

The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

"THE COLLECTOR'S BEST BET"

THE eighth and concluding article, in the series on rare books and book collecting, contributed to *The Saturday Evening Post* by Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, appeared in the issue of July 2nd. Little, Brown & Company, of Boston, announces that these articles, and others still unpublished, will appear in a volume in the Fall bearing the title, "Books and Bidders." In this last article, rich in anecdote and good advice, Dr. Rosenbach pays his respects to rare Americana as a field for the collector. He says:

"So many books and documents on which history is based have been absorbed by public libraries and historical societies that the available source material has dwindled. In the old days, when James Lenox, Doctor Brinley, old Menzies, John Carter Brown, Brayton Ives, Henry C. Murphy, James Carson Brevoort, and countless others were enslaved by an inordinate passion for books, they did not have to go far afield to find the things that delighted their souls. The most precious relics were to be found almost at their door-steps. If they were in Philadelphia, it was to the bookstalls along Second Street they went; in New York, to the drowsy old shops along lower Broadway. . . . Indeed, those were the days when you could pick up Smith's 'History of Virginia' for \$50, almost as easily as you can secure today the latest novel of a popular writer.

"But, budding collectors, do not despair. Who knows but there are nuggets this very minute, at your hand? Hidden only because you do not realize their potential value! Things which are considered valueless today may soar high in favor in the near future. You know that our grandfathers—not to mention their sisters and their cousins and their aunts—could have bought the autograph letters of such historical figures as Lincoln, Grant, Lee, and Jeff Davis for a few dollars during the years that immediately followed the Civil War. And it was not until twenty years later that collectors began to gather together everything that they could find concerning Lincoln, for it was not until then that he became a figure permanently great in the thought of the people. His merest scratch took on a definite value, which has increased steadily since then.

"The World War has now been over for

nearly nine years. Mementoes of the conflict which are today tolerated merely for their sentimental value will be highly esteemed twenty years from now. They will be coveted objects not only in the eyes of the collector but to the perhaps more discerning ones of the historian as well.

"The demand for things American is not a passing fancy. It will increase in the same way as a stone gather moss. The prices now paid for early American furniture, pottery, glass, pictures are but an indication of a movement yet in its infancy. Even collectors in England, such as that eminent enthusiast, Sir R. Leicester Harmsworth, Bart., are gathering objects of interest relating to this country. It is only meet and proper that Americans themselves should tenderly cherish the primal, honest, unpretentious things to which this country owes its greatness."

MADAME DE SEVIGNE'S LETTERS

MADAME DE SEVIGNE was one of a very few authors whose fame was entirely posthumous. Louis XIV, who became possessed of a number of her letters was among the first to point out that their style was matchless in grace of thought and expression. Her letters were full of domestic and public news, the details of daily life, the books the writer had read, the people she had met, and what was said, thought, and suspected in the world of Paris. Unauthorized editions of a portion of the letters of Madame de Sevigné were published in 1726; but so incomplete and full of errors were the collections, that her granddaughter, Madame de Simiane, was forced very reluctantly to consent to the issuing of the correspondence in a more correct form and under her own supervision. Even this last named collection was not complete; and diligent research has subsequently increased the number of letters, and given rise to numerous editions of the entire correspondence. The translations in English have been criticized as both inaccurate and incomplete. The tri-centenary of the birth of Madame de Sevigné was celebrated last Spring in Paris and it was pointed out that among her contemporaries were Colbert, Turenne, La Rochefoucauld, La Fontaine, Molière, Racine, Corneille, Bossuet, Cardinals Mazarin and De Retz, Mesdames de Maintenon, de Montespan, de La Vallière, and the brilliant galaxy of wits

that frequented the home of Madame de Rambouillet. An acquaintance with all these celebrated people was Madame de Sevigné's by right of birth, intelligence, and fortune. At last we are to have an edition in English with a more accurate text and far more complete than any that has preceded it. J. P. Horn & Co., of Philadelphia, announces the publication of the finest and most inclusive edition ever published, carefully re-edited and revised. It will be complete in seven volumes, illustrated, printed from twelve point Scotch face type on special water-marked all-rag paper, and limited to 1,550 sets for England and America. A. Edward Newton has written an introduction and he pays an eloquent tribute to these immortal letters and their writer.

DRAMATIC COLLECTION SOLD

THE famous dramatic collection brought together by the late Harry Houdini, magician, has just been sold by his widow to Messmore Kendall, vice-president of the George H. Doran Company, publishers, and president of the Moredell Company, owners and operators of the Capitol Theater. It is said that this collection contains 40,000 play bills, including old programs of Drury Lane and Covent Garden in London, and the old Park Theater of this city. Among the latter is a program for the production of Hamlet in 1802. It is also rich in autographic material, containing more than one thousand letters of famous men and women identified with the stage. Probably the most important single item among this autographic material is the seven years' diary of David Garrick. Here, also, is the correspondence of Cagliostro, written during his confinement in the Bastille. Independent of the play bills and autograph letters there are several thousand items comprising books and relics. Large estimates have been placed upon the valuation of this collection but it is doubtful if any appraiser has been able to go through it with great care.

COLLECTED SET OF CABELL

ROBERT M. MCBRIDE & CO., of this city, announce the forthcoming publication of a new limited edition of the writings of James Branch Cabell, to be called the Storisense Edition, designed by and bound under the personal supervision of William Dana Orcutt at the Plimpton Press, Norwood, Mass. Each volume will be signed by Mr. Cabell and will contain a special preface and complete textual revisions. The set will contain 19 volumes and will be limited to 1,500 copies. The first three volumes will be published this Fall;

three more will appear next Spring, and the remaining volumes will appear at intervals until the set is completed. Of the titles included, sixteen have already appeared in regular editions, a seventeenth is nearing completion, and two are in the process of construction.

The New Books

(Continued from preceding page)

Brief Mention

Leolyn Louise Everett has already given us two volumes of poems, "Fauns at Prayer" and "The Hills of Arcetri." Now her "By-ways to Crossroads" (Brentano's, \$1.50) is before us. These are poems of love and despair, illness and death, and a few more objective ones that are better. There is too much of a poetic wail in these verses and too little that is strikingly original, though there is mellifluous cadence and ejaculatory sentiment. "Penelope and Other Poems" by Sister M. Madeleva (Appleton, \$1.25) bears the Nihil Obstat of the Catholic censor of books and the Imprimatur of Cardinal Hayes. This member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross writes poetry of a fine lyric intensity, of fresh charm, of poignant implication. She takes rank with the best contemporary Catholic poets and possesses a finished technique that many poets may well envy. Her lyric voice is spontaneous, her feeling for phrase and epithet sure. "The Son of Man, and Other Poems and Essays" (Doran, \$1.50), by Father John Bernard Kelly, is another Catholic volume. Father Kelly is evidently a man who attracts warm friendships, for on the jacket of his book both Irvin Cobb and Kathleen Norris praise his poetry highly. We cannot praise it as poetry. It is straightforward devotional Catholic verse and that is all. His prose is interesting in his praise of Joyce Kilmer, and for its frank quality. He is evidently a lovable personality strong in his particular faith. "Songs in the Sun" by Caroline Hazard (Houghton Mifflin, \$2.25) are pleasant poems mostly about flowers. Frank L. Stanton's "Just From Georgia" is a posthumous collection of the work of the well-known and much-beloved Southern poet whose chief claim to fame is that he wrote "Sweetest" Li'l Feller. "Sarge—Don't you Remember" by Charles Keen Taylor (The Academy Press, Orange, N. J.) are colloquial reminiscences of the Great War in verse. They would be popular with any "outfit" to be read around a campfire.

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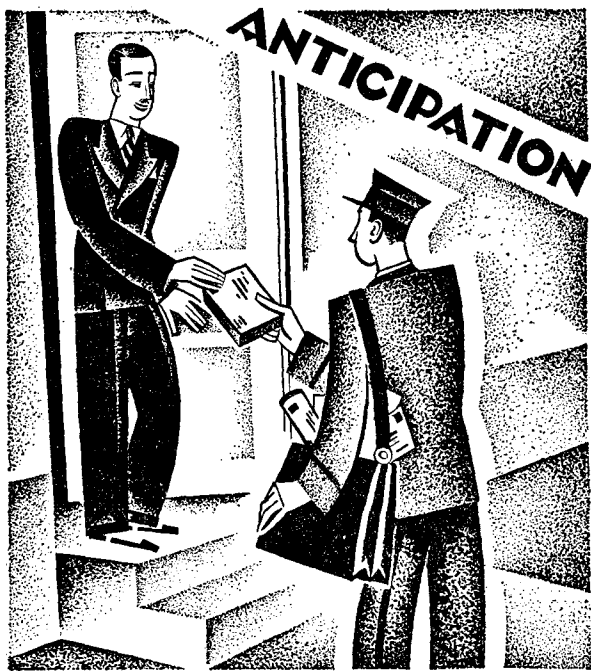
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