenth century publishers of children's books represented are Samuel Wood, Solomon King, American Tract Society, and McLoughlin Brothers. Twentieth century works include those by Maurice Sendak, Bruno Munari, and William Pène du Bois, among numerous others. There are more than one hundred pieces of realia, including a stereopticon and viewing cards, playing cards, bookmarks, greeting cards, woodcuts and engravings, toys and games, salesman's samples, and dioramas of a village festivity and a scene from an eighteenth century play. Of special importance are a lithograph by August Renoir, "La Tête baisé,"



ca. 1904, one of twelve lithographs published in 1919 in Paris by Ambroise Vollard in a limited edition portfolio; and an etching and dry point by Henry Moore, "Reading Lesson," 1967, one of fifty numbered copies signed in pencil by the artist.



Henry Moore, "The Reading Lesson," etching and dry point, 1967; one of fifty copies, signed and numbered by the artist. (Henne gift)

*Jones gift.* Mr. and Mrs. Dan Burne Jones have presented approximately sixty first editions, pamphlets, and printed ephemera pertaining to Rockwell Kent, Lynd Ward, James Michener, and other writers. Of special interest are two rare editions illustrated by Kent, the Lakeside Press edition of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick, or The Whale*, published in 1930 in three volumes and issued in an aluminum slipcase, and Voltaire's *Candide*, Random House, 1928, with thirty-nine initial letters and illustrations hand colored by the illustrator's artist friend, Dale Nichols. There are also fine copies of John Masefield's *The Trial of Jesus*, London, 1925, one of 530 copies signed by the author, and *Storyteller*

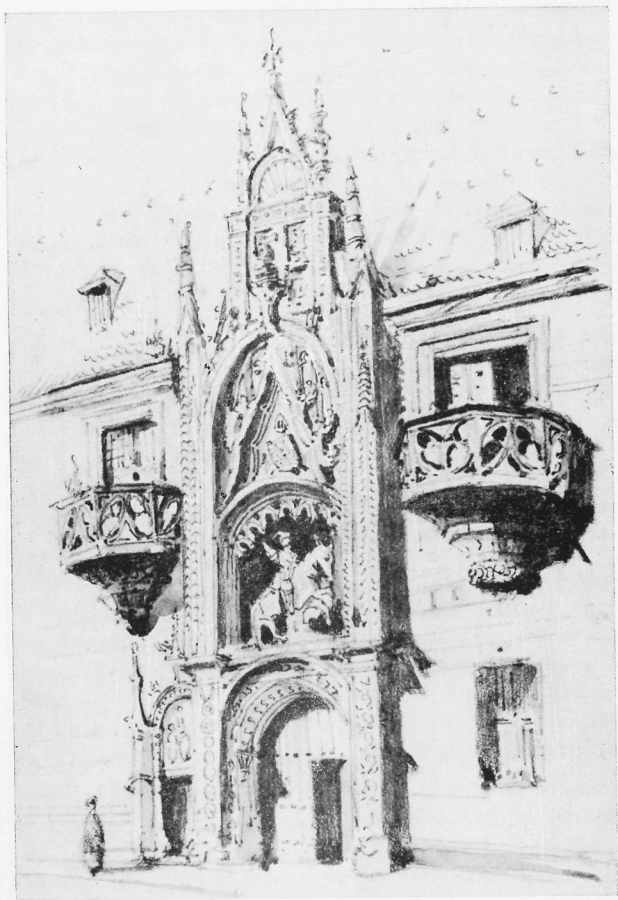
*Without Words: The Wood Engravings of Lynd Ward*, New York, 1974, inscribed by the artist.

*Lieberman gift.* Dr. E. James Lieberman has presented the first complete typescript of his biography of Otto Rank, *Acts of Will*, along with the printer's copy which contains his corrections and those of his editor.

*London gift.* Mrs. Ephraim London has presented a collection of seventy-one letters and other pieces of correspondence received by M. Lincoln and Ray Schuster from the connoisseur of Italian art Bernard Berenson, his companion Nicky Mariano, and others on the staff of I Tatti, Berenson's home in Settignano, near Florence. Dating from 1952 until shortly before Berenson's death, the file of thirty letters written by the art critic cover a variety of subjects, but deal primarily with the writing and publication of his books, his reading, travels, visitors to I Tatti, and the illustration of his books on Caravaggio and Lorenzo Lotto. There are also twenty-eight letters written by Nicky Mariano from 1953 to 1968, as well as other correspondence from Baroness Anrep and Lawrence Berenson, and a photograph of Berenson taken by Yehudi Menuhin in 1959, inscribed to the Schusters by Nicky Mariano, and with a note on the verso stating that this is the "last picture taken of B.B."

*Lutz gift.* Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Lutz have donated a copy of Zacharias Ursinus's *Summe of the Christian Religion*, printed in London in 1645. Based on the Latin edition of David Pareus, the work was translated into English by Henry Parry, Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth and the Bishop of Worcester.

*Palmer gift.* Mr. Paul R. Palmer (M.S., 1950, A.M., 1955) has presented a collection of 265 volumes, mainly first editions in the fields of contemporary literature and the popular arts, published from the 1930s to the 1970s. Included are several volumes inscribed by their authors, Laurette Taylor, Lana Turner, Edith Head, Helen Hayes, and others.



Pencil and wash drawing by Augustus Hare of La Grande-Porterie of the Ducal Palace, Nancy, France, ca. 1854. (Schimmel gift)

*Plimpton gift.* Mrs. Francis T. P. Plimpton has added to the collections of her late husband and father-in-law approximately 375 letters and documents, including the diaries kept by Francis Plimpton from 1892 to 1900, an extensive file of letters written by George Arthur Plimpton to his son during the 1890s, and individual important letters received by the Plimptons from Samuel Putnam Avery, John W. Burgess, Robert Underwood Johnson, Seth Low, Annie Nathan Meyer, George Haven Putnam, Charles Scribner, David Eugene Smith, Oswald Garrison Villard, and Horace White.

*Raushenbush gift.* Mr. Carl Raushenbush has presented a collection of 116 volumes and pamphlets of works by Henry Fielding and other eighteenth and nineteenth century authors, collected by his late wife, Esther McGill Raushenbush, who taught at Barnard College in the early 1930s. Of special interest are the first Dublin edition of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1795, a first edition of Frances Burney's *Camilla: or A Picture of Youth*, 1796, and a fine copy in contemporary calf of Henry Fielding's *Pasquin: A Dramtick Satire on the Times*, 1746.

*Schang gift.* Mr. Frederick C. Schang (B.Litt., 1915) had added ten additional visiting cards to the collection that he established nearly ten years ago, including choice examples of autographed cards of the choreographer Marius Petipa, the German philosopher Georg Hegel, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the German dramatist Gerhardt Hauptmann, the composer Irving Berlin, and the pioneer airman Alberto Santos-Dumont, among others.

*Schimmel gift.* Mr. Stuart B. Schimmel has presented exceptionally fine collections of autograph letters, manuscripts, drawings, and first editions of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Augustus J.C. Hare, and Christopher Isherwood. The Holmes collection, the most extensive of the three, comprises more than one hundred first editions of Holmes's publications and writings about him, as well

as fifty-seven letters written by the lawyer and jurist, including an important series to Charles Henry Butler, reporter of decisions at the U.S. Supreme Court; a group of thirty-eight working autograph drafts and corrected proofs of Holmes's reports of Supreme Court decisions; the autograph manuscript of an essay on the legal vocation, "Just the Boy That's Wanted in Law"; and a fine letter to P. E. Mason, dated March 1, 1899, giving advice to a young lawyer on what books to read, how to conduct himself, and the like. The printed materials include two first editions of Holmes's *The Common Law*, Boston, 1881, one a virtually pristine copy in the original plum cloth; Theophilus Parson's *Essays*, Boston, 1859, inscribed to Holmes; *Poems*, Boston, 1863, by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., inscribed to his cousin Sally Gardiner; and a copy in the original boards of *American Annals*, Cambridge, 1805, by Abiel Holmes, the grandfather of the jurist.

The late Victorian writer Augustus J.C. Hare is best known for his guidebooks, the materials for which he gained on foreign tours and many of which he illustrated himself. The collection presented by Mr. Schimmel includes: 105 volumes of these informative guidebooks and biographical works, as well as 59 autograph letters, primarily concerning the writing and publishing of his books; autograph manuscripts of the announcement for his book *Shropshire* and of his autobiographical essay "The Hare with Many Friends"; and five original pencil and wash drawings of buildings in France, Germany, and Switzerland, used as illustrations in his books. The thirty-eight volumes by Christopher Isherwood donated by Mr. Schimmel include first editions of the author's early books, *All the Conspirators*, *Goodbye to Berlin*, and *Prater Violet*, and of Gerald Hamilton's *Mr. Norris and I*, for which Isherwood wrote the prologue.

*Sykes gift.* Mrs. Claire Sykes has established a collection of papers of her late husband, the novelist and critic Gerald Sykes, who was adjunct professor at Columbia and taught sociology at the New School for Social Research during the 1960s and 1970s. Included



in Mrs. Sykes's initial gift were the manuscripts and proofs for numerous short stories, essays, novels, and non-fiction works, among them, *The Hidden Remnant*, *The Perennial Avantgarde*, and *Foresights*.

*Thomas gift.* In memory of Marguerite A. Cohn, Mr. Michael M. Thomas has presented a fine copy of the limited edition of Samuel Johnson's *London: A Poem* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, printed by the Chiswick Press and published in London in 1930 by Frederick Etchells and Hugh McDonald. The folio volume has an introductory essay by T.S. Eliot and is one of 150 copies signed by Eliot.

*Wertheim gift.* Professor Stanley Wertheim has added to the Stephen Crane Collection two rare and important printed items: *Legends*, a pamphlet privately printed in April 1942 by Edwin B. Hill in an edition of forty-five copies for the friends of Vincent Starrett and Ames W. Williams; and the first English edition of *The Little Regiment and Other Episodes of the American Civil War*, 1897, with the pictorial wrapper of The Pioneer Series bound in at the front of the volume.

*Woodring gift.* Professor and Mrs. Carl Woodring have presented a group of letters, drawings, and printed items pertaining to John Masefield and Charles Ricketts comprising: three letters written by Ricketts to Bruce Winston in 1924 concerning his costume designs for the 1924 production of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, all of which have pen sketches, along with a separate sheet of pencil, pen and watercolor sketches of Gilles de Retz for the same play; five letters from Laurence Irving and Alan Jefferson addressed to Professor Woodring, with related printed ephemera, concerning the productions of John Masefield's *The Coming of Christ* at Canterbury Cathedral in 1928 and at Wittersham Church in 1953; and the copy of the limited signed edition of *The Coming of Christ*, published in London by William Heinemann in 1928, inscribed by Masefield to Ricketts.

## Activities of the Friends

*Winter Reception.* A reception sponsored by the Friends on Thursday afternoon, March 6, opened the exhibition, "Baron Corvo—Madman and Genius." Drawn from gifts received from Jack Harris Samuels and Stuart B. Schimmel, and from individual items acquired on the Charles W. Mixer and Friends Endowed Funds, the exhibition of nearly 150 items included such rarities as the only known inscribed copy of Frederick Rolfe's first book, *Tarcissus*, one of only a few known copies of the first issue of *Don Renato*, and the manuscript of the Venice letter book kept by Rolfe during his final years.

*Bancroft Awards Dinner.* Presided over by Gordon N. Ray, the annual Bancroft Awards dinner was held in the Rotunda of Low Memorial Library on Thursday evening, April 3. President Michael I. Sovern announced the winners of the 1986 awards for distinguished books in American history and diplomacy published in 1985: Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Oxford University Press; and Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, Basic Books, Inc. The President presented to the author of each book a \$4,000 award from funds provided by the Edgar A. and Frederic Bancroft Foundation.

*Future Meetings.* The reception opening the Michel Butor exhibition will be held on Thursday afternoon, December 4. The winter exhibition reception will be held on March 5, 1987, and the Bancroft Awards dinner is scheduled for April 2, 1987.

# THE FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA LIBRARIES

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