

The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

THE SEASON OF 1926-1927

A REVIEW of its auction season now closing issued by the Anderson Galleries emphasizes the growing interest among collectors in autographic material. Autographs of Button Gwinnett, Signer of the Declaration of Independence for Georgia, are a conspicuous example of this tendency. A Gwinnett signature offered last November brought \$28,500, a record price for an American historical autograph. The second, sold in March, fetched \$51,000, a record for an autograph anywhere at any time. The advance in fifteen years from \$4,600 to \$51,000 reflects the growth of interest in sets of Signers of the Declaration of Independence. Aside from Gwinnett items, the season has been one of outstanding importance. Manuscripts of Lafcadio Hearn, in December, realized from \$450 to \$975 each, according to length; a Roosevelt manuscript review of Capt. Mahan's "Influence of Sea Power on History," sold for \$2,500; a 15th century Book of Hours brought \$3,600; and a Washington letter to Thomas Paine, March 17, 1782, concerning the evacuation of Charlestown, went for \$950. Many new records were made at the sale of American and English autographs in the collection of A. C. Goodyear of Buffalo, in February. A collection of letters from Thackeray to Mrs. Brookfield, Miss Kate Perry, and Mrs. Elliot fetched \$29,500. At the same sale a manuscript fragment of a speech by Lincoln on September 15, 1859, dealing with slavery and equality, sold for \$4,700, and a letter written by Lincoln June 19, 1860, protesting against the unauthorized publication of his alleged biography, went for \$2,900.

The American Art Association announces that its thirty-five sales for the season, comprising autographs, manuscripts, books, and prints, realized \$910,882.50. A few of the outstanding sales were the notable library of Major W. Van R. Whitall of Pelham, N. Y., which brought over \$120,000. The sporting library of Walter C. Noyes of this city, sold in a single session, totaled over \$40,000. The famous Conrad collection made by Richard Curle, another single session sale, brought nearly \$39,000. The highest price for a single item was \$15,400 paid by the Rosenbach Company for the original manuscript of Richard Wagner's "Das Rheingold," one of the most important operatic manuscripts ever sold at auc-

tion. The second highest price was \$8,400 paid for the first edition of Shelley's "Adonais," a superb copy in the original wrappers. It was unusual that two copies of Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam," both in the original wrappers, should appear in two different collections, one selling for \$3,200, the other for \$3,250. The greatest number of records were established during the Whitall sale, \$5,000 being paid for one of twelve known copies of William Blake's "The Book of Thel," \$3,800 for Browne's "Pseudodoxia Epidemica" with manuscript notes by S. T. Coleridge; \$2,200 for Thomas Hardy's "The Dynasts," while "The Temple" of George Herbert realized the same price. A first edition of the "Poems" by John Keats sold for \$3,300, and Shelley's "The Cenci," presented by Leigh Hunt to Charles Lloyd, fetched \$2,500. Another Shelley item, "Epipsychidion," brought \$5,100, and \$3,400 was realized for Spenser's "Faerie Queene." It was practically a rule without exception that when material of the first importance, whether autographic or rare books, was offered it found enthusiastic bidders and high prices were the result.

AMERICANA AT HEARTMAN'S

THE auction business of Charles F. Heartman, of Metuchen, N. J., differs from others in one respect, it takes no vacation. Book sales are held, we believe, in every month in the year, those in midsummer being quite as successful as any. A notable collection of Americana, comprising books, pamphlets, broadsides, autograph letters, documents, and manuscripts, selections from various consignments, was sold on May 19, good prices generally being realized. A few representative lots and the prices which they brought were the following:

Adams (John). A. L. S., 2 pp., 4to. Philadelphia, March 2, 1798. To Eliphalet Fitch. \$116.

Adams (John Quincy). A. L. S., 4 pp., 4to. Washington, March 17, 1841. To Simon S. Jocelyn, Joshua Leavitt, and Lewis Tappan. Protesting against slavery and the right of search on the high seas. \$77.

Bartlett (Josiah). A. L. S., 2 pp., folio. Exeter, June 29, 1791. To Col. Joseph Whipple. \$77.50.

Burgoyne (Gen. John). L. S. with a few lines in his autograph, 3 pp., 4to.

Cambridge, February 12, 1778. To Gen. Heath. \$75.

Gaine (Hugh). "Universal Register," for the year 1775, 16mo, sheep. New York, 1774. \$88.

Hamilton (Alexander). A. L. S., 1 p., 4to. March 28, 1792. To John Keen. On financial matters. \$77.50.

Hancock (John). Printed D. S. In Congress, Philadelphia, December 6, 1776. \$85.

Holmes (Oliver Wendell). Twenty-one A. L. S., two original manuscripts, and a note. About 35 pp., 1859 to 1890. \$70.

Jackson (Andrew). A. L. in third person, 2 pp., 4to. July 12, 1833. To William J. Duane. \$86.

Jefferson (Thomas). A. L. in third person, 1 p., 4to. Monticello, August 8, 1814. To Thomas C. Flourney. \$71.

Lee (Gen. Charles). A. L. S., 4 pp., 4to. New York, February 9, 1776. To Robert Morris. \$80.

Morris (Robert). Original draft of an A. L. S., 5 pp., folio. Philadelphia, June 26, 1779. To David Rittenhouse. \$85.

Morton (John). D. S., 1 p., small folio. Philadelphia, April 6, 1776. \$75.

Washington (George). L. S., 1 p., folio. Headquarters Gross Prackness, October 29, 1780. War letter in reference to the court martial of Joshua Smith in connection with Arnold's treason.

NOTE AND COMMENT

AS the eighth number of its series of the Centaur Bibliographies the Centaur Book Shop of Philadelphia announces "Theodore Dreiser" by Edward D. McDonald, with an introduction by Mr. Dreiser. The edition will consist of 300 numbered copies for sale and a large paper edition of 100 copies autographed by Mr. Dreiser and the author.

Peter Davies of London announces the early publication of Charles Knight's "Shadows of Old Booksellers," originally published in 1865, recalling the great figures of the booktrade in the eighteenth century. Stanley Unwin, who recently wrote the book "The Truth about Publishing," recently published, has contributed an introduction comparing eighteenth-century methods with those of the present day.

A long-lost poem of the ancient Toltec Empire, 661 A. D., composed more than 1000 years ago and telling the tale of the glories and downfall of the mythical city of Tula, capital of the Toltec Empire, has been found and translated into English by John H. Cornyn, American journalist, master of the Aztec language, and for many years professor of literature in the Mexican

National University. The poem is entitled "Song to Quetzalcoatl."

The New Books

(Continued from preceding page)

Travel

SAVAGE LIFE IN THE BLACK SUDAN. By C. W. DOMVILLE-FIFE. Lippincott. 1927. \$6.

No book for the squeamish is this latest work of the prolific Mr. Domville-Fife, whose wanderings hitherto have been chiefly confined to South America. His hazardous observations among the giant Shilluks, the blood-drinking Dinkas, and the little-known Nuba tribes of Southern Kordofan yielded him a mass of unpalatable data which he sets forth generally with the impartiality of the ethnologist, although he is quite as often entirely frank in recording his own natural disgust. Some of the more lurid chapters, like the fifteenth on black secret societies, are founded on hearsay, but his own account as an eye-witness of an orgy among the Shilluk induces credence in his other authorities. His speculations on the relation between the religious beliefs and customs of the Nubas and the Priest-Kings of ancient Egypt are interesting and apparently have more than a slight basis in fact. There are many photographs of natives, most of them magnificent physical specimens, and the index is full beyond cavil.

ONCE IN THE SADDLE AND PASO POR AQUÍ. By EUGENE MANLOVE RHODES. Houghton Mifflin. 1927. \$2.

Composed of two novelettes, whose scene is the southwest of an earlier day, this book treats of a life and characters such as, in fiction, are usually given the distorted dimensions of the fabulous. The first of the tales (both are concerned with outlaws fleeing from justice) presents the familiar situation of the small rancher being hounded for his coveted property by more powerful neighbors. But this beginning soon leads into other channels, which, without break in the unity, contribute steadily to development of the main theme. The conclusion, though rather too abruptly effected, is the essence of good melodrama. In the second story, our own preference of the two, is pictured the gruelling flight across semi-desert country of a bank bandit, who finally takes refuge with a diphtheria stricken family of Mexicans. Though broken in strength, the hunted man remains heroically beside the sick, his better nature uppermost, and cares for them till belated help arrives.

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LATELY we have enjoyed some really good Scotch—novel-writing. Of course the name of *John Buchan* is not a new one. He has distinguished himself in a variety of ways in the kingdom of letters. He can be grave, he can be humorous, he can be swashbuckling, he can even—at times—be rather bigoted. "Witch Wood," however, (Houghton Mifflin), is just a thoroughly capable historical romance with an element of the horrible, and there's more Scotch dialect in it than you can shake a stick at. And we admit that we can read and enjoy Scotch dialect and Negro dialect as easily as we can read plain English, because we have read both since childhood. . . .

At which moment the awful thought occurs to us that we shouldn't mention this book yet, because we got hold of an advance copy, and it probably won't be out by the time you read this. However, it may be,—and we're not going to give the plot away. We shall merely say that if you are interested in the great Montrose (he is one of our heroes), in the period in Scotland when it was King versus Covenant, in the manifestations of the witch-cult in Caledonia, and in the full-blooded, glamorous style of John Buchan, you will read this novel. . . .

Then there's "Ariane," by *Claude Anet* (Knopf), translated by *Guy Chapman*. We don't know whether the translation is particularly good or not. It seems to be. The Russian girl of this torturing love story is rather fascinating. She is noble in her own inexplicable fashion. The novel is for the sophisticated and for the tragically-minded. But it is unusual and impresses. . . .

F. Tennyson Jesse's "Moonraker" strikes us as a hasty outline of the novel she might have made of a female pirate in the time of Toussaint P'Ouverture. The writing is brightly enamelled. Everything is in *petto*. The characters remind us of those vividly-colored little figures that *Dwight Franklin* fashions and sets against miniature backgrounds on which he plays colored lights. In fact, we should like to see *Dwight* make some of his bookcase insets of the scenes of this story. He has never done a female pirate. The story is almost a juvenile in its complete, boyish objectivity, where there was opportunity for remarkable psychological handling. It is brisk and condensed; action all the way. We thought of *Conrad* given the same theme,—how entirely differently he would have handled it. But we read the small book at a sitting and delighted in its color. The struggle and tragedy of Toussaint deserves a larger canvas. The portraits of him and of his family and of his generals are firmly laid in, however. And we didn't know Miss Tennyson Jesse could draw. Her illustrations for her own story, though amateurish, have vivacity. And we almost forgot to mention that her brief flashlight of the Voodoo practices on the grievous island of San Domingo (now Haiti) is striking. . . .

But a book coming nearer home than any of those we have mentioned, a modern novel more remarkable both in conception and execution, is one of which we heard from *Robert Nathan*, but which, until recently, we had not got around to reading. Bob thinks a lot of "Half Gods" by *Murray Sheehan* (Dutton), and now we can understand why. If this book had been fashioned by an Englishman or a Frenchman it would have attracted twice as much attention as it has to date. The community into which the centaur of the story is born, in the Middle West, is horribly real. The growth of the boy in the story, as the centaur deteriorates under the pressure of his environment, the sodden local characters who unconsciously accomplish the latter's deterioration, the sophisticated and restless Mrs. Delacourt,—all these leave their firm impression. The author misses no opportunity for quiet irony. "Main Street," perhaps, began the kind of examination of the benighted community that Mr. Sheehan here continues, but we venture to say that the whole of "Elmer Gantry" says no more concerning evangelistic buncombe than Sheehan includes briefly in his stride. He touches on every phase of small-town ignorance, hypocrisy, stupidity, and grossness, but without laboring. His centaur is a new character in fiction, convincingly created, so truly seen and followed through the story that even the most fantastic of its elements blends smoothly into the whole. We shall be some time forgetting this most individual and tragic tale. . . .

In view of the recent banning in Boston of their translation, "The Madonna of the Sleeping Cars," Payson & Clarke, Ltd., the

new firm of publishers, are running a nation-wide questionnaire in the newspapers of the country to discover the popular reaction to the whole matter of book censorship. They announce themselves as intending to be guided by popular feeling, and they pose four questions. (1) The statement is being made very generally, that the great majority of fiction, in order to possess literary worth, must deal freely with sex relations. Do you believe this to be true? (2) Do you approve of censorship? (3) Have you any suggestions to make as to an effective method of applying censorship to books without killing all freedom of expression? (4) If you know that a book deals with sex relationships, are you prejudiced against reading it for that reason? "The Madonna of the Sleeping Cars" had been published in fifteen languages before it was banned in Boston. . . .

Doubleday tells us that *Radclyffe Hall*, the *Femina* Prize winner, has a hair-cut which is considered the best shingle in London, and that *Mary Borden*, who will have a new novel, "The Flamingo," out this fall, is called the best-dressed of English hostesses, though an American. They also tell us that *George A. Dorsey*, whose new biography is "The Evolution of Charles Darwin," had his first job teaching Latin, German, Algebra, History, and being librarian at a female college. He also had to ask the blessing. At that point he began his researches as to why people behave like human beings. . . .

A new guidebook to ocean travel, out in about a week, whose title piques our curiosity, is "The Frantic Atlantic," by *Basil Woon* (Knopf). He wrote "The Paris that's Not in the Guide Books." He tells you, among other things, how much to tip, how much to drink, and how to win the pool. . . .

We thank Boni and Liveright for the volumes of The Black and Gold Library. They are, "The Travels of Marco Polo," "Tristram Shandy," "A Sentimental Journey," "The Physiology of Taste," "The Dialogues of Plato," and "The Complete Poems of François Villon," most of all of which we have already read (strange to relate), and all of which we rate among the best books in the world. . . .

This season the same firm will publish two additional titles in the Black and Gold, namely "Il Pentamerone, or The Tale of Tales," by *Giambattista Basile* in the rare translation of *Sir Richard Burton*, and "The Satyricon of Petronius Arbiter," based on the now famous contemporary translation by *W. C. Firebaugh*. Then there will be a gathering into one volume of rare books by contemporaries of Marco Polo; there will also be "The Golden Ass," "The Confessions of Saint Augustine," Brantôme's "Fair and Gallant Ladies," Castiglione's "Book of the Courtier," a *Münchhausen*, selections from *Machiavelli*, the Comedies of *Terence*, and so on. These are all planned for publication in the future. . . .

Somebody from England told us that "Jew Suss" was a novel being avidly read in that country. At first we did not realize that it was the same book as "Power" by *Lion Feuchtwanger*, published here by the Viking Press. The sale of this book has been slow. It was brought out last October. In January it began to show signs of life. Recently it doubled all previous sales records. . . .

Horatio Winslow, author of "Spring's Banjo" is out in Cincinnati with the express purpose of writing a new and even better novel. He has acquired a French wife who is being gradually educated into being an American; not, we hope, to her detriment. . . .

Donald Ogden Stewart did not leave our shores after all. He became severely ill and has been convalescing in this city. He had to cancel his passage and will probably write his "An American Comedy" in America, after all.

The Literary Guild's fourth choice is a book that came to them from the African jungle. It is called "Trader Horn," and was out in the trade edition yesterday, through Simon & Schuster. Guild members received it at the same time. *John Galsworthy* has written an enthusiastic foreword to it. . . .

Anent *Phelps Putnam's* title for his book of poems, "Trinc," *Moses Maimonides* postal-cards us, "Surely I have read, and so have you, that 'Trinc' was the most intelligible or the only one intelligible of all the utterances of the Oracle of the Holy Bottle!" . . .

We go to seek the Oracle.

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