

The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

A NEW GWINNETT RECORD

THE letter dated July 12, 1776, eight days after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, signed by John Hancock, Robert Morris, Button Gwinnett, George Read, and Arthur Middleton, Members of the Marine Committee of the Continental Congress, and all Signers, sold at the Anderson Galleries March 16, brought \$51,000. It was apparent that a new high record would be created, but the jump from \$28,500, the last record for a Gwinnett signature, was not expected. The date of this letter, the early marine document, the signatures of six signers, all important members of the Continental Congress, united to make this the most valuable letter or document ever sold under the hammer. Nevertheless, it was the signature of Button Gwinnett, the rarest of the Signers, that was the main factor, by far, in this letter's reaching this new high record.

The bidding began at \$5,000 and in less than a minute had reached \$30,000. From this point the advances were in \$1,000 bids, Gabriel Wells and Dr. Rosenbach being the bidders. When \$51,000 was reached the letter was knocked down to Dr. Rosenbach who was warmly applauded. The purchase of this letter makes five Gwinnett signatures that Dr. Rosenbach has bought in two years at auction paying \$14,500, \$19,500, \$22,500, \$28,500, and now \$51,000. Each of these sales created a new high record, and it would seem that a figure has now been reached that will not be passed very soon.

For 150 years this letter was in the Ashmead and Ashmead-Clay families, never to have been recognized as other than a relic of the American Revolutionary War days, in which the great-great-grandfather of the recent owner bore no inconspicuous part. John Cecil Clay, reading of the sale of the Gwinnett signature sold in Anderson's for \$28,500, recalled that among his family papers, which had not seen the light of day for many years, was one with that elusive name. He searched and found it carefully tucked between the leaves of an old French illustrated book. Mitchell Kennerley gave him an idea of its value and secured the consignment. And here it is pertinent to remark that Mr. Kennerley has sold all of the five documents that have

made such wonderful records.

Altogether, 272 historical and literary letters, documents, and manuscripts were sold in this sale bringing a total of \$67,274. The next best prices were \$625 paid by F. G. Sweet for the Preble documents and reports relating to the Northwestern Boundary dispute with the Netherlands, \$600 by Walter M. Hill, of Chicago, for a Thackeray letters of 1858 including a sketch of the great novelist by himself, and \$500 by Thomas F. Madigan for a 1793 letter by George Washington to Edmund Pendleton.

About 250 men and women from the cities of the east and middle west were present. Among these were Dr. Herbert Putnam, librarian of the Library of Congress, Owen D. Young, Miss Belle da Costa Greene, director of the Morgan Library; Jerome Kern, A. Edward Newton, Frederick S. Peck and T. W. Best of Boston, and W. T. H. Howe of Cincinnati. Practically all of the leading rare book dealers were present or represented.

GOOD BOOK MAKING

THE *Year Round Bookselling News*, organ of National Association of Book Publishers, says:

"More and more booksellers are finding it profitable to encourage an enthusiasm for good bookmaking among their customers. They call the customer's attention to the excellent typography of a new book and make him eager for it not only for its literary interest but also as a thing of beauty. While there is a growing market for special and limited editions, there are also a great many books issued in the regular trade edition which are distinguished by very fine printing and make a special appeal to the discriminating book-buyer. . . . The annual exhibits of the American Institute of Graphic Arts of the 'Fifty Books of the Year' chosen for the beauty of their typography are helping to increase popular interest in good bookmaking. The exhibit is held in New York in May and is then sent to various cities throughout the country. . . . Frank C. Dodd, of Dodd, Mead & Co., elected president of this same society in January, recently said that 'within the next ten years the American public probably will consume twice as many books as it does today, for

its appetite for reading is increasing enormously. The last six years have been the most prosperous in the history of the book-trade. American publishers are rapidly becoming the foremost in the world, not only increasing their output but publishing better printed and more artistic books.'"

AN INTERESTING EXHIBITION

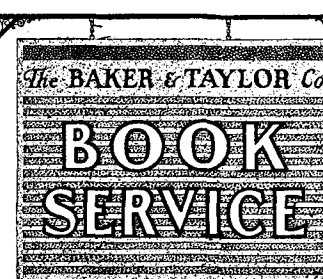
THE Horticultural Society of New York and the Garden Club of America have assisted the New York Public Library in making what is believed to be the largest and finest exhibition of garden literature ever attempted in this country. From the numberless books about gardening and allied subjects that have been produced since the early days of civilization, a selection of 400 volumes has been made, ranging from the earliest Persian, Chinese, classical, and European eras down to the international garden literature of our own time, with pictures portraying many of them. The purpose is not only to show how wide and deep and far-reaching interest in gardens has been made since the history of man began, but to stimulate interest in garden lore as well. The Morgan Library is lending some of the earliest manuscripts, one of them by Pliny, who discoursed on nature for the edification of the classic world, and also several of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, inscribed in Gothic letters by hand before the dawn of printing. These are superbly rubricated and illuminated in colors still bright. The period of nearly five hundred years of printing is marvelously well covered. Beside the work of other centuries stand specimens of the latest scientific treatises on gardening, now embodying the last word, but destined, of course, to be superseded in time. This is a most attractive exhibition and the book-lovers of New York seem to know it, for they are turning out in great numbers to see it.

Chapman & Hall, of London, announce in their Spring List the forthcoming publication of a new edition of Thoreau's "Walden," with sixteen wood-cut illustrations by E. Fitch Daglish. There will be a limited edition of 100 copies printed on handmade paper, and an effort has been made to give it points of distinction that will appeal to lovers of fine printing.

The current catalogue of Dauber & Pine Bookshops, Inc., of "Fine Rare and Old Books," consisting mainly of the library of the late Arthur Dana Clough, comprising

modern first editions, publications of special and private presses, art, the classics, the humanists, old books in contemporary bindings, curios, etc., containing 1,262 lots, is handsomely printed, with a cover of typographic distinction. It is printed by the Southworth Press, of Portland, Maine, who rank high as book catalogue makers.

A reprint of Frances Trollope's "Domestic Manners of the Americans," with an introduction by Michael Sadleir and reproductions of eight of the original plates will soon be issued.



Booksellers to the Dead

They were the first booksellers, those ancient Egyptian undertakers, and they sold the oldest volume known to man, "The Book of the Dead"—a copy of which went into every tomb. They sold no other book, for there was none.

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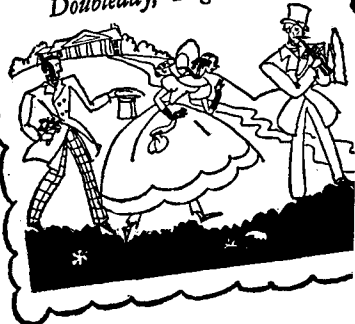
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The Romantic Comedians

by ELLEN GLASGOW
3rd large edition \$2.50
Doubleday, Page & Co.



Exaggeration?

Publishers are often accused of a weakness for superlatives. Exaggeration is supposed to be their only form of self-expression. May we, in one instance at least, refute this charge?

Last September, in announcing the publication of *The Romantic Comedians* we said "this is the most brilliant novel of the year." Subsequent critical comment indicates that this was an understatement. For see what skilled and impartial judges have said.

Henry Seidel Canby wrote in the *Saturday Review*: "When a mind as subtle and civilized as Miss Glasgow looks at our generation there are new things to be said, new thrills, new beauties . . ." "Witty, wise and delicious," wrote Carl Van Vechten.

"A brilliancy of dialogue and a competency of analysis which will put Edith Wharton to shame," said the Boston *Transcript*. "A great book, I repeat it, a great book!" wrote John Farrar in *The Bookman*. "Both dialogue and analysis are full of sentences that seem too good to be true," said *The Nation*.

Frances Newman called it "the kind of book I wish the Pulitzer Prize Committee could realize as the most civilized possible picture of the highest standards of American manhood and manners." Dr. Joseph Collins wrote in the *N. Y. Times*: "What Conrad has done for 'Youth' Miss Glasgow has done for old age."

Harry Hansen wrote in the *N. Y. World*: "It is our guess for the Pulitzer Prize for 1926."

Day after day more delighted readers are discovering this magnificent novel—which is not only a huge success, but also a brilliant one!

The Romantic Comedians

By Ellen Glasgow
95th thousand
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & CO.
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The Phoenix Nest

IF you want to review the chief tendencies of the year 1926-27, *Grant Overton* has gathered together a number of most interesting people to tell you all about it. They do so in "Mirrors of the Year" (Stokes). They include *Mark Sullivan*, *Clarence Darrow*, *Elmer Davis*, *Kathleen Norris*, *Homer Crow*, *Muriel Draper*, *Carl Hovey*, and others. . . .

He whom we think of as the pre-Revolutionary, *Artzibashev*, was only forty-eight years old when he died the other day. "Sanine" was published twenty years ago. It was a sensation. In it man's natural instincts were defined. First the Continent, then London and New York were fascinated by it. The author admitted that he was influenced—not by Nietzsche but by *Max Stirner*. *Artzibashev* was not a one-book man. He wrote long short-stories, "novellen," and "Breaking-Point," a novel. The Viking Press tells us all this, and adds

Kosciusko, upon whose fall Freedom shrieked, was *Artzibashev's* maternal great grandfather. The author's mother died when he was three years old; "as a legacy she bequeathed me tuberculosis," he wrote. Like many other writers he was proficient in another art: he studied at a school of art and made some reputation as a caricaturist before he turned to letters.

The same publishers have just brought out a volume of poems, "Red Flag," by *Lola Ridge*. *Lola Ridge* is one of our enthusiasms as a poet. We haven't seen her new book yet, but we are sure it will be full of glorious stuff. "Sun-Up" was, and it has been altogether too long a time since "Sun-Up." . . .

By the way, what a spring it is for good poetry: we can name four new volumes right off the reel that have interested and excited us. First, *George O'Neil*, in "The White Rooster" (Boni & Liveright), has an astonishing book to his credit. Recently in the most select circles there has been much clapping for *Hart Crane* who wrote "White Buildings." But *George O'Neil's* mastery of language and brilliance of technique make *Hart Crane's* verbal architectonics look absolutely gelid. *O'Neil* has taken a long stride forward, and if we don't look out we shall have another first-rate poet on our hands, one to rank with Frost and Robinson. . . .

There is true magic in some of the poems in *Scudder Middleton's* "Upper Night" (Holt). He too has advanced his standard and given us some beautiful creations. "Astrolabe" by *S. Foster Damon* (Harpers) is fitfully brilliant, glittering with individuality. And "Lost Eden" by *E. Merrill Root* (Unicorn Press), though of lesser merit than any of these, furnishes some true poetic entertainment. . . .

Then, of course, in "Tristram," *Edwin Arlington Robinson* has achieved again,—and, what with *Lola Ridge's* book coming, we must repeat that it's a great spring for poetry. . . .

We were speaking of the great *Artzibashev* above. His son, *Boris*, inherited his father's ability to draw. One of the son's most recent drawings has been for the jacket of *Evelyn Scott's* "Migrations" (A. & C. Boni). What we have read of "Migrations" we found a solid and vivid reconstruction of the ante-bellum South, of the community of Mimms, Tennessee, in 1850. Mrs. Scott was born in Tennessee, in '93. This new book of hers, as we skimmed it, seemed hardly tinged at all by the neuroticism that gave a sour taste to her earlier work, brilliant, in many respects, as it was. . . .

Sumpun marvelous is "an unrivaled panorama of the history and adventure of sea and ships," namely, viz., to wit, "The Sea, Its History and Romance," by *Frank C. Bowen* (McBride). This mighty work is in four big volumes and the set costs twenty dollars, but the plates, culled from old prints and maps and engravings, many reproduced in beautiful color, are a delight to pore over. Ah, to possess these four huge hunting-red volumes and spend a week in the library with them! . . .

Two lighter books that have attracted our attention are "The Magic Casket" by our favorite detective story writer *R. Austin Freeman*, who produced "The Singing Bone," "The Red Thumb Mark," "The Shadow of the Wolf," etc., and has created the interesting "Dr. Thorndike" who, to our mind, now far excels the *Sherlock Holmes* who has fallen upon his dotage in the pages of *Liberty*. . . .

Well, we got so wound up in that sentence that we had no breath left to say "and." The other of the "two lighter books" that we meant to mention is

"Lancelot and the Ladies," by *Will Bradley*. It would seem to us that *John Erskine's* "Galahad" may have suggested this quite different but fantastic romance, in which a modern dreamer, touching English yew, enters into the days of the Round Table and lives a double romance thereafter. But then you really might as well say that "A Yankee at King Arthur's Court" suggested it, so different are all three books. Bradley's is light and sentimental romance. . . .

Ludwig Lexisohn has translated from the German and *Mahlon Blaine* has illustrated, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" by *Hans Heinz Ewers*, a horror story of religious hysteria coming to an Italian mountain town. The John Day Company has beautifully made the book. Ewers is a celebrated contemporary German writer. This, his first novel, was originally published in Germany back in 1910. It is the first of his novels to be translated into English. . . .

This week's mail bag was particularly full. The response to the ferocious sonnet idea has been so immediate that we are (comparatively) swamped in ferocious sonnets. *Harry Crosby* has sent one all the way from France. *Leonard Doughty* of Texas has not only provided us with some of his own but has chosen and copied out some fine ones from the great poets of all time. This week we have not room to print any of these sonnets. But next week we shall provide you with a *Ferocious Sonnet Number* of the *Phoenix Nest*. Dead and living bards will be represented. Come early and avoid the rush. . . .

Oh, we forgot to say, that among these sonnets will be two by *Kenneth Slade Alling*, whom we lately requested to contribute. The sequence is entertaining. We thank Ken especially for so prompt an acquiescence and reply. . . .

Power Dalton writes us from Boston, first about the reception given to *Harriet Monroe* on her recent visit. *Mr. Leighton Rollins* was master of ceremonies. Several hundred people attended the luncheon. The table of honor was presided over by *Mrs. Henry Jewett*, *Leonora Speyer*, *Grace Hazard Conkling*, *Nancy Byrd Turner*, *Curtis Hidden Page*, *Dallas Lore Sharp*, and others graced the board. Secondly, *Power Dalton* thanks us for recently printing that poem of *Rupert Brooke's*, the one that is framed in the *Pink and Lily* pub near the English village of *Princes Risborough* which we visited last summer. . . .

As for the still unsolved mystery as to what a "goofus" is, we receive from Boston the following hint:

The enclosed announcement of this year's Hasty Pudding Club play should interest *Abbe Niles* and his six jazzists who say "there is no such thing as a goofus" (The *Phoenix Nest*, March 19, 1927). As the Pudding play is to be given in New York on April 22nd there will be opportunity for these seven to hear and see the goofus. I think they owe it to your readers and to themselves to buy seats for the show. This same Henderson "stopped" last year's Pudding play with his goofus-playing.

The Henderson referred to is *C. E. Henderson*, '28, who is mentioned in the announcement as "top-sergeant of them all, and also as an actor and Goofus-player." The Pudding Show is its eighty-first annual spring production, is entitled "Gentlemen, the Queen!" and bears the slogan, "What could be fairer—more or less—than a day in the life of Good Queen Bess?" . . .

From Cannes *Hosward Vincent O'Brien* tells us that there is a clue to the baffling popularity of *Mr. Guest*. He writes:

Think of him as "Eddie," not as "Edgar A." And then consider this: at a certain commercial banquet, the oratorical semi-windup dealt with aspects of synthetic chemistry. The next to speak was *Mr. Guest*, the peoples' poet. He rose, surveyed the weary throng, and said: "We have listened to the improving words of Professor Blank. He has told us everything about chemistry except the thing I wanted most to know, namely—what I should put on spinach so my kid will eat it."

From then on the audience was, as we say, one hundred per cent his!

It is this ability to hit the lowest common denominator of the public emotion which obliges his publisher to buy paper in carload lots. Whatever he may be as a poet, as a salesman he is an authentic genius.

Which gives us a new idea. We have now two swell tributes to *Edgar* to reprint in this column. Won't some of our darling readers come across with more, that an *Edgar A. Guest Number* of *The Phoenix Nest* may blossom as the rose? Think it over. Let us hand a regular whopper of a nosegay to this modern Burns.

THE PHOENICIAN.

from THE INNER SANCTUM of
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One of the alluring things about an intimate column like this is the opportunity it affords for setting down items that are ruthlessly deleted by the cold-blooded copy-writers in the advertising department. A recent flourish for *The Story of Philosophy* began, quite fittingly, we thought, with a quotation from John Milton, but the high-pressure lads thought it didn't have sufficient "selling punch". Out it went, and now that we have a chance to salvage the quotation in this more private vehicle, back it goes:

How charming is divine Philosophy,
Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools
suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute
And a perpetual feast of nectared
sweets
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

This quotation is our favorite answer when inquiring reporters ask for an explanation of the unprecedented sale of *Will Durant's* 592-page book, at \$5. *The Story of Philosophy* is now in its nineteenth large printing. 137,421 copies were sold up to 10 o'clock this morning.

Our recent double-page advertisement in *The New York Times*, characterizing *The Story of Philosophy* as the best of the best-sellers in every city of these United States except

Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Kalamazoo, Michigan
Traverse City, Michigan
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
Savannah, Georgia
Stamford, Connecticut and
Pasadena, California

brought down upon this unprotected retreat a barrage of telegrams from the hinterland. The embattled librarians, book-sellers, ministers and teachers of Stamford refuted the allegation with sales statistics ranking *The Story of Philosophy* first by a wide margin; the liveliest Chamber of Commerce in Wisconsin pointed to *Durant's* book as the outstanding best-seller, not only in Eau Claire proper but in all its outlying suburbs, environs, and abutting areas; the bell-ringers of Traverse City, Michigan, alone were forced to admit the soft impeachment.

We pause for a reply from the illuminati of Cedar Rapids, Kalamazoo, Savannah, and Pasadena.

According to all the rules of the game, every intimate gossip column must contain at least one "now-it-can-be-told" paragraph. Here's ours: *Liggett Reynolds*, the mysterious author of *Sweet and Low*, that "smashing indictment of the younger generation" which paralyzed *F. P. A.'s* diaphragm and seriously threatened the vertebrae of *Will Rogers*, is none other than *Robert A. Simon* (not a member of the firm), novelist, detective story writer, music critic of *The New Yorker*, harmonica virtuoso, anthologist of *The New York Wits*, and raconteur-at-large.

Coming Attractions: Forthcoming tidings and tidbits from the inner sanctum will include an important announcement from Vienna concerning *Franz Werfel's* next book, an interview with *Arthur Schnitzler* on a subject of timely interest, a private letter from a fair young novelist of the Southland, the first revelation of the full names of the *Whoops Sisters*, and an indiscreet foot-note on a recent book which has sold more than a million copies.

—ESSANDESS

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