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The Playboy of Gad's Hill

COLLECTORS not only read—they occasionally evolve out of their collections engaging footnotes to history or biography. Consider, by way of example, the chain of adventures that befell Charles Rubens and the fruits thereof.

Some months since, returning from the continent to London via Dover, Mr. Rubens bethought him that it was in this colorless little part that Charles Dickens labored for three months in the autumn of 1852 on "Bleak House." The association of Dickens and house, perhaps, reminded Mr. Lukens that Gad's Hill, final and most famous of the novelist's homes, was on the direct road to the metropolis.

Gad's Hill is now a young ladies' seminary, but its traditions are not lost on the present proprietors, who maintain the establishment as school and memorial alike, and admit visitors at specified hours. The Rubens party arrived on Sunday, which was out of bounds, but the head mistress, Miss Mina S. Burt, not only graciously permitted them to inspect the premises but herself acted as conducting officer.

The focus of interest, of course, was Dickens's study, and in particular, relates Mr. Rubens, "the famous doorway which originally had broken the uniform extension of the long rows of books, until Dickens had conceived and carried out the idea of covering it with an imitation of a book case containing a number of fictitious titles invented by himself." During his tour of the study Mr. Rubens's eye fell on a playbill for one of Dickens's private theatricals—unfortunately, a facsimile.

Back in America, apparently, Mr. Rubens had the good fortune to acquire (whether at a single stroke or not he fails to say) two letters from Dickens to one Eeles, who was in charge of the alterations at Gad's Hill. Both letters were written in October, 1857, and both have to do with the imitation book case and the fictitious books. This documentary evidence, Mr. Rubens properly asserts, seals the history of the dummy library "with an authenticity which could not be more perfect."

But Mr. Rubens, in all this pleasant excitement, had not forgotten the facsimile play bill. He found an original and sent it to Miss Burt, who reciprocated by copying the titles of the dummy books and transmitting the list to him. The titles, which apparently have never been printed in full before, together with the two Dickens-Eeles letters and Miss Burt's letter to Mr. Rubens in facsimile, have been incorporated into an account of the whole incident—"The Dummy Library of Charles Dickens at Gad's Hill Place: Recollections of a Pilgrimage," as narrated by Mr. Rubens to J. Christian Bay—which Mr. Rubens recently issued at Chicago in a private edition of three hundred copies.

Of the more than sixty titles which comprise the library, several are obviously local and topical, and not all, therefore, are funny at this writing and in this longitude. Some might be anybody's, others are obviously Dickens's. Here are a few:

The Wisdom of Our Ancestors. Vol. I: Ignorance; Vol. II: Superstition; Vol. III: The Block; Vol. IV: The Stake; Vol. V: The Rack; Vol. VI: Dirt.
Noah's Arkitecture. Vols. I-II.
General Tom Thumb's Modern Warfare. Vols. I-II.
Socrates on Wedlock.
Drowsy's Recollections of Nothing.
Lady Godiva on the Horse.

J. T. W.

The Offenbach Workshop

SCHRIFT UND HANDWERK: Ein Offenbacher Sonderheft des Philobiblon. Vienna. 1934.

WE have had occasion before to speak of this Austrian magazine devoted to printing and book making, which deserves support and encouragement from all interested in books. It presents, first of all, a very comely typographical appearance—both in size and careful type-setting it sets a high standard. The contents include fairly

long and scholarly treatises on various aspects of printing, old and new, and a considerable amount of current information about book publishing and book auction activities in Europe and America. I know of no magazine where equally interesting matter is so attractively presented.

The first part of *Philobiblon* for 1934 contains a special section devoted to the work of the Offenbach craftsmen—Rudolph Koch, Fritz Kredel, Berthold Wolpe, Willi Harwerth, the Klingspor Brothers, and others of the group which has produced some of the most distinctive work not only in typography, wood engraving, and other graphic arts, but also in many other of the hand crafts. There are forty pages of text by Georg Haupt, sixteen pages of plates of craft work other than printing, and a handful of loose specimens of Klingspor work. The whole forms a reasonably representative collection of the work done at Offenbach, and will be of much interest to those who realize how outstanding has been that accomplishment.

Philobiblon is one of the few European magazines devoted to printing which cannot be overlooked.

R.

The Folger Library

THE FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY. Washington, 1933.

THE Trustees of Amherst College, administrators of the Folger Shakespeare Library at Washington, have issued a modest but sufficient book containing information which will be of general interest.

Mr. Joseph Quincy Adams has written an account of the amazing collection of books which Mr. Folger gathered; Mr. Paul G. Cret, the architect, has written of the fine building which houses the collection; and there are thirty-six excellent photographic plates of the structure, inside and out.

It can truthfully be said of this book that it sets forth with added effectiveness, because of its modest straightforwardness, the substantial grandeur of this remarkable library. Only a confirmed devotee of the needlessly mysterious, follower of Donnelly or Looney, could fail to be impressed by the devotion which gathered these books and housed them so nobly.

R.

Dumas and the Gold Rush

A GIL BLAS IN CALIFORNIA. By Alexander Dumas. Translated by Marguerite E. Wilbur. Introduction by P. T. Hanna. Wood engravings by Paul Landacre. Los Angeles: Primavera Press. 1933. \$3.75.

THAT Alexander Dumas wrote a story of the gold rush, the adventures of a Frenchman who joined the searchers for gold in 1849, has apparently been known to few. The book was first published in Brussels in 1852 under the title "Californie—Un An sur les Bords du San Joaquin et du Sacramento"; a German edition appeared the same year, and a second French edition under the name "Un Gil Blas en Californie" in 1861. It has never been translated into English until the present edition, a somewhat surprising circumstance.

Whether Dumas conceived the book entirely himself or whether, as he professed, it is the little-altered journal of an unknown Frenchman whom he met at Montmorency, is a mystery which his own assertions do not make plain; Mr. Hanna's ingenious suggestion that it may have been founded on papers and conversations of some real Gallic adventurer, fused into a story by the great novelist in the days of his intimacy with Ada Isaacs Menken fresh from her California triumphs, seems attractive! At all events, it was an admirable idea to translate and publish the story.

It is a well printed book with some competent wood engravings by Paul Landacre, including a grand pictorial map of San Francisco Bay and the region of the diggings.

R.

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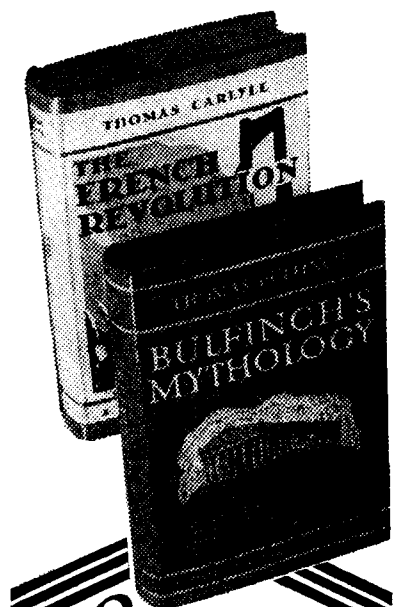
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Trade Winds

By P. E. G. QUERCUS

☐ The Quercuses and Mr. Bob Linscott of Houghton Mifflin, erring in the direction of Sutton Place, were delighted to learn that their old friend Peter Mulligan is doing handsomely in his kitchen at 422 East 55—an ancient coach-house which he has turned into a most agreeable restaurant. Peter is one of the Irish who were Born Hungry: he takes food seriously and serves it in generous portions. When he was a book salesman for Macmillan, years ago, he never could get enough to eat, so he went into the chophouse business. The famous Mulligan Stew used to be delivered around in cartons, but no messenger could be found who was not tempted to open the container and sample it en route. ☐ Traces of Peter Mulligan's literary training survive however: The shelves behind his upstairs bar, where the Three Hours for Lunch Club occasionally meets, were once an old bookcase. ☐ He plans to fit up his roof as Mulligan's Airport, where the Lonely Hearts of Sutton Place make an ascension every afternoon at 5.30. ☐ That whole neighborhood is full of bohemian recollection: Edgar Allan Poe used to go swimming in the tide rips below "Welfare" Island; and Peter Doelger's great effigy of King Gambrinus is just around the corner.

☐ Quercus was amused, he doesn't know just why, by a circular announcing the "Formal Opening of the Speech Center"—with 22 Heads of Divisions, a Hospital for Speech Disorders, a Home Talent Division, a School of Everyday Speech, and a Vaudeville Producers Division. As some pretty poem said of old, "In your sweet dividing throat, She winters and keeps warm her note." ☐ The saddest thing that happened lately was the salesman who tried to sell copies of a book on Nudism at the Garment Center.

☐ Frances Steloff of the Gotham Book Mart has returned from a vacation in Mexico City where she found some fine bookshops (especially Alberto Misrahi and the American Book Store) and surprisingly cold weather. She was agitated by seeing a bull-fight. ☐ Mr. R. T. Bond of Dodd, Mead says advance interest in *Merchants of Death*, Engelbrecht and Hanighen's book on the Armament Industry, is exceptionally vigorous. The book will contain many illustrations of modern death equipment—illustrations "of the bleed type" he accurately says. (An illustration is "bled" when the cut comes right out to the edge of the page, with no margin.)

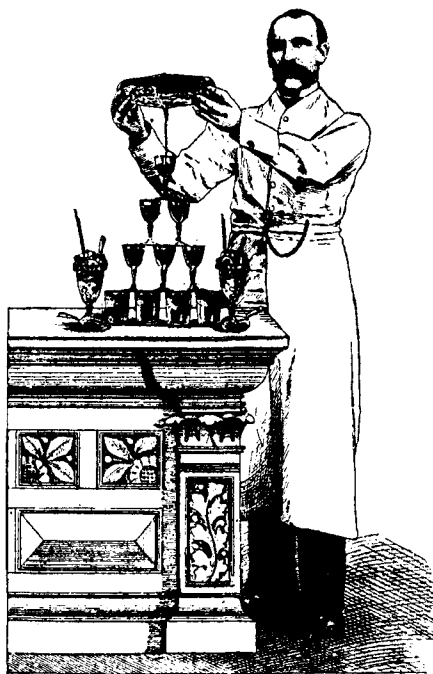
☐ Frances Fox took the pseudonym of Frances Renard for her novel, *Ridgeway*, after consultation with a numerologist. We should have thought it was a linguist. ☐ Speaking of linguists, the first misprint we ever saw in *The New Yorker* is in the French caption of a drawing in the March 31 issue: "Regardes, Pierre—un américain." We hardly know whether to suspect them of careless proofreading or bad French. ☐ Coward-McCann issue an amusing item on William C. Hanighen's biography, *Santa Anna: Napoleon of the West*—"Santa Anna may go down in history as the villain of the Alamo, but perhaps the most villainous thing he ever did to America was to introduce chewing gum into this country."

☐ The pulling power of this department is established by the fact that our recent complaint in re the unavailability of Dorothy Sayers's early books has borne fruit. Medium Quercus is obliged to Mr. Earle Walbridge, who noticed our recent jeremiad, and lent us a copy of *Whose Body?* It is every bit as good now as it was eleven years ago. ☐ It was amusing, though, to see that the early Peter Wimsey had some excess baggage of eccentricities which Miss Sayers has later dispensed with: an exaggerated dropping of g's, a touch of shell shock, and—hinted at—a hidden unrequited passion. As Wimsey has become more human, his stories get better and better. Cf. Philo Vance.

☐ Booknotes, the twelve-page booklet issued bi-monthly by the Britannica Book Shops, gets better and better. There seems to be a new theory distinguishing Booknotes from the usual bookstore leaflets: namely, that the descriptions of books should be honest, rather than uniformly favorable. After reading of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* that "it's excellent journalese, but . . . all a little silly"; and

of *Shake Hands with the Devil* that it's "deftly written, but not of unusual significance," one takes them seriously when they let go and shout about a book.

☐ Old Quercus, always very susceptible to Advertising, has often thought of ordering a bottle of Moët & Chandon but is never quite certain how to pronounce the two little dots. ☐ Spring is here, the new brand of Applejack (exclusively predicted in this department) is on the market, and on Shakespeare's Birthday there'll be a new Wodehouse book. ☐ One of our favorite pictures (we reproduce it) is *Harry Johnson Serving Drinks To A Party of Six*, in the good old *Bartender's Manual*,



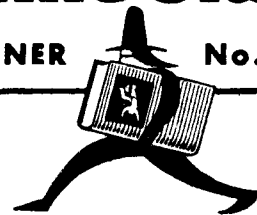
now republished in a new edition by Charles E. Graham, Newark, N. J. ☐ But, as the vintners say with exquisite simplicity, this advertisement is not intended to apply in States where liquor is unlawful. ☐ The interesting article in April *Fortune* on Books for Boys discusses the enormous industry of the Stratemeyer Syndicate which takes a hack at the juvenile market (20 hacks, indeed, and keeps them all busy). ☐ It also remarks on the fact that General Hugh S. Johnson of the NRA used to write juveniles. At Mr. O'Malley's Columbus Avenue bookstore we discovered General Johnson's *Williams of West Point* (Appleton 1908). ☐ Even then Hugh Johnson (Lieut., U. S. A.) was interested in Codes: his foreword says, "This book is intended to convey to boys some small idea of the old Code of the Cadet Corps." It's a well-written book but rather mysterious to those who don't know West Point personally.

☐ Edwin Valentine Mitchell of Hartford, Conn., makes alarming announcement of his new bimonthly magazine *The Literary World*: "All the background usually hidden from the reading public will be laid bare. Subscribers to *The Literary World* will know what the author of a certain best seller said to a certain critic; just how much it cost a certain publisher to keep a certain poet sober enough to finish his latest book." ☐ The Society of American Florists writes us, evidently in a most determined mood, "One of the major exhibits at A Century of Progress in Chicago for 1934 shall be the International Friendship Garden, which shall contain," etc. The italics are Quercus's. ☐ That excellent English magazine *Life and Letters*, now edited by Mr. Hamish Miles, has become a monthly (instead of a quarterly). It calls itself "the florin magazine," how many of our patrons know what is a florin? ☐ Bert Crockett, author of *The Old Waldorf-Astoria Bar Book* (Dodd, Mead) laments that cocktails nowadays are shaken instead of stirred as in the Pre-War. Shaking dissolves more ice and makes 'em weaker. ☐ Georgia Lingafelt, bookseller at 410 North Michigan Ave., Chicago, values a fine copy of Aldous Huxley's first little book (*The Burning Wheel*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1916) at \$45. ☐ The vigorous *Book Survey*, published quarterly by Cardinal Hayes's Literature Committee, says that "many of the evils from which we are at present suffering were produced by books, books which have weakened faith, corrupted taste, undermined morals and left most of the world floundering in despair."

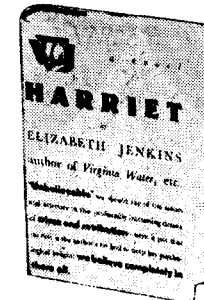
Crime Club

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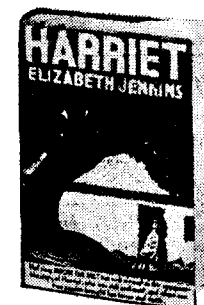


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