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Merrymount Press

EXHIBITIONS of printed books may or may not be important or interesting, but they are universally beloved of all conditions of men. Not always, however, are they of real value to workers in the same field, who usually have a rather clear idea of the capacity of the exhibitors, and scarcely need reminder. In the case of the work of the Merrymount Press, now on view at the Art Center, through the initiative of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, the value of the exhibition is, I believe, greatest to the active worker in typography, because of the exceptionally successful way in which printers' problems have been met and solved by that Press.

Those who have followed Mr. Updike's career from the establishment of the Press as a composing room, in the purlieus of Beacon Hill, with the presswork done elsewhere, have not failed to recognize in its founder a singular capacity for selecting with judgment and taste the elements out of which his printed product was to come. Mr. Updike's knowledge of type was considerable from the start: but not unique. What did at once set off the work of the Merrymount Press from the work of others then working in the same field was an excellent and sophisticated taste in the type-faces employed, and the manner of using them.

For it is, after all, important to select only the very best of type-faces if one would do distinguished work. And an examination of these books (since Mr. Updike has never fallen into the pit of a specimen of types in use at the Merrymount Press!) shows with what rare skill the fonts in use have been selected from the welter of types available. English Caslon, Brimmer, Oxford, Scotch Roman of the best cut, Black Letter of authentic form, a delectable seventeenth century type—the types of his books are each and all admirable, and almost always quite the best there are. Where the one criticism unfavorable to Merrymount types can lodge is in the special fonts cut for the Press—the type of the Altar Book, and the Montallegro. Measured against such faces as the Centaur, Doves, or Ashendene types, they seem amateurish. But it is to be noted that they are seldom used, and the best work of the Press has been done with those "survivals" which Mr. Updike has written of so well in his book on type.

The types which Mr. Updike has used are, it scarcely need be pointed out to a printer, foundry type, necessitating hand composition. Now composition by hand is not, *per se*, better than composition by machine. Indeed much may be said for the superiority in general of machine composition. It has been said that the machine can do anything—except produce a work of art! But what the machine had not done in 1894—as Mr. Updike once pointed out to an inquirer—was to produce the handsome type-faces which were to be had of the type foundry (if one were persistent enough!). And, if I may venture a statement at odds with much expensive publicity, the type-faces available on the type-setting machines in 1928 are not, save in a few rare instances, equal in beauty of face or skill of punch-cutting and casting, to the fine fonts which display their charms in this exhibition.

Fine type is essential to fine printing, but not the only element. Besides the skill in selecting only good types, Mr. Updike has shown in the work of the past thirty-five years, a conception of the way to build a book which is uncommon. Take an instance with which I happen to be uncomfortably familiar—the college catalogue. The Merrymount Press issues of the catalogues for Brown University, Middlebury College, Trinity College are very fine examples indeed of how an intelligent mind, with adequate tools at hand, can make a comely book out of the most dispiriting of copy. Or, such a book as the Sulgrave Manor Record. I question seriously the economic justification for so much type-setting for so small an edition devoted to so worshipful

an enterprise; but I doubt if the book could have been so completely done *in type* by anyone else. It is essentially a printed book.

A printed book has to have a title page, it has to be on paper, and it has to be bound. And on these three points something more may be said of Merrymount Press work. Frankly, books from this Press sometimes disappoint in the matter of title-pages. There is a lack of virility, of spontaneousness—a semblance of uncertainty and timidity which is later belied by the frank quality of the text pages. Title-pages and text pages are in accord, yes, but one wishes for a little more jubilation at the start! In the selection of paper for his work, Mr. Updike has been remarkably successful—and against odds which only those know who know the vast quantity of poor paper made, and the lack of papers of quality during so many years. The binding of the books from this Press has been exceptionally successful. So distinctly has Mr. Updike worked out his problem that a trained eye never fails to detect a Merrymount Press book on the shelf—picks it out by little tricks of material, dies and ornaments which taken together may suggest a certain lack of experimental variety, but which point to a conscious and successful effort to give style to the work of the Merrymount Press.

The exhibition will continue through April and May.

THE stock market being on a rampage, the book auctions reacted sympathetically, and on March 28 at the Anderson Galleries held a carnival. Handsome is as handsome does, "handsome" being the most the cataloguer had found to say for the library of the late Charles H. Senff, which came to the block that afternoon, with a run of Cruikshank illustrations as the main course. As Cruikshanks go, these were exceptional copies, many of them from the Bruton collection, with the usual assortment of original drawings and extra plates. The earliest item was the 1813 Meteor, with a few plates from the second volume added, which went to \$675, and was followed by \$500 for Mudford's "Campaign in the Netherlands," one of the Waterloo classics. Then came a very fine copy of the four volumes of the Humorist of 1819-1820 in four volumes, which went on up to \$4,250. The cataloguer indulged in one of the ultra-modern refinements in describing this item: "A name of a former owner has been detected on two of the leaves . . . but aside from these the pages may well be termed matchless." It only remains another time to record the finger prints. After this, \$350 for Pierce Egan's "Life in London" seems hardly worth noting, while Paris described by Carey was only valued at \$240. Ireland's Napoleon, rebound and with plates split, reached \$600, and the artist's own "Scraps and Sketches" \$500. "Hogarth Moralized" went to \$825, but this had one of Cruikshank's self-portraits sketched on the margin of an original drawing, and these are not as easy to find as they were once. The Wits Magazine of 1818, with one facsimile plate, rose to \$2,600, which figures out at \$65 apiece for the forty colored plates by Cruikshank and Rowlandson, neither of them at his best.

Mr. Senff's library appears to have been purchased in blocks, and was sold the same way. Sir Richard Burton had the ill luck to come before the excitement began, and his thirty-seven first editions, without the translations, dropped at \$100. The set of Hardy, thirty-nine volumes, including the first "Desperate Remedies," but not "The Dynasts," and all rebound, reached \$1,175. Charles Lever's twenty-four volumes went for \$230, and eight Smollett Firsts for \$525, and sixty-five Trollopes for \$510. The revised printer's copy for the second edition of Washington Irving's "Life of Columbus," which is of more literary than historical consequence, sold for \$2,500, and will, it is much to be hoped, now or later find its way to join the rest of the Irving material which is accumulating at the Yale library.

Reader's Guide

(Continued from preceding page)

copy of the then only edition of Jezebel Pettyfer, but it vanished, as all such delights are fond of doing. May I thank you very much for the information about its reappearance from Knopf?"

To these welcome additions I can bring one more Voodoo title: in Paul Green's recent volume of plays, "In the Valley" (French) is a one-act called "Supper for the Dead" in which the wandering spirit of a murdered girl is laid at rest and her killer brought to justice. A better example of grotesque horror than the aged twins who carry out this spell, it would be hard to find. It is magic of a type near enough to that under discussion to make it suitable for this list.

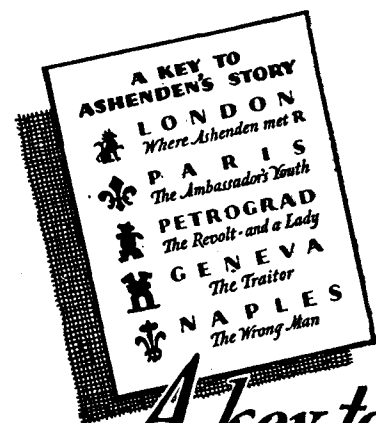
I AM quite chagrined at the slight interest taken in the literature of profanity by this little group of serious readers. But one response has come to the cry of W. K. Yoe, Pa., for books about swearing: this is from the librarian of the University of Nebraska, who says that in the Winter issue of the *Prairie Schooner*, published at that University, there is a charming essay on this subject. And to divert the discussion of how to pronounce the title of Disraeli, which has been trickling through this column for some weeks past, M. R. F. Washington, D. C., says that Andrew D. White says in his "Autobiography" that at a ceremonial dinner given by the Lord Mayor of London, the toastmaster pronounced it as "Urll Beckinsfield."

D. N., New York, asks what Etheldreda Lewis has written besides her part of "Trader Horn." "I was almost regretful," she writes, "when she left off and the Trader began."

IT shows how easily we pass on things we don't know, that people say glibly "Mrs. Etheldreda Lewis, the well-known novelist" and I'll bet a cooky not one in ten could tell you that her novels are "The Harp" and "Mantis" and that they are published in England by Hodder & Stoughton. I know, not because I'm a better man than you are, Gunga Din, but because this question caught me in the conscience and I promptly wrote to Simon & Schuster for information.

M. C. A., Hornell, N. Y., asks what is the Golden Hind Series.

"THE Golden Hind" is a series of biographical and historical studies of great explorers, adventurers, colonizers, and wanderers out of England over the globe, under the general editorship of Milton Waldman, published in this country by Harper. "John Smith," by E. Keble Chatterton, will open more than one eye to adventures more thrilling than the Pocahontas episode, and bring the modern reader as near to actual contact with the Captain's own writings as he is likely to come. Llewelyn Powys's "Henry Hudson" is a surprising recreation of a time and a personality. E. F. Benson writes of "Sir Francis Drake," and the others later to be presented are Raleigh, Hawkins, Froisher, and Grenville.



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The Hardy Memorial

Dr. Henry Seidel Canby, editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, has written the following appeal to American book lovers to support the campaign now being conducted in America by Harper & Brothers and the *Saturday Review* for a memorial to Thomas Hardy. The memorial is to consist of (1) the preservation of Hardy's birthplace at Bockhampton; (2) an obelisk to be erected on a suitable site in the neighborhood; (3) the founding in Dorchester of a Hardy Memorial, housing a collection of his works and relics. All contributions should be sent to the Hardy Memorial Fund, c/o Harper & Brothers, 49 E. 33rd St., New York City.

By HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

THE news that a committee with Sir James Barrie at its head is to collect a fund for a memorial to Thomas Hardy is as welcome to Americans as to the British. There are what might be called all-Eng-

lish and all-American writers among the moderns for whom it would be an impertinence to ask international recognition, but Hardy quite transcends nationalism—at least American or British nationalism and this, paradoxically, in spite of the fact that his novels and his poetry, too, rise from such a depth of Wessex soil as to make him the authentic voice of primitive English character. Of course he is much more than this. He spoke first for the soberer view of man's place in the universe which, with tender souls as well as with "hard boiled" individuals, has taken the place of Browning's hearty optimism, where all was right with the world if you were only young and healthy; and yet his popularity in America, which was early and wide, seems to have been based upon his characters rather than his philosophies. For years his novels have been read in American universities, indeed they were the first modern novels to become "classics" in the University sense, and the reason, I firm-

ly believe, is that quite unconsciously we Americans realized that with Hardy as with Shakespeare we were encountering memorials of the very foundations of American life. For the English ideas and ideals that came over with the first colonists—simple people most of them, like Tess of the D'Urbervilles or Jude the Obscure—penetrated and colored all our American civilization, which, though drawn from so many races, nevertheless has crystallized about an English core.

Indeed, the literary work of Thomas Hardy is closer to New England of the last century or the rural West of today than to modern London or Manchester or Dublin or Edinburgh. The farm novel of the Middle West, which is one of our most original literary contributions, goes directly back to him for influence, as to a man who might have written more adequately and wisely of the great corn fields, the plains, or the forests than native Americans. Indeed Hardy cannot be fitly honored ex-

cept by the English-speaking world, for his Wessex is a spiritual kingdom in which we all can move with understanding and leave with a better knowledge of ourselves.

As one American, a reader, a critic, a teacher, and an admirer of Hardy, I hope that Americans will acknowledge their debt and express their justifiable pride in a great writer who has made English eloquent for them as well as for his countrymen, by contributing liberally to this memorial from the English speaking world, which will rise appropriately, not in London but in Wessex, upon earth from which so much that is good American has sprung.

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A. A. Milne and the other wits of England have rediscovered a fellow-wit whose matchless short stories are the delight of a growing number of readers. He is H. H. Munro, better known as **SAKI** and the stories are collected in three choice little volumes: *The Toys of Peace*, *Beasts and Super-Beasts*, and *The Chronicles of Clovis*. His novel, *The Unbearable Basington*, is now available also. Each, \$1.75

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WE hear that this may be the last year of the existence of the committee which awards the Prix Goncourt, the most coveted of French literary prizes. The latest winner of the prize is *Maurice Bedel*, and the translated title of his book is "Jerome at the Sixtieth Degree of North Latitude." The story concerns a lively French dramatist and his experiences among the chilly beauties of Scandinavia. The Viking Press will bring out the book in this country in June, translated by *Lawrence S. Morris*.

The Periodical, published by the Oxford University Press, discusses in its April issue the completion of the Oxford English Dictionary. It was finished on April 19th. At the end of this anecdotal discussion it refers to how *Professor Skeat's* pretty gift for light verse was more than once displayed in connection with the Dictionary. Twenty years ago *Notes and Queries* published the following:

TO DR. MURRAY ON COMPLETING THE LETTER C

Wherever the English speech is spread
And the Union Jack flies free,
The news will be gratefully, proudly read
That you've conquered your A, B, C.
But I fear it will come
As a shock to some
That the sad result will be
That you're taking to dabble and dawdle
and doze,
To dolour and dumps, and—worse than
those—
To danger and drink,
And—shocking to think—
To words that begin with d—.

We wish to thank Mrs. John Kennedy for sending us an old copy of that now defunct but once most pleasing periodical published at New Orleans, *The Double Dealer*—we had mentioned it lately with reference to some of Thornton Wilder's earlier work appearing in it.

You may recall *Abel Chevalley's* article on *Julien Green* in *The Saturday Review of Literature* for February 4th. If you do, you will also remember that therein he incidentally reviewed *The Closed Garden*, which is Green's latest novel, published in France as *Adrienne Mesurat*. Well, by whichever name you choose to call it, this novel has been awarded the Femina-Vie Heureuse Prize. The Book-of-the-Month Club over here has chosen it as their May book. A first printing by Harper & Brothers has gone to 90,000. The American edition bears a preface by *André Maurois*, an excellent study of Green. We have also noted an essay on Green by *Edmond Jaloux* in the *March Bookman*.

To the author of the best book of fiction for girls, as determined by the judges, *Kathleen Norris*, *Claude G. Leland* (Superintendent of libraries) and *Bertha E. Mahony*, (Director of the Bookshop for Boys and Girls in Boston), Harper and Brothers at 49 East 33rd Street, will pay the outright sum of \$2,000, in addition to the ordinary terms of royalty, which will be

arranged with the author. The book will be serialized by *The American Girl*, and the prize will cover the serialization rights. Any author is eligible for the prize and only original manuscripts of unpublished works should be sent in. They should be submitted before December 1st, 1928.

The Scholartis Press of 30 Museum Street, London, W. C. 1, announces "The Man of Feeling" by *Henry Mackenzie*, edited by *Hamish Miles*. This book is one of the most interesting in that great period of the novel, 1741-1771, and is the first of a series of eighteenth century novels that The Scholartis Press intends to issue.

Asa Don Dickinson, Librarian of the University of Pennsylvania, has compiled a volume for Doubleday, Doran entitled "The Best Books of Our Time." The lists of books consulted for his compilation are such as the Book Review Digest, the Encyclopaedia Britannica, 13th Edition, Manly and Rickert, the New International, and so on. The number of endorsements given by each of the authorities is quoted. Mr. Dickinson himself ventures occasionally to indorse a favorite title which otherwise would be excluded for want of a full quartette of sponsors. In the back of the book, the Authors, Arranged according to Number of Endorsements by the chosen authorities shows a somewhat strange order. *Galsworthy* is first, *Wells* second, *Arnold Bennett*, and *G. Bernard Shaw* fourth. Then come, in turn, *Edith Wharton*, *Joseph Conrad*, *Booth Tarkington*, *Rudyard Kipling*, *W. H. Hudson*, and *Joseph Hergesheimer*. *John Galsworthy* is quite a bit below *Winston Churchill*. *Percy MacKaye* is way ahead of *James Stephens*. *Marcel Proust* is only seven times endorsed. *Emily Dickinson*, *Dmitri Merejkowski*, *Ezra Pound* and *Havelock Ellis* only get four votes, and come at the end of the list with such others as *James Oliver Curwood*, *Henry Ford*, *Peter B. Kyne*, and *George Barr McCutcheon*. In spite of all that sort of thing the compilation contains, necessarily, many important titles. If Mr. Dickinson had only dropped the indorsement business, which is all right as a rough guide to mere popularity, but is *reductio ad absurdum* when applied to the relative actual values of the books concerned, and had reselected and rearranged from his statistical findings, the book would be much better as a book of reference. But he has accepted yardsticks of very doubtful value, and confusion in the average reader's mind is likely to result from the application of negligible standards.

Edna St. Vincent Millay, no less, has written a foreword to a book of poems, "Outcrop" by *Abbie Huston Evans*. This is country poetry and excellent of its kind. Miss Millay has said a wise thing of it when she remarks,

More than once, in reading them, (the poems) you will find yourself stock-still before some object with which you have rubbed elbows all your life, but which you have never truly seen until that moment.

Well,—See you next week!

THE PHOENICIAN.

"I remember that Mr. Maynard's poem 'Exile' gave me a crinkle when I first saw it in the *London Mercury*."—*Edwin Arlington Robinson*.

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(Her flash of intuition spanned the globe)

It seems to HEYWOOD BROWN that *Trader Horn* "sounds so much better in the blurbs than in the reading. . . . Certainly a very considerable proportion of its success belongs to the firm of SIMON AND SCHUSTER.

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The velvety impeachment of *Trader Horn* and the laurel wreath upon our advertisements are not entirely convincing. The blurbs and the ballyhoo have all been devised here in *The Inner Sanctum*, but they spring right from the book itself: it is simply a case of selection of glamorous headlines, and of arresting layouts that feature the wind-swept face of *TRADER HORN* himself. The best advertisements for the book were written by ZAMBESI JACK and ETHELREDA LEWIS.

Consider this, from page 3—in the introduction by ETHELREDA LEWIS:

That mild voice, rising, as I now know, from a past as infinitely full of repose, of restlessness, of action, of hidden hoards, of spectres of bones and wreckage—from the past as the sea itself; as full, if so I may put it, of the quality of timelessness, that quality which keeps every roamer, from Ulysses to Columbus, and from Columbus to — to Aloysius Horn, awash between year and year as if the shores of time were forever theirs. Cradled like gulls, safe on the fiercest sea.

Or these quotations from the *TRADER'S* own recital:

"Nature's a great big unknown God we've got to make terms with without the humiliation of prayer. This constant nudging of the Almighty is a mistake."

—From Page 151.

A gorilla'll visit five colonies in rotation to avoid interbreeding. A regular scientist.

—From Page 298.

Aye, 'tis easy enough to catch an elephant once you've made up your mind to be no gentleman about it.

—From Page 121.

We leave it to readers of *The Inner Sanctum* to judge whether such writing hasn't been more alluring than our own announcements, even when orchestrated on themes from the book itself:

I am going to buy *Trader Horn* today! I shall sail beyond the sun. . . . Wildest Africa will be my home, swift rivers my daily course, ivory, apes and peacocks my stock in trade, and cannibals my blood brothers. . . . Romance will run amuck.

Now, puissant advertising and seductive illustrations might conceivably sell the first few editions—say ten or fifteen thousand copies, perhaps even thirty or forty thousand—by dangling before the customers the possibility of wonders unspeakable, but to sell 168,000 copies, the book itself must deliver. You can't top the best-seller list month after month on promises.

It is one of the private, unprovable hunches of *The Inner Sanctum* that the first page of a book helps in large measure to shape its destiny.

The first page of the initial *Cross Word Puzzle Book* was positively hypnotic in its black and white pattern; the first page of *Fraulein Else* was irresistibly redolent of Vienna; the first page of *The Story of Philosophy* we have almost committed to memory, so gloriously does it articulate the June-like lure of the unknowable; the first page of *Trader Horn* ensnared even HEYWOOD BROWN.

—ESSANESE.