

The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

"THE MATHER LITERATURE"

ON November 24, 1925, Thomas J. Holmes read a paper before the Rowfant Club, Cleveland, as an introduction to an exhibition of Matheriana from the library of William Gwinn Mather. The exhibition was repeated and the paper read again at the Mather dinner at "Gwinn" on December 27, 1925. The Board of Fellows of the Rowfant Club, on the recommendation of the publishing committee, approved the paper for a club publication, but because of the desire of the owner of the Mather collection to have copies of the paper for presentation to members of his family and to a few friends, they relinquished publication privileges to him.

The paper has now been privately printed under the title, "The Mather Literature," in a narrow 12mo of 64 pages, in Caslon type, on handmade Holland paper, bound in marbled boards with levant back, and limited to 250 copies. This little volume is a model of good taste, restraint, and simplicity of conception, and the success of its technique, typographical and bibliographic, has been generally acknowledged by those who have seen it.

The content of the paper has been divided into ten chapters: Protestantism, a result of the discovery of the Bible; Puritanism, the logical outcome of Protestantism; Puritan pioneers: Cartwright, Brown, Barrowe; Collections of Mather literature; Richard Mather defines the church polity of New England; Increase Mather's works were historical and scientific, as well as theological; Increase Mather terminates the witch persecutions of Salem; Cotton Mather, the most prolific American author, innovator of small pox inoculation; the value of inscriptions, and of setting limits to a collection; and Mr. Mather's plans for the future. This synopsis of chapter contents shows the comprehensive range of the paper.

Mr. Holmes has gathered into his little volume a most interesting study of the Mather literature, especially from the standpoint of the collector. The style is clear, condensed, and forcible, and the contents throughout strikingly interesting. Few fully realize that Cotton Mather was the most prolific of American authors, but the following paragraph seems to entitle him to that distinction:

"From his facile quill came a total of no less than four hundred and thirty-seven published works, exclusive of reprints, prefaces, and unprinted manuscripts. A hasty examination shows that among these are works on the following subjects: For the popular light reading of the day, funeral sermons take the lead with fifty-one examples. Sixteen works deal with various aspects of New England history. On medicine there are ten; five of which are on small pox. There are ten biographies, five issued singly and five in one work. Of

these there were eight reprinted in the "Magnalia," his largest published work, which contains over sixty biographies as well as a large number of short memoirs. At least four works were devoted to psalms, hymns, singing. There were two elegies. No subject of possible interest in his day escaped his attention."

William Gwinn Mather's collection of Matheriana, comprising the works of Richard, Increase, Cotton and the rest of the writers born of the Mather family, is the result of more than forty years of collecting, he having made his beginning as early as the fourth Brinley sale, back in 1886. He has brought together 321 titles, second in size only to the collection owned by the American Antiquarian Society. There is no collection in private hands worthy of comparison with it. But more information in regard to Mr. Mather's collection and his future plans will be given in another article.

KEBLE'S "CHRISTIAN YEAR"

JOHN KEBLE'S "Christian Year" appeared just a century ago. In a recent letter to the *London Times*, the Bishop of Winchester wrote of the instantaneous success of this remarkable book, which went through ninety-five editions before the author's death in 1866. Since then it has been constantly reprinted, and, whatever may be its literary merits, it is now a "household word wherever the English language is spoken." The *Times* adds that "as a best seller during an author's lifetime it probably has no rival. Of Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' which at once suggests itself in this connection, eleven editions appeared during the author's lifetime—certainly a record up to that date. In totally different lines of literature there are other books, such as Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe' and Swift's 'Gulliver's Travels,' which ran into many editions during the lifetime of the respective authors, but 'The Christian Year,' with its ninety-five editions in thirty-nine years is probably a world's record."

ILLUMINATIONS AT SOTHEYBY'S

ONE of the outstanding sales at Sotheby's in London in recent weeks consisted of the very fine series of medieval illuminations on vellum forming a part of the Holford Library. There were only forty-eight lots, but they brought a total of £10,181. The collection was acquired in 1838 from the well known London bookseller Payne & Foss, who in turn obtained it from William Young Otley, a man of varied accomplishments, who was studying art and collecting for ten years beginning about 1791. Later he was Keeper of Prints in the British Museum. The most important lot was a leaf from a British Psalter, painted on both sides with twenty-five scenes from the Bible by an artist working probably at Bury St. Edmunds, in the

last half of the twelfth century. This lot went to Quaritch at £1,750. Most of the best lots were purchased by Quaritch of London, and Gabriel Wells, of this city.

NOTE AND COMMENT

THE Cambridge University Press has in preparation a critical edition of Thomas Middleton's "A Game of Cheese," by R. C. Bald. This play, quite apart from its interest as a piece of political satire, offers exceptional material for the study of Elizabethan dramatic texts.



Payson & Clarke, Ltd., of London, have in preparation a new edition of George Borrow's "Celebrated Trials and Remarkable Cases of Criminal Jurisprudence from the Earliest Records to the Year 1825." The book was originally published in London without Borrow's name. The new edition will be in two volumes and is being re-edited and annotated by Edward Hale Bierstadt.

The first edition of Kipling's first book, "School Boy Lyrics," which recently brought £420 in London, was not a new high record after all. Mr. Swann, of the American Art Association, has called our attention to the fact that the Paul Hyde Bonner copy sold by the Association November 23, 1926, brought \$3,350, more than \$1,000 in advance of the recent English record.

The New Books Poetry

(Continued from preceding page)

connection write and are among the best poets of Canada. Mr. Roberts can turn graceful verses, but it would seem that his best days are now past as a poet. "In the Night Watches" has atmosphere and sincere feeling, "The Summons" has lyric power. Yet we can find little else here that moves us much.

IDYLLS OF THE GHETTO. By S. A. DE WITT. New York: Rand Book Store. 1927. \$1.50.

Mr. Joseph T. Shipley speaks for Mr. De Witt in the introduction of this book. The opening poems, transcripts from the poet's real early life, roused our interest. But the sonnets dulled it, and the miscellaneous poems and smaller fragments left it cold. "Hunky Meets a Man" at the end of the book is good *New Masses* verse, but not as good a poem as often appears in the *New Masses*. In general we feel that Mr. De Witt gets no particular spirit of his own into his poems. Most of them might have been written by anybody, and the autobiographical ones in the beginning are interesting for their material rather than for Mr. De Witt's treatment of it.

THE LONE ADVENTURE. By STANTON A. COBLENTZ. The Unicorn Press (5 East 57th St.) 1927. \$2.

Mr. Coblenz's narrative poem is a parable of human effort not too originally planned. The young Prince rebels at ruling

in his Father's kingdom and fares forth alone. He has a brief happiness with a shepherdess of the hills and then leaves her and presses on a difficult road up the mountains till he finds the pool on the peak. Thereafter he is known as a mad wanderer. Finally he returns to his father's kingdom upon hearing the news that his father is dying. On his father's death he takes up the sceptre and rules for years. But the pool on the peak is ever in his mind and finally, as an old man, he goes forth alone on a second quest for it, attains the summit, finds it sheathed in ice, and dies in the snow. The verse is really quite undistinguished in phrase or epithet, though there is metrical fluency.

Travel

TRAVELS IN SPAIN AND THE EAST.

By SIR FRANCIS SACHEVERELL DARWIN. Macmillan. 1927.

This record of a journey through Spain, Portugal, and the Mediterranean is at once unpretentious and pleasing. Sir Francis, the son of Erasmus Darwin, was a physician of note, a man whose intense love of nature and richly stored mind made him a traveler alert to the significance and beauty of the countries he visited. He made his tour in 1808, a time when war made travel in the Spanish Peninsula a matter of much inconvenience and of some danger, and when conditions everywhere were such as to expose the journeyer to considerable hazards. As a matter of fact he alone of the five travelers who sailed from Falmouth returned to tell the tale of their experiences for his four companions succumbed to what the writer of an obituary on one of them termed "the fatigues and dangers of foreign climes."

A straightforward record, Sir Francis's journal is marked rather by clarity of style than by eloquence of description. Yet it has a pleasing fluency and though brief contains much pointed comment. Sir Francis had a quick eye for the distinctive, and a background of knowledge that is reflected in the sureness and discrimination with which he selects the incident of his narrative. His concise journal contains much more meat than many a longer book.

WHEN YOU GO TO LONDON. By H. U. Morton. Harper's. \$2.50.

PRIMITIVE HEARTHES IN THE PYRENEES. By Ruth Otis Santell and Ida Treat. Appleton. \$3.

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They Grinned When the Waiter Spoke to Me in French

—but their laughter changed to amazement at my reply

WE HAD dropped into Pierrot's for dinner—Pierrot's, that quaint French restaurant where the waiters speak nothing but French. Jack Lejeune, who boasted a smattering of French, volunteered to act as interpreter.

"Now tell me what you want to eat," announced Jack grandly, after we were seated, "and I'll 'parley' with the waiter."

With halting French phrases and much motioning of hands, Jack translated our orders to the waiter. Finally Jack turned to me.

"What's yours, Fred?" he asked.

"Virginia ham and scrambled eggs," I replied.

Jack's face fell. He knew that my order would be difficult to translate into French. However, he made a brave effort.

"Jambon et des—et des—" but Jack couldn't think how to say "scrambled eggs." He made motions as if he were scrambling eggs in a frying pan, but the waiter couldn't get what he was driving at.

"I'm afraid you'll have to order something else, Fred," he said finally. "I can't think of the word for 'scrambled eggs.'"

Everybody smiled—everybody except me. With great ceremony I beckoned to the waiter. "I'll explain my order to the waiter," I said. A chuckle ran around the table.

"Fred can't speak French, can he?" I heard a girl whisper to Jack.

"No—he never spoke a word of French in his life," came the answer. "But watch him. This will be funny. He'll probably give an imitation of a hen laying an egg."

A Tense Moment

The waiter addressed me. "Monsieur a fait son choix?" he asked.

There was a pause. All eyes were on me. I hesitated—prolonged the suspense as long as possible. Then in perfect French I said to the waiter: "Oui Donnez-moi, du jambon aux oeufs brouillés—jambon de Virginie."

The effect on my friends was tremendous. The laughter stopped. There were

gasps of amazement. In order to heighten the effect, I continued for several minutes to converse in French with the waiter. I asked him all sorts of questions—what part of France he was from—how long he had been in America, and many other queries. When I finally let the waiter go, everybody started firing excited questions at me.

"Fred! Where did you learn to speak French like that?" "Why didn't you tell us you could talk French?" "Who was your teacher?"

"Well, folks," I replied, "it may sound strange, but the truth is I never had a teacher. And just a few months ago I couldn't speak a word of French."

"Quit your kidding!" laughed Jack. "You didn't develop that knowledge of French in a few months. I thought it took years to learn to talk like that."

"I have been studying French only a short while," I insisted. And then I told them the whole story.

How I Learned French Without a Teacher

"Did you ever hear of the House of Hugo?" I asked.

Jack nodded. "That's that famous Language Institute over in London, isn't it?"

"Yes," I replied. "They've been teaching languages for over a century. Thousands of Europeans have learned foreign languages in a surprisingly short time by their 'at-sight' method."

"But what's that got to do with your learning French?" asked Jack. "You haven't been over there taking lessons from the House of Hugo, have you?"

"No. I couldn't go to the House of Hugo, so the House of Hugo came to me," I replied quizzically.

My Friends Look Startled

"Here's what I mean," I said. "The authorities of the House of Hugo got together recently and decided to condense their knowledge of language instruction—their experience in teaching French—the secrets of their wonderful methods into a course of printed lessons—a course which anyone could study at home."

"This course turned out to be the most ingenious method of learning French ever devised. It was simply marvelous. It enabled people to learn French in their own homes, in an incredibly short time."

"I can scarcely believe it myself, but just a few months ago I didn't know a word of French. Now I can speak and understand French when it is spoken to me. And I didn't study much—just a few minutes a day. There were no laborious exercises to do—no tiresome rules—no dull class-room drills. It was actually fun learning. Everything was so clear, so simple, so easy. Honestly, the Hugo 'At-Sight' French Course is the most remarkable thing of its kind I have ever seen!"

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