

# 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*

## Boring from Within

**T**HEY are running a sale at the 4AG\* this week which contains as high a potential voltage of arson, mayhem, and hari-kari as heart might desire. The famous Browning-Browning correspondence given to the world between 1929 and 1935, a first Baron Munchausen (Oxford, 1786), Jenner's "Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae" (London, 1798), letters of Shelley and Kipling and Stevenson, a document whereon George Washington, with a splendid regard for the acquisitive itch of posterity, inscribed his name no fewer than twelve times—desiderata like these would lend distinction to any auction session.

Had this been the be-all of the business, the end-all had been well. But Lots 320 through 323 tell a different story. Here is Lot 320:

**POSTAGE STAMPS.** United States 1869 issue 1c-90c, complete; all stamps in fine condition except the 15c type I which is slightly off centre and has lost a corner perforation. 1893 Columbian issue 1c to \$5.00—the high values quite nice, the 8c, 30c, 50c and \$1.00 somewhat off centre. All the stamps are lightly cancelled. Catalogue value \$224.

The property of a Chicago lady. The descriptions of the above and the three following lots were written by Mr. Walter Scott.

A little more of that and phut goes the book business. The attempt to impart a literary aroma to the proceedings by having the descriptions written by Walter Scott will not befuddle the cognoscenti. Literary, forsooth, with his "centre" and "quite nice"! Is this Chipping Norton? Give the stamp people four entries today and tomorrow they will take the whole catalogue—as well sow moth eggs in your favorite ulster. By 1941, or 1942 at furthest, we shall be having this sort of thing:

**EXTRAORDINARY! FANTASTIC!! DEVASTATING!!!** Big stamp sale at the United States Envelope Association Galleries, Philadelphia, next Thursday! Austria Birthday set complete; Cayman Islands 1900-1907 1/2d-10sh, including rare surcharges; Leeward Islands 1902 issue; Newfoundland Cabot issue and Royal Family issue complete; Niger Coast, first three issues; Papua 1/2d-

\* American Art Association Anderson Galleries, Inc. Try that on your check-book.

## Guaranteed Original Folio Leaves of first issue King James Bible

**T**HE scarce "Great He" Bible, 1611—noblest monument of English prose. Printed in Black Letter, 16" x 11". Suitable for framing. \$2.50 each. RUMBALL-PETRE, Sole World Dealer exclusively handling Rare Bibles, 507 Fifth Ave., New York.

Ish; Rhodesia, 1901, 1909, 1910. SPECIAL ADDED ATTRACTION! After the main sale go slumming among the books! Shakespeare, First Folio, 1623, uncut; Milton, "Paradise Lost," 1667, first title-page, presentation copy from the author to King Charles II; Whitman, "Leaves of Grass," 1855, Abraham Lincoln's copy, with his signature on title and racy marginal comments throughout. BRING THE KIDDIES!

## Catalogues and Notes

The bulkiest catalogue of the year to date comes from the shop of James A. Williams, 122 South 18th Street, Philadelphia. It is devoted to Americana, is a half-inch thick, contains 252 pages plus extras, and lists 2086 lots from John Adams to John Peter Zenger. (There have been more copious offerings out of Philadelphia. Mr. Williams's No. 22—anybody's for \$4—is John Pennington's "Catalogue of Curious, Valuable and Useful Books," issuing from 10 South Fifth Street in 1849, with 5000 entries.) Included in the Williams catalogue are two unique

Franklin imprints and the most extensive collection of Pennsylvania-German material ever offered for sale—nearly 200 units. The Compleat Collector's curiosity is aroused by this stipulation: "All items (except genealogies) can be returned, if unsatisfactory for any reason, within three days of their receipt." Why this stricture? Are genetic arborealists mere egg-suckers? Mr. Williams is offered the freedom of this department if he cares to explain. Meanwhile the Bromwells, the Fites, the Mickleys, the Searights, and the Zartmans (\$3.50, \$8.50, \$3, \$3.50, and \$10) are going to be pretty mad.

"I think that I lost thousands of readers by calling my little autobiography 'The Story of a Bad Boy.' I know that it has been excluded from several Sunday school libraries simply on account of the title. To be sure it has attracted a great many persons; but I might have had both classes of readers. If I had the book to name over again, I should call it something else—'The Story of a Real Boy,' for example. The thing sells right along just the same." Thus Thomas Bailey Aldrich in 1893, in adequate disproof of the thesis that second thoughts are best. The letter embodying this self-criticism is listed in the catalogue of the library of the late Speaker Henry T. Rainey, recently scheduled for sale by Chicago Book & Art Auctions.

# The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
<b>DEAD RECKONING</b> Bruce Hamilton (Simon & Schuster: \$2.)	English dentist cleverly kills crippled wife for love of buxom divorcee and kills again for sake of safety, but. . .	Harrowing picture of calmly premeditated murder, its execution, the inevitable slip—all beautifully done.	Gr-riping
<b>THE RED BOX</b> Rex Stout (Farrar & Rinehart: \$2.)	Poisoned candy gets wrong victim in N. Y. dress shoppe, but two more die before Nero Wolfe and Stooze Goodwin mop up.	Plot plays variations on ancient device, and book shows a few signs of carelessness, but Wolfe is still unbeatable.	Don't miss it
<b>MURDER MAKES MURDER</b> H. Ashbrook (Coward-McCann: \$2.)	Bride-to-be and 2 others die on lonely Hallett island and Spike Tracy takes a week to solve slaughter.	Specters of tragic past tend to trip up actors of present; otherwise consistently dramatic yarn with literary overtones.	Commendable
<b>THE CASE OF THE DANGEROUS DOWAGER</b> Erle Stanley Gardner (Morrow: \$2.)	Gambling-ship proprietor slain. P. Mason, retained by cigar-smoking old lady, saves family honor and finessees killer into confession.	All customary ingredients of Mason yarns with some sextuple double-crossing and rapidly shifting plot that glues eyes to pages.	1 Notch above Top
<b>THE CLUE OF THE SILVER CELLAR</b> Miles Burton (Crime Club: \$2.)	Shred of fur on locomotive starts case that involves Insp. Arnold, Desmond Merrion, and vast amount of superior sleuthing.	If reader can stand suspense of cadaver that doesn't show up until next to last chapter this is regal fare.	Superb
<b>THE AFFAIR OF THE SCARLET CRAB</b> Clifford Knight (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Death dogs party of scientists on trip to Galapagos but observant amateur, via castaway and friendly crustacean, spots killer.	Shipboard scenes convincing, dramatic, and eventful; island stuff brilliantly colorful; solution completely surprising.	Excellent

# The New Books

## Biography

*A LONG WAY FROM HOME.* By Claude McKay. Furman. 1937. \$3.

The incidents in this book are selected from Claude McKay's experiences and impressions during the past twenty years. Though the author is primarily a poet and consistently has been unwilling to ally himself with a cause in any role unsuited to his own needs and talents, his is an unusually interesting mind which has developed through contact with many of the problems which concern and stimulate the world today. Unavoidably, discriminations of race occupy much of his thoughts. He responds with no more bitterness, certainly, than the situation warrants, and without enough to warp his own personality, but with a forthrightness and clear-sightedness which are admirable and which should be useful.

Except in the Russian interlude, where Mr. McKay's associates were in the main concerned with the social order and political intrigues, the people met with are most frequently those interested in writing, Frank Harris, Elinor Wylie, H. G. Wells, Sinclair Lewis, Paul Robeson, Carl Van Vechten, and Shaw, and others equally interesting if less well known. Vincent Sheean's "Personal History" is a book with which this can well be compared. In each the author writes with charm, taste, and candor about the matters which engross him, and his intellectual stature grows with the experiences encountered, while the reader follows with pleasure and benefit.

One realizes, from this and other recent books by Negroes, that the hardships and injustices which the race has suffered have failed to unify them. Different groups have different goals, and those who aim in the same direction have little patience with the methods of their confrères. Claude McKay himself seems to have had more intellectual companionship and friendly welcome from the emancipated members of the white race than from those blacks who approximate his cultural advantages.

P. S.

*ASPECTS OF WILDE.* By Vincent O'Sullivan. Holt. \$2.50.

Mr. O'Sullivan portrays Wilde neither as demon nor as saint. Personal acquaintance leads him to attack the notion that Wilde's later days, as "Sebastian Melmoth," were merely sordid or ignoble. For the real Wilde was a great personality, master of a wit all his own, and, pathology aside, "one of the clearest and most well-balanced minds of the time," as well as a man of loyalty, good-humor, charm, force. Wilde himself somberly declared, "I died in prison." But his personality survived Reading Gaol and lives on.

The sections of "Aspects of Wilde" are gossipy and discursive, being arranged like beads on a string, yet they produce a unity of impression. Though slight in substance, they remain entertaining even

when they approach the trivial. In a style not always faultless but usually energetic, Mr. O'Sullivan has interwoven pleasant stories about his friend, analysis of the man and his work, *obiter dicta* on other writers, and characterization of contemporaries. The book is true to the Wilde saga. Not afraid of adding to that saga, the author well comments, "Something imaginary arises from the contemplation of the real which is far more nutritious than the real itself."

This book gives the best existing portrait of the later Wilde.

C. K. H.

## Fiction

*CENTRAL STANDARD TIME.* By Harlan Hatcher. Farrar & Rinehart. 1937. \$2.50.

Mr. Hatcher has made a conscientious attempt to present a Middle-Western city through the interweaving lives of its inhabitants. The intransigent industrialist, the unemployed with too many children, the girl who thought she wanted experience, are familiar types presented without originality. This novel brings the reader not an experience of life, but rather a reminiscence of many other books which have used similar material. The strike which is the central event of the story is handled in terms of an earlier generation, and has more relation to Galsworthy's "Strife" than to current events. "Central Standard Time" gives the impression of being an essayist's novel.

G. S.

*RAINBOW FISH.* By Ralph Bates. Dutton. 1937. \$2.

No questions are asked, apparently, of men applying for work as sponge divers in the Greek archipelago. Upon this circumstance Mr. Bates has based the plot of his new novel. Half a dozen fugitives from justice of different nationalities and differing tastes in crime are isolated on a battered yacht in the Ægean, on their way to a new fishing ground. The yacht is sunk in a storm, but not before the author has told how and why these men have been reduced to the desperate situation in which the climax of the book finds them. Their case-histories are of varying length and interest, yet Mr. Bates has treated them all with the requisite insight and power. It is strong, often melodramatic stuff, but the characters are always something more than hardened criminals. Without sentimentality, the author reveals their human qualities, making of Skinner, the sea captain who has run his ship ashore for the insurance, of Freeth and Legge the murderers, and of Weisendonck, the Jewish swindler, really memorable creations.

His narrative methods are still unnecessarily willful at times—his prologue, indeed, seems designed expressly to mystify the reader with its complicated oblique dialogue. Nor does the body of the book, with its retracing of steps as each new character is introduced, move easily. It is only when all are gathered

at Skarpa before the final tragedy that the story gathers force and conviction. Some of the writing is of an extremely high order. "Rainbow Fish" may not be numbered with the author's major works, but it has its moments, and leaves Mr. Bates secure in his position as one of the white hopes of the present-day British novel.

T. P., Jr.

## Miscellaneous



*INVITATION TO TRAVEL.* By Helen Dean Fish. Washburn. 1937. \$2.50.

Miss Fish is obviously a seasoned traveler of the highways through England, France, and Italy which she here describes so enthusiastically, and her book is the perfect gift for a woman going abroad, or rather for any woman whose first trip is limited to thirty days, who enjoys ready-made itineraries, and whose funds and courage are both somewhat less than moderate.

The author is a thorough guide to the sights and views of her preference, and conscientious in suggesting, from personal experience, which side of train or boat to travel on, and which hotel to single out. She herself chose not to approach too close to the Paris bookstalls or the famous Flea Market, or to trifle with "night-life," though she admits others may find these attractive.


Among the most interesting chapters, for the audience she has elected, are those on "Your Own Discoveries" (which you can check with various good guide books) and "Travel Reading."

H. D.

 A BORZOI BOOK 

says  
**Christopher  
Morley**

"The effect of *Maurice Baring's* book **HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO DECLARE?** is that of walking 'round the library shelves, wine and cigars handy, with a host who has made reading a fine art for half a century. He has gone back through the memories and note-books of a lifetime of literary devotion; here he gives us, with quotation and shrewd gossip of the most jocund sort, a glimpse of his well-packed portman-teau."—*Book-of-the Month Club News.* \$2.75

 ALFRED A. KNOPF 