

# Trade Winds

By P. E. G. QUERCUS

OLD Q wishes to thank again the large number of friendly correspondents who sent in lists of their own private favorites as suggested Treasure Books for the lady in La Jolla. Letters are still coming in: the latest is from a reader in Shanghai. If the lady in La Jolla will kindly send us her address, which we have mislaid, we will forward these lists to her, too numerous to print. The publication committee of the Rowfant Club (3028 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, Ohio) announces *An Austin Dobson Letter Book*. Alban Dobson, son of the poet and critic, has selected from letters to his distinguished father passages interesting to bibliophiles and has added intimate comment. The price of this book will be below \$10; exact figure depending on subscriptions received. Ready in time for Christmas. The sprightly Lucius Beebe has written *Boston and the Boston Legend* (Appleton-Century, \$5) particularly to show the Sacred City as rather more genial than tradition allows. He says Boston has supplied "some of the most gorgeous rioting, most learned cursing, hardest drinking and most spectacular high-binding finance."

The learned bluestockings Carolyn Wells and Louella D. Everett sent their publishers (Little, Brown & Co.) to the dictionary when they wrote that their new anthology was for ailurophiles. It is a gay collection called *The Cat in Verse*; in their brief and agreeable note of explanation they restrain themselves from turning a Foreword into an Essay. They do not deal with The Cat in folklore, occultism or Deep Brooding. The cat's charms," they remark, "are only inscrutability and fur." Mark Harris, of Dingwall-Rock, publishers, says the

mystery omnibus *Murder by the Dozen* is his first effort as "a newcomer to the strange and terrible business of publishing books for the trade." His office is at 45 West 45 and he says that he shares with Old Q "the stately vista of the Harvard Club's famous smoke-stack." The bright eye of Donald Gordon compiling the American News Company's monthly book bulletin notes that the title of a new publisher's catalogue sounds unfortunate. It says simply: DODGE BOOKS.

Harry Patterson (in Grand Island, Nebraska) writes me that he still rereads John Bennett's *Master Skylark*; and that Conrad Aiken's *Blue Voyage* is "a whale of a good novel." I am still on intermittent vacation. I came back to town, saw in Brentano's window a book called *How To Have Fun With Your Clothes On*. I thought this vulgar and went back to the country. I shall not return home until that motor truck with loud-speakers on it and a crew of dewlapped salesmen quits trying to sell me pamphlets on Bible and Government by Judge Rutherford. Who is Judge Rutherford and why does he wear a Pecksniff collar?

Tell the Mermaids, if they positively can't find a bottle of Old Parr, *Cutty Sark* will do; the whisky named for a ship named for Burns's hobbtailed shift. One of the former customers listed on the Cutty Sark label was Lizzie Farren the actress. She came to London in 1777 and played Kate Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer*. I don't know how far she stooped: but she nearly conquered Charles James Fox; until he saw her play a "breeches part" and observed that her figure was not good. Horace Walpole thought her the best actress he had ever seen. Ask the Mermaids to go round to the N. Y. office of the *Manchester Guardian* (220 West 42) and get me half a dozen late issues of the M. G. Weekly, the newspaper that tells me the kind of news my foreshortened view of the world requires; from it, for instance, I learned lately the grievous fact that Britain has at last adopted Western Union's horrid notion of "Greetings Telegrams." The British Greeter pays thruppence extra, for which he gets "a special form bordered with red and gold, which includes doves with letters in their beaks and an octave of music representing a peal of bells."

I liked Professor Osgood's remark (in his fine textbook of literature *The Voice of England*, Harper's) that James Thomson was "great enough to be a poet's poet." If you find out what poetry the poets are reading, what cars the engineers are driving, what scissors the barbers are using, there's some chance of Going to Town. Who cares what kind of cigarettes Mrs. Frelinghuysen Fish sets her mattress on fire with—except the color printer? My favorite song is *I Took My Harp To a Party But Nobody Asked Her To Stay*. My favorite grace is Tom Fairbanks's, *Benedictine Benedecanter*. My next campfire will be on that hilltop near Walt Whitman's birthplace: the highest point on L. I.



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# The Compleat Collector

RARE BOOKS: CONDUCTED BY JOHN T. WINTERICH

*In alternate weeks this Department is devoted to Fine Printing  
and is conducted by Carl Purington Rollins*

## Terra Incognita

THE ways of the acquirer are strange. It was the fate of this segment of the Compleat Collector to pass a few days during the summer in the company of a no-more-than-ordinarily rabid stamp collector, and a whole new terminology, an entirely alien technique of conquest, swam into our ken. We became aware, for a moment or two, of the distinction between blocks, panes, and sheets—the designation sheet, it appears, is as much misused by the non-stamp-collector as the designation uncut is misused by the non-book-collector. Each passion, moreover, exhibits an explicable tendency to make one syllable do the work of many—the book-collector says bib for bibliography, the stamp-collector perf for perforation.

The dissimilarities are, naturally, even more striking. The stamp-collector inclines far toward paranoia in the detail of condition—his perfs must be fairly centered, every hole must be punched through, the original gum must be present. He carries tweezers with him, and falls into the habit of using them to pick up tiny objects generally.

The book-collector is often ridiculed for his slavish loyalty to the creed of the point. The awry ornament on page 84, the still unshattered comma on page 491 that make, if not all the difference in the world, at least so much difference as lies between seventy-five dollars and seven dollars and a half—these matters incite guffaws among the incognoscenti. But the stamp-collector must have not only an example of the unshattered comma, but examples of the shattering and of the ultimately shattered comma in all its stages, so that, at the last, if he could run his collection through a projection machine, one could actually see the business of deterioration in full process. How charming is divine philately.

Our friend showed us a specimen. "Here," he said, "is something that is definitely rare. Only an insignificant number of these were issued."

"Insignificant?" we inquired, envisioning a total issue of one hundred, or perhaps only fifty. "How many, actually?"

"Oh," he said, "probably around eight hundred thousand."

There, my masters, is a limited edition that is in very sooth a limited edition.

## Diagnosis

An apparently inconsistent complaint has repeatedly been voiced by the rare-book trade during the past five years. It has assumed the form of a two-part threnody for departed customers and departed books. Can there exist, and if so why should there exist, at one and the same moment, a shortage alike of buyers and of merchandise?

The phenomenon is not so contradictory as it seems. During the most desperate of economic crises the collecting urge is not

utterly silenced, nor are the means of gratifying it wholly dried up. Even from 1930 to 1935, be it remembered, more men and women continued to receive pay checks than were forced to forego them. The army of the employed was hardly so well equipped as it had been before, but it kept formation, and those among it who had contracted the collecting habit in happier days continued to respond to its appeal, albeit with reduced effect on bank clearings.

Such buying as there was, moreover, was of a saner, a more selective sort. The days when almost anything between covers could successfully masquerade as a collector's item slid over the horizon—and God willing, will stay slid. Collectors bought sparsely, but they bought shrewdly, and desirable books, particularly in fine condition, did not long remain on the bookseller's shelves even when the clouds of depression were lowest and blackest.

There must be taken into account, too, the fact that during the glamorous 1920's the country had been systematically explored for good books and even for fair books. This is not to say that no sequestered manse survives which may not shelter a noble run of New England Primers antedating any hitherto seen by man in this century, but be sure that it has already been marked out by some alert eye as a likely quarry. Scouting developed in-

to a systematized, even into an overcrowded profession, and the zeal for the uncovering of rarities became almost a door-to-door pursuit. The collecting passion was enormously publicized; Vincent Starrett contributed to the *Saturday Evening Post* an article headed "Have You a Tamerlane in Your Attic?" and a Worcester housewife looked there and found one—it is now the property of Owen D. Young.

Thus the merchandise moved in the heydays—from the cowhide trunk to soldier case, out of casual and unpremeditated hiding into purposeful and intelligent hoarding. And whither it went, there it rested. Such of it as was not absorbed in quantity before 1930 has been as adequately if not so abundantly absorbed since. At whatever pace, the rare-book traffic has moved along a one-way street. Eventually all the good books will have gone down it.

All this means, of course, that the source of supply in the future will be, mainly, collectors themselves. The speculative fringe will continue to go to market, buying or selling as the occasion seems to warrant. But the non-speculative collector will part with his treasures only with his eventual dissolution or when the dire compulsion of some harder time to end hard times forces his hand. What the effect of this situation will be on prices is an exciting question. The trend will inevitably be upward, whether immediately or not, but no prophet dare foretell what groups of books will be most affected, or what least, or to what extent. It is safe to say, however, that the next few seasons, in auction room and bookshop alike, will present a lively, informing, and entertaining panorama of the collecting universe.

## The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE HOUSE OF WRAITH Edward T. Millard (Houghton Mifflin: \$2.)	Cultured British black-mailer slain. Amateur 'tecs—one a suspect—and Insp. Rapp contest every clue.	Murder, robbery, ancient house, puzzling picture-diary, love interest—this has everything.	Top-notch
THE SCANDAL OF FATHER BROWN G. K. Chesterton (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Eight adventures of the umbrelliferous <i>padre</i> , all but two involving uncanny murders.	Featherweights, a few of them, but all in all as satisfying a collection as one could wish.	For adepts
MISS MYSTERY Sydney Horler (Little, Brown: \$2.)	Lovely lady secret agent and susceptible Yankee diplomat track wicked Russian plotter.	Some of Mr. Horler's Americanisms are a trifle askew but his thrills are 100 proof.	Bld.-and-Thun.
DEATH AT DAYTON'S FOLLY Virginia Rath (Crime Club: \$2.)	There was poison in the brandy and the lumber-king expired. Then Rocky, the depitty, and Mr. Pope got busy.	Snowbound Cal. mountain locale is attractive, family warfare interesting, and sleuthing holds up pretty well.	Adequate
MURDER IN TEXAS Ada E. Lingo (Houghton Mifflin: \$2.)	Newspaper owner shot as his oil-well gushes: town banker goes next. Girl reporter and private 'tec solve it.	Malodorous mazes of small-town scandal form pungent background for quick-moving, plausible yarn.	It'll do
THE PERJURED ALIBI W. S. Masterman (Dutton: \$2.)	Brewer-baronet slain on eve of wedding. Friend saves suspect and spots real killer.	Bit prosy at times, but enlivened by a very dirty villain and some creepy graveyard stuff.	Passable