

# Points of View

## From Duluth

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:  
SIR:

The Roman Maxim "why not tell the truth with a smile" occurs to me, as I jot down quite frankly a few significant experiences with publishers.

To booksellers in the west, some 1500 miles from New York, the attitude of the publisher and his response to the booksellers' problems, as presented to him from time to time, make a vast difference in the success of book-selling.

In point of distribution, the farther the shop from the base supply the greater the prospect of not getting new books by publication date.

A case in point:

An important book by a noted author is largely advertised, and an order is placed some two months ahead of publication, which is listed for early fall. Literally nothing is left undone by the publishers to advertise the book and finally it is reviewed by the inspired reporter.

Publication date is within a couple of weeks and anxiety is felt about the supply of books which has not arrived. As a last resort a telegram is sent to New York costing 72 cents, which is the ten word rate, asking for immediate reply as to when the books were shipped. The reply comes back "Don't worry; your books will reach you on time" (this is verbatim) and this masterfully noncommittal message is the only consolation, as publication date comes and goes and the books arrive one week late! The sales lost and worse yet the good will of numerous customers whom we had assured would have the book by a certain time, was a hard experience to overcome.

In our book shop the supreme duty of every one is to try to create a desire for books. If one can so present a book that not only the story is well suggested but also a touch of the atmosphere that goes with comfortable reading becomes a part of the picture, the sale is made, generally. A disappointment on the part of the publisher to materialize with the books one has been working for, seriously breaks into this sympathetic method of book-selling.

In commenting to a publisher about a certain class of books as being fine literature he snapped out, "Fine literature, bosh! What you should accentuate is, fun, thrills, diversion, then turn 'em over quick!"

But in pointing out the literary value of books you make an appeal to a class of people whose patronage is the backbone of the book business, you persist. "Nothing in it, too slow," he replies. "The backbone of the book business is turnover, not the intellectual customer."

And to this epigram this publisher will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant" from the full congregation of publishers.

Both bookseller and publisher should be more closely in touch with the other's problems. At present there is a grave lack of coöperation owing to an ignorance of each other's obligations. The bookseller fails to understand why a publisher should publish the older poets, for instance, or any other books, from plates so worn that the text is often unreadable, bind them in a good grade of leather and list them at four dollars. A four dollar book should ring true at every point, not be just good looking. The reverse of this transaction occurs when a new book is made from new plates and bound in a material called leather but more nearly resembling crêpe paper; these books list at \$2.00. Again a monkey wrench is thrown into the selling game. Query! how can such discrepancies be explained to the court of last appeal, the purchaser?

Publishers should mark plainly the jacket of every new book, stating that the story has not been published serially. One publisher, I recall, did this in one instance. Also when a story is republished under a new title, that fact should be noted on the jacket.

The publisher will perhaps agree with the bookseller that it's somewhat disconcerting, when after a customer has paid \$2.00 or more for a story, he returns the book with the remark, "You sold me this as a new story; I read it four years ago under a different title." Here the bookseller is struck dumb, but not the customer.

After an author's death, publishers often compile a lot of his rejected material, advertise it largely and call it a book, when it has little or no merit. A raft of political

or court gossip is made into books which have no reason whatever for existence. These types of books the bookseller is urged to sell when he knows they are worthless—even for diversion.

Instances here noted serve to show how little sympathetic knowledge exists between bookseller and publisher even though the success of one depends upon the other.

IDA JOSEPHINE WATSON.

Duluth, Minn.

## A Comparison

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:  
SIR:

Thrice good and to the point is the letter of H. R. Hutting in the *Review* of March 14, for he tells the tale rightly.

The paragraph concerning the publisher who finds the booksellers "a rather slow, unprogressive lot" interests me to the point of wishing to add just a few small words.

Making a comparison between the publisher and the bookseller in the large is comparing the elephant and mouse. So that if the Elephant (great in name, as a rule, and his command of capital) continues to send *book wagons* unto remote places and those not so remote, and establish *book shops* on steamships, encircling the earth, and to make it so very easy for the book buyer to write directly to the Elephant for his one or two or five or six books,—tell me, do tell me, please, about the little Mouse, and how he manages to fare?

For it is not only, in most cases, because of his daily grind, his love of books, his will to succeed and his splendid faith in his work and in his people, that he manages to exist at all? For a book shop usually grows from a small one to a large one, does it not, unless directly sponsored by one of those Elephants who can afford to lose thousands of dollars in a venture and put it down to "advertising"?

However, there are some, and quite a few publishers who seem to find such worthy things to publish, but who are also content to sit back afterwards, giving the book seller the nice little helps which spread the good titles, but who do not try to be publisher, middle man and bookseller, too.

But speak to me not of the unprogressive bookseller—the very nature of his business keeps his brain alert and his eyes searching the horizon, even while one hand is taking the pulse of his public, and he is holding out the other in greeting—his spirit is willing to progress, but his capital is weak.

BEATRICE MULLIKEN

Greenwich, Conn.

## A Difference of View

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*.  
SIR:

The review in yours of yesterday, headed "A Gladiator of Our Time", John L. Sullivan by R. F. Dibble, reviewed by Jim Tully, no doubt is excellent as reviews go but when Mr. Tully takes great credit to himself as an intimate of John L. Sullivan and says, among other things:

"Mr. Sullivan was about as complex as a mule in a meadow," he writes himself down as Dogberry's twin.

The magnificent simplicity of John L. Sullivan might make such men as Jim Tully regard him as "much of a moron." Yet this moron was admired as a man by John Boyle O'Reilly, and if I am not mistaken, was well considered by James Jeffrey Roche and other literary men. Arthur Brisbane might testify to that. He was with Sullivan when the latter was presented to the Prince of Wales, afterward Edward VII. He refused to meet the prince unless his friend Brisbane could accompany him, much to the amazement and consternation of the Earl of Lonsdale and the Marquis of Queensbury who acted as equarries. They said it couldn't be done but Sullivan was firm. "By all means let him bring his friend," said the prince when the strange conduct of the strange American was reported to him. So Brisbane went. "How are you, Prince. How is your good mother?" said John L. Sullivan crossing to the prince and offering his hand, which the prince took as an equal. Why not? If he was prince by right of birth Sullivan was a king by right of his mighty fists. In the days of King Hakon, or Knut, he would have won the crown by feats of arms. No doubt King Richard I was a roval John L. Sullivan. In any gathering Sullivan dominated all by his personality, yet he was

bashful in the presence of women, not meaning those who are known as gold-diggers.

"Jack Dempsey would have battered John L. Sullivan to the canvas any time they ever started," avers Mr. Jim Tully. Indeed? This is but another proof that Tully who worshipped John L. Sullivan next to Shelley when he was fifteen did not know the man who transformed prize fighting into boxing contests and who knocked out in a few weeks more men than Dempsey has in his life. There are at least fifty-one official knockouts to the credit of John L. Sullivan. Count those to the credit of Dempsey and give him a round dozen for the total.

Of course R. F. Dibble's book is just a collection of Sullivaniana and a poor one. The man who worsted Gen. Nelson A. Miles in a passage-at-words had something more than skill in a passage-at-arms. He was my friend, although some years my elder and a wiser man, in my opinion, would be hard to find. "Much of a Moron?" Even less than Jim Tully is a fighter.

Sincerely yours,

JAY LEWIS

## The Reader's Guide

(Continued from preceding page)

drama, so is the new volume by Leo Wiener, professor of Slavic literature at Harvard, on "The Contemporary Drama of Russia" (Little, Brown), latest of a valuable series on contemporary drama in Europe. For first principles and their development in the world's drama there is a new book, "Introduction to Dramatic Theory," by Allardyce Nicoll (Brentano), including Greece, Rome, France, Italy, Germany and England, and looking for characteristics that link them. And now that we are on the subject, let drama clubs look up "The Organized Theatre," by St. John Ervine (Macmillan), comparing the place of the repertory theatre with that of the small publisher, and proposing among other things that the repertory theatres should be federated, to help solve the royalty problem. And another is "The Actor's Heritage," by Walter Prichard Eaton (Atlantic Monthly Press), theatrical history from a critic whose knowledge of the past gives weight to his praise of the present.

*A circulating library in a New Jersey town asks for advice on new detective stories.*

EMBARK on this list with a light heart, remembering that in this lottery there are no blanks: he who reads detective stories at all reads almost anything gratefully. But he should be especially grateful to me for telling him about "The Groote Park Murder," by Freeman Wills Croft (Seltzer), because it is the best detective story I have read in months. If the invention of J. S. Fletcher ever runs dry, and from present indications there is no need to worry about that, this writer can carry on the business; the same complicated plot-scheme, fitting together like a crossword puzzle. There is matter for a student to work out the relation between these two forms of intellectual diversion, by the way; I have been turning it over in my mind all winter. Vincent Fuller worked it out in practice, in his tale "The Long Green Gaze" (Huebsch); at least its solution is blocked at intervals by crosswords that must be solved before you can go on. Let not this too long delay the curious, however: work out only the words with a star. "The Monster," by Harrington Hext (Macmillan), has a vast ruin on the edge of a village with a mysterious murderer lurking somewhere in it; the ruin is really one of the creepiest things imaginable. "Burned Evidence," by Mrs. Wilson Woodrow (Putnam), is melodrama hot and plenty, but they get the villainess in the end, which is more than they do in "Anna's," by Nina Boyle (Seltzer). In this story, which concerns as smooth a sinner as one could wish to see safely shut up, Miss Boyle leaves the lady still in the open air on the last page—possibly she is too good to lose before another volume. "The Second Bullet" (Dodd, Mead) is by Charles Dutton, who wrote "The Underwood Mystery," and like that, it is what a client of the Guide means when she asks for a "gentleman's detective story"—that is, everyone moves in good society, and even at grips retains a sense of humor and the power of repartee. "The Murder Club," by Howel Evans (Putnam), is a series of crimes solved by an organization formed for that purpose: it takes an unfair advantage, though, by relying several times on agencies like telepathy, unknown poisons, and strange inventions, to go over the top. I think mystery stories

should be somehow penalized for this. "A Voice from the Dark," by Eden Phillpotts (Macmillan), starts with what seems to be supernatural intervention, but gets it on a physical basis before the last page.

"Bobbed Hair" (Putnam) is a composite mystery story by twenty of the younger choir of intellectuals, very dashing, just the thing for a movie and moving that way rapidly. The plot hangs together beautifully, but as for the writing, they might better have let Dorothy Parker do it all, with a little help from Alexander Woolcott. "The Sign of Evil," by Anthony Wynne (Lippincott), has a doctor for a detective and Gordon Hall Gerould's "Midsummer Mystery" (Appleton) murders a Senator in Washington, and there is a new man at work in this field that Knopf thinks is as good as Fletcher: A. G. Fielding, whose "The Eames-Erskine Case" has just appeared.

I RUBBED my eyes to make sure that I really let a list about Louisiana go to press without a book on it by Grace King. The only way I can understand it is that in copying from the list I sent by mail to the original inquirer, who was in a hurry, a paragraph dropped out. For a Louisiana list without Grace King's "New Orleans: the Place and the People" (Macmillan), and "Creole Families of New Orleans" (Macmillan), is a plain joke. They are classics of their kind. Her latest novel goes back to early days of New Orleans, with "La Dame de Ste. Hermine" (Macmillan). Elise Ripley Noyes, Stamford, Conn., daughter of the author of Ripley's "Social Life in Old New Orleans" (Appleton), sends me other books for this list—that book is her mother's reminiscences of a girlhood in the forties, written after she was seventy-five. Stella Perry's "Come Home" (Stokes) is a novel of the bird preserve section; her "Palmetto" (Stokes), of the bayou country. John S. Wise's "End of an Era" (Houghton Mifflin) gives the Southern point of view to a Northerner. E. L. Tinker's "Lafcadio Hearn's American Days" (Dodd, Mead), and Hearn's "Creole Sketches" (Houghton Mifflin), are pictures of the old city. These are in print, but the inquirer, if she has access to libraries—she told me she had not, but this will do for other readers—should consult these out-of-print authorities: "Tales of a Time and Place," Grace King; Mrs. T. P. O'Connor's "My Beloved South," Hart's "The Southern South," and Gayarre's "History of Louisiana," whose fascinating pages were used as sources by Cable and others.

A. C. T., Kingston, Jamaica, B. W. I., is interested in books on Japanese Buddhism and would particularly like references to any books in English by Japanese scholars; he wishes also advice on books about the religions of China.

IN matters of this sort I apply at once to Dr. Henry Preserved Smith of Union Theological Seminary; here is his advice: "Japanese Buddhism is of course thoroughly dependent upon the Buddhism of India and the sacred books of that religion are translated from Sanskrit or Pali originals. On Japanese Buddhism specifically the work usually recommended is Arthur Lloyd's 'The Creed of Half Japan,' London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1911. For Japanese religion in general, I should name W. G. Aston's 'Shinto, the Way of the Gods,' published by Longmans, Green, 1905, and there is a smaller book by the same author and with the same title published by the Open Court Publishing Company in Chicago.

"For Chinese religion a good book is J. J. M. De Groot's 'Religion in China,' and a somewhat older work by James Legge is 'The Religions of China' (Hodder & Stoughton, 1880).

"A good introduction to the study of religion in general is Sidney Cave's 'Introduction to the Study of Some Living Religions of the East,' published by Duckworth, London, 1921, and our Professor Hume has just published a book on 'The World's Living Religions' (Scribner, 1924). [This is, by the way, a small book full of meat for the general reader; I have occasion often to recommend it. M. L. B.]

"A bibliography on this subject is contained in Professor George Foot Moore's 'History of Religions,' vol. 1, published by Scribner in 1913. In this is also a chapter on China and one on Buddhism in Japan. J. J. M. De Groot has a very elaborate work, 'The Religious System of China,' in six volumes, which is regarded as a standard. The smaller book by the same author, named above, was published by Putnam in 1912."



# The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

## A COLLECTOR'S FAVORITE

A FEW days ago Dr. Rosenbach paid £1,750 in a London auction room for Robert Burns's "Poems" printed in Kilmarnock in 1786, the first edition of the poet's first book. This volume was described as one of the four or five best known copies, perhaps the finest of them all. The previous high record, £1,600, was paid by Dr. Rosenbach for the Carysfort copy sold at Sotheby's in the summer of 1923, less than two years ago. The writer then predicted that the next time another copy as good as the Carysfort copy appeared in the auction room it would bring a new high record. And \$600 may be regarded as a very substantial advance even for a Kilmarnock Burns for this short period.

The record of this rarity is extraordinary. It has moved steadily forward since collectors first became interested in it. In 1858 in Edinburgh a copy sold for £3 10s, which indicated that some patriotic Scotchman, or a booklover, wanted it. A few years later in Glasgow a copy sold for £8; ten years later in Edinburgh two copies were sold, bringing £10 and £14 each; in 1871, in Glasgow, £17; three years later in Edinburgh, £19; in 1876, in London, £33; in 1881, again in London, £40, and the next year in the same city two copies were sold, bringing £67 and £73, and six years later two copies fetched £86 and £111 each. When the price passed the £100 mark, writers for the London newspapers became quite excited. A few years

ago a scrap-book with clippings in regard to the sale of this book at this particular time was sold at auction in this city. The price of £111 was characterized as "absurd," "ridiculous," "utterly without reason," "certainly crazy prices," and it was predicted that the "limit has finally been reached."

That the price was regarded as high at the time is apparent from the rush to sell. In 1890 four copies appeared in the auction room bringing £72, £100, £107 and £120 respectively. Coming down twenty years later we find the Van Antwerp copy bringing £700, and the British Museum paying £1,000 and Harry Widener \$6,000 for their copies. About four years ago a London dealer catalogued a very remarkable association copy of this rarity at £1,250 and in both this country and in England there were protests and the discussion of the price became more or less general. It was pointed out that the Kilmarnock Burns belonged to a class of books that the collectors had taught the booksellers to ask a good price for, that its rise in value had been steady and unwavering for three-quarters of a century, advancing the most rapidly when the price had become the highest and most discussed, chiefly because it was one of a few books of the eighteenth century that collectors all over the English speaking world were determined to have, and for which American collectors especially did not grudge paying a high price for. Before this discussion was over, the copy was sold at the catalogue price, which

was regarded as a significant endorsement of the bookseller's idea of values.

And the limit has not yet been reached for this collector's favorite. When another copy appears in a London or New York auction room justifying the claim that it is the "finest of them all" it will show another substantial advance. It will not be long before we shall see this rarity bringing £2,000 or more under the hammer with collectors eager to buy at that price.

## FORTHCOMING SALES

ON April 27 autographs from the collections of the late Augustin Daly of this city, and from the collection of Sara J. Hale, editor of "The Ladies' Book," with additions, including a very wide range of American and English historical and literary material, will be sold at the Anderson Galleries. On April 27 in the evening at the same galleries there will be a sale of the first editions of Keats and Shelley, an immaculate copy of the "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam," from the library of the late Bertha L. Bolton of Rochester; a complete set of the books printed at the Kelmscott Press and many finely bound sets, the property of a Boston collector; and standard sets in fine bindings from the library of the late Viola C. Lyman of Syracuse.

On April 28 and 29 fine sets of standard authors, desirable first editions of American and English authors, handsomely extra-illustrated works, publications of the Bibliophile Society and the Grolier Club, and autograph letters of American and English authors and statesmen and French royalty, including the libraries of Veryl Preston and of the late Walter Learned, will be sold at the American Art Galleries. On April 30 in the same galleries there will be a sale of literature relating to the Polar

Regions formed by Henry Brevoort Kane, grandnephew of the Polar explorer, with a collection of books on whaling, clipper ships, voyages, sea narratives.

## NOTE AND COMMENT

THE Cardigan manuscript of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," one of the earliest and finest Chaucer manuscripts, brought £2,700 at Sotheby's.

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Amy Lowell's "John Keats" has now gone into the fifth large impression and the first edition is selling at a premium. Its popularity is as great in England as in America.

\* \* \*

Over 170,000 visited the exhibition of Morgan manuscripts of British authors while on view at the New York Public Library. Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" is said to have been the most popular of all.

\* \* \*

The ten English authors, whose first editions were most in demand for the four weeks ending February 21, according to the tabulation of desiderata printed in English trade publications, tabulated in the March *Bookman's Journal*, were Charles Dickens,

\* \* \*

A collection of several hundred volumes consisting of various editions of Montaigne and of books relating to him, was recently given to the Princeton University library by Mme. Le Brun, in the name of Pierre Le Brun, New York architect. All of the known editions of the great essayist works published before his death in 1592, including the excessively Bordeaux edition of the essays of 1580, are represented in the collection.

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