

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
PHOTOCRIMES Miles Horton & Thomas Pembroke (Hillman-Curl: \$1.65.)	Be your own detective: find clues hidden in photos reconstructing 26 crimes. The answers are in the back of the book to help out.	The idea is unbeatable; about half the cases are very well done; some are too English, others contain unfair false clues, even mistakes.	Don't miss it
THE CROOKED CIRCLE Gerald Verner (Macaulay: \$2.)	Miscreant members of law-fearing British swindle-circle gradually perish but portly Supt. Budd finally waddles into solution.	All sorts of action, love interest, trick killing devices, and what not, but general effect is cheap and disappointing.	Brum-magem
LAST TRUMP Lee Thayer (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Death predicted by ace of spades occurs on trans-Atlantic liner and Peter Clancy, incognito, takes 24 hours to get slayer.	Fake sweepstakes tickets, blackmail, a friendly chimpanzee, and a killer intent on rubbing out rivals, provide plenteous excitement.	Satisfactory
THE PONSON CASE Freeman Wills Crofts (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Inspector Tanner follows triple trail in violent death of British knight and reaches amazing conclusion. (First published 1927.)	For those unfamiliar with, or recently introduced to Crofts's meticulous methods—and for addicts with reasonably short memories.	Super-sleuthing
NINE DOCTORS AND A MADMAN Elizabeth Curtiss (Simon & Schuster: \$2.)	Violent death of doctor in New England mental hospital cleared up by plump Dr. N. Bunce in agreeably unethical fashion.	Spooky locale, engaging characters, illuminating psychiatric and pathological passages, somewhat <i>déjà vu</i> sleuthing, and a very illegal ending.	Good
SPY MEETS SPY Frederick Frost (Macrae-Smith: \$2.)	Anthony Hamilton, ace secret agent, again foils insidious Franco-Jap de Gaulchier thereby saving U. S., Asia, Africa, Polynesia, and points West.	Glittering tissue of impossibilities with hell popping all over Continental Europe, including some dazzling scenes in a Russian prison camp.	Thriller

Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

A RESOUNDING victory for the booksellers in their long fight against price-cutting was registered on March 9, when the New York Court of Appeals upheld the Fair Trade Practice (Feld-Crawford) Act, previously declared unconstitutional. The court reversed its earlier ruling on the basis of a recent U. S. Supreme Court decision which sustained similar legislation in California and Illinois.

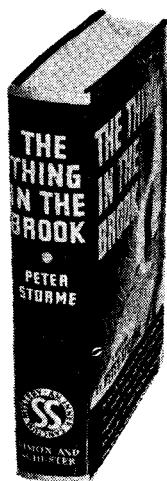
☞ This is the third time in three years that the booksellers have won price-maintenance. The first two times (NRA, and first decision on the Feld-Crawford Act) court rulings snatched away the victory. This time it seems to be final, and the SRL congratulates the trade on a long and successful fight. ☞ The Feld-Crawford Act makes it possible for price-maintenance contracts on books to be entered into between publishers and booksellers; and once such a contract has been signed, it renders price-cutting actionable, even price-cutting on the part of a retailer who has not signed a contract.

☞ Numerous technical and legal questions must be ironed out before any new contracts are signed. Meanwhile the American Booksellers' Association is preparing a standard form of contract for submission to the trade, and the National Association of Book Publishers has called a meeting for March 18 to discuss the necessary legal points. The Macmillan Co., which already has price-maintenance contracts on "Gone with the Wind" in California and Illinois, is offering contracts on this book in New York. In a quick, incomplete survey just before going to press, we learn that Doubleday Doran, Farrar & Rinehart, Reynal & Hitchcock, and W. W. Norton & Co. have definitely stated their intention to offer Feld-Crawford contracts; other publishers will do so after the Thursday meeting.

☞ On March 11 R. H. Macy & Co., principal price-cutters on books in New York, ran an ad headed "The Consumer Will Now Decide," and stating that "This law opens the door to price-fixing by manufacturers—and price-fixing means price-raising." ☞ The SRL does not believe that the Feld-Crawford Act will result in higher list prices on books. The intention of the publishers and booksellers signing contracts is to prevent books from being used as "loss leaders." The independent bookseller has been squeezed hard by the loss leader competition. The SRL believes that the independent bookseller is a valuable social asset, and we regard the Fair Trade Act as a signal advantage not only to the trade, but to readers and book-lovers everywhere.

☞ Coincidence, goddess of goof, was hard on Poor Old Quercus's trail last week. About two hours after he had been hunting a copy of the SRL in the Fred Harvey bookstore, Union Station, Cleveland, the first consignment of 25 copies arrived there for sale. ☞ Mr. Clip Boutell, energetic promotioneer of our own Bookstore Department, had just signed up Cleveland (and three other Fred Harvey branches, viz. Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis) for 25 copies each, weekly.

All he had was—



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Boswell Detrunked

A CATALOGUE OF PAPERS RELATING TO BOSWELL, JOHNSON AND SIR WILLIAM FORBES FOUND AT FETTERCAIRN HOUSE. By Claude Collier Abbott. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1936. 500 copies. \$7.

IF Tom Sawyer on attaining maturity developed an itch for scholarly investigation (and his early career certainly adumbrated such a tendency), the same incredible good fortune must have overtaken him that befell Professor Abbott. In search of material relating to James Beattie, Professor Abbott was carried by logical stages to the door (and ultimately to the attic) of Fettercairn House. Here, after several weeks of poking about in hidden corners, he unearthed at the last such a trove of documents as collectors dream about, the bulk of it concerned with a greater James than Beattie.

At the end of an all too short introduction which is a buried treasure story gone Ph.D., Professor Abbott summarizes the details of his find. There were hundreds of letters to Boswell, many having to do with the "Life," and most of them accompanied by drafts of Boswell's replies; several Boswell journals and registers of letters; letters of Burke, Mrs. Thrale, Edward Dilly, Wilkes, and others of the Johnson circle, and 119 letters of Johnson to various correspondents.

Professor Abbott has sorted his material into more than 1600 lots, in most instances summarizing the contents of a document in one or two sentences, and occasionally at greater length. The effect makes for a higher degree of readability than one might suppose; thus, the skeletonizing of Johnson's twenty letters to Dr. Richard Brocklesby, who attended him in his final illness, provides a pathetic and absorbing sequence. Of this important group of twenty, one is used entire in the "Life," sixteen are printed there in part, and three are unpublished.

The Fettercairn papers are obviously a Boswellian discovery that has been exceeded in importance only by the contents of the ebony cabinet of Malahide Castle. "Is it too much to hope," asks Professor Abbott, "that the ghost of Boswell begins to be content?"

Happy days are inferentially here again. Scribners have just issued a cloth-bound quarto catalogue listing fifty lots whose aggregate price is \$63,640. It seems a modest anticlimax to add that every lot is accompanied by an illustration. The blue-ribbon item is the original manuscript, in full orchestral score, of Mozart's Haffner Symphony, offered at \$20,000 (including, presumably, two aisle seats). For \$12,500 is available a copy of Browning's "Pauline" (London, 1833) in superb state, and a presentation copy to boot. The recipient was Comte Amédée de Ripert Monclar, to whom, two years later, Browning dedicated "Paracelsus." When

Yale acquired its copy of "Pauline" some years since, Professor William Lyon Phelps organized a parade with band and transported the book through the streets of New Haven on a silk cushion flanked by a guard of honor. On this basis the Scribner copy should rate an elephant with howdah and six squadrons of cavalry.

Eight years ago Edward S. Harkness gave the Library of Congress two remarkable collections of manuscripts concerning Peru during the critical period of 1531-1651. In 1932 a calendar of these

documents was prepared by Stella R. Clemence under the direction of J. F. Jameson, Chief of the Division of Manuscripts, and issued from the Government Printing Office. Now, under the same auspices, appears a second volume in the Harkness series, comprising a full text (transcription and translation) of documents relating directly to the brothers Pizarro and the Almagros, father and son. The chronicle thus unfolded in all its legalistic ponderosity and diffuse Castilian formality presents an odd parallel to the Spain of today. In general the paperwork of the period stood a better chance of immediate survival than did the men whom it concerned. Of four Pizarros (father and three sons) and a half-brother, three were executed or assassinated and one died in battle; of two Almagros both were executed. The sole survivor of this gory septet, Hernando Pizarro, perversely lived to be a hundred.

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