

the Phoenix Nest

THE PARSON POET

AH, would it had been my lot to know
The remarkable vicar of Morwenstowe,
Where from Eagle Crag to the rocks below
Clung coombe and village of Morwenstowe,
Where a Celtic dialect once was spoke
And the gods are good to the Cornish folk—
Would God it had been my lot to know
The antiquary of Morwenstowe!

He lived in a coign of the coombe, of course,
'Twixt winy heather and guinea-gold gorse.
He led nine cats for to hear him preach
'Mid cobbles and nets on the pebbly beach.
In a long-tailed coat of the claret hue
And a fisherman's jersey rough and blue,
He'd a small red cross patched over the place
Where Our Lord was pierced for the human race,
And of love and of pain it was woven full—
But the vicar's socks were of black sheep's wool!
On his pate sate a brimless beaver hat
As pink as the face that was under that,
And though scorning the shears of the London tailors
He'd gold to bury all shipwrecked sailors;
And he perched as naked as any nail
With a seaweed wig and an oilskin tail
On rocks, for a jest, to attest the permanency there of a real live merman!

Also we know he gave his benison
To tall black-elflocked Alfred Tennyson,
Parleying with him in proper pride
On all the myths of the countryside,
Of smugglers' revels gone corybantic
And midnight wrecks in the wild Atlantic,
Orating the same in cavernous nooks,
And piling his arms with Arthurian books—
The parson whose throat-thundering cry
Is still, "And shall Trelawny die!"
The sturdy walker, fabulous talker,
The poet whose name is Stephen Hawker,
Who junkets still, a beloved ghost,

On the howling heath of the Cornish coast;
Whose mind and spirit were ever agile
To view archangels or build Tintagel;
The Magdalen man who, with zeal of the Gael,
Retold the tale of the strange Sangreal;
Bright reliquary of doughty fable
And wizards and knights around Arthur's table . . .

Woe worth my life, that I never could know
The wonderful vicar of Morwenstowe!

W. R. B.

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To: The Phoenix Nest.

FROM: (Mrs.) Mary Ellen Lewis, Librarian,
State Teachers College,
Kutztown, Pa.

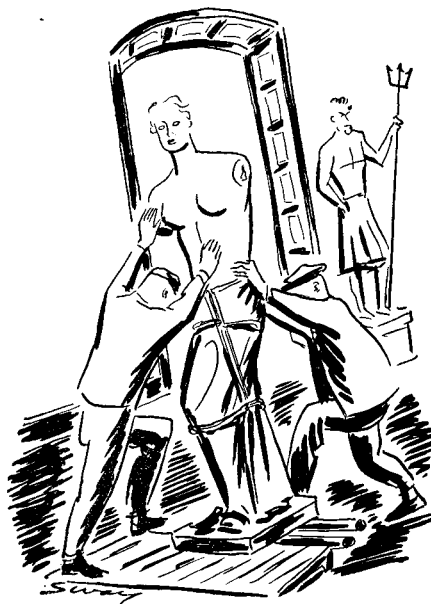
DATE: August 18, 1948.

SUBJECT: The MISplacement of autographs in books.

Why do authors invariably autograph their books on the inconsequential flyleaf?

Autographed books are things of beauty and joys forever to their owners, and are used frequently in book talks and book exhibits. It bespeaks much more if the interest of the title page is enhanced by the personal signature of the author rather than having the autograph placed on the otherwise cold, blank, flyleaf where writers of books will place it every time if left to their own.

Could you call the attention of authors to this annoying habit of theirs—or am I the only one it annoys?



Today, in the midst of political campaigns, let us remember a great American. The following poem comes from that stronghold of Republicanism, the State of Maine:

F. D. R.

Sundial, flowers where the Hudson
flowing flows
out of today to reach tomorrow's ocean
which spreads the greatness of the sun by its
reflection of true planetary warmth
know but the mortal dust, the man lives on
through triumph over death to shape his dream
from clay of humankind that we should mold
our way of life; American, but not America's alone, for through the clear, concerted vision of his heart and soul high councils, universal, shaped his mind
where world democracy shines as the sun
shines on the dial where far shadows lengthen
to rays of peace his being helps to strengthen.

LOTON ROGERS PITTS.

* * *

OFFICE FABLES

A secretary long ago
(Doubtless in the Land of Oz)
Said, "He's in conference."
And oh,
Whaddye know?
The so-and-so

Was.

ETHEL JACOBSON.

* * *

I thank Edward L. McKenna, of the University of Pennsylvania, for the following:

You write affectionately and accurately about Henry Cuyler Bunner. He had a fine and delicate talent. He was not Saki, perhaps, but he was quite close to Francois Coppée—maybe better than Coppée, although Coppée was fine, when he was not too saccharine.

Mr. Bunner was a friend of my father. My father worked as a book-keeper for Richard V. Harnett, and used to contribute to *Puck* and the other light magazines of the day. Mr. Bunner was editor of *Puck* (this was about 1890 or so). He had lived in France, as no doubt you know. He wore a Van Dyke, and he carried a stick. Mr. Harnett was the auctioneer for Tammany Hall. Mr. Bunner came over to see my father. Harnett went back, and said, "Hey, Bill, there is some dude out there looking for you. Name is Bunner." "My God!" my father said. "That is the editor of *Puck*!" *Puck* was a Democratic paper; *Judge* was a Republican paper. Mr. Harnett said, "He is? Go on, get your coat, Bill; stay out with him all afternoon, don't come back today!" My father's

particular friends were Charles Gibson (not Charles Dana Gibson!), Harry Leon Wilson, Rose O'Neill, and Booth Tarkington. We had many of Miss O'Neill's pictures, and two by Glackens.

Years ago, Miss Willa Roberts, of *Woman's Home Companion*, bought a story from me. She said, "You may not like the comparison, but this might almost have been written by Henry Cuyler Bunner." I wrote back, "No, Miss Roberts, but I thank you sincerely, just the same." Mr. Bunner died in 1896, when I was three, but he was in my father's house many times—Henry George was a friend of my father, too, and the great James L. Ford ("The Literary Shop," and "Forty-odd Years in the Literary Shop"). My father left nothing but fugitive material, and neither shall I. Mr. Ford used to say, "Two rhymes to the quatrain, that's enough; don't spoil the market!" Thomas Augustine Daly here in Philadelphia is a good friend of mine, and a good poet, too. He has a passionate, bilious hatred for Walt Whitman. My pet hate is Emerson. I said, "He was the Doctor Frank Crane of his day," and I wasn't far off the target either.

It is nice to have a literary magazine that makes some sense, Mr. Benét. I have a friend, a newsdealer at Fifteenth and Market, who always saves it for me. Of course, he does a lot more business with *Racing Form*!

By the way, I don't teach English—don't think that badly of the University. I teach insurance at the Wharton School—all kinds of insurance: life insurance, property insurance, marine insurance, casualty insurance, sure, sure, sure! Oh, by the way. The best writer of light stories, like Bunner—Henri Duvernois. For tough stories, Pierre Mille. For tough novels, Claude Farrère ("Les Civilisés"). I thought one time I might translate that, but you could no more translate it than that volume five of Brantôme.

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TRAVELOGUE

They say that travel broadens one,
And now, whichever way one looks
At me, I'm broad. I got that way
Sitting reading travel books!

F. B. TOULMIN.

* * *

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S
DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 753))

GERALD BULLETT:
GEORGE ELIOT
[HER LIFE AND BOOKS]

*My soul never flourishes on attention to details that others can manage quite gracefully without any conscious loss of power for wider thoughts and cares. Before we began to move I was swimming in Comte . . . ; now I am sitting in puddles.

*From a letter written to Charles Lewes, son of George Lewes, and his first wife, on his twenty-first birthday.

The New Recordings

| COMPOSITION, PERFORMER ALBUM NUMBER, NUMBER OF RECORDS | ENGINEERING | | PERFORMANCE AND CONTENT |
|--|---|---------|--|
| | Recording Technique | Surface | |
| GLAZOUNOFF, FROM THE MIDDLE AGES. (1903). Indianapolis Symphony, Sevitky. RCA Victor DM 1222 (3) | A fine recording, alive, expansive. Good tonal range and sharpness of detail, warm liveness. | A+ | A lush-colored late-Romantic work; opens part Brahms, part Tchaikovsky, goes on to a touch of Rimsky and Moussorgsky. Not overheavy. |
| DVORAK, HUSITSKA OV. SMETANA, THE MOLDAU. Boston Pops Orch., Fiedler. RCA Victor DM 1210 (3) | Husitska seems better than Moldau—diff. in musical texture? Both are excellent, good tonal range, could be wider. | A+ | Husitska is big, tragic overture, not unlike the "Tragic" of Brahms but more impetuous, dramatic. It's a good piece of its kind. |
| DVORAK, SLAVONIC DANCES (arr. Szell). Cleveland Orchestra, Szell. Columbia MM 756 (3) | Terrific ultra-wide-range cymbals almost every beat—a stunning job, quite literally! | A | Ecstatic playing of rather too noisy but still musical arrangements by Szell. Five of them. |

THE LP PICKUP — WHAT WILL THE PUBLIC TAKE?

THE Columbia LP (long playing) record is officially complemented by the Columbia-Philco LP record player, and many of us have assumed that, as a team, the record and its pickup would reflect similar characteristics. Unfortunately this is not the fact. The LP record at its best has a wide tonal range that extends easily to 10,000 cycles, with extremely low distortion and very low surface noise—those being the chief difficulties with wide-range recording. The LP player, on the other hand, is designed, I understand, to cut off all higher tones above about 6,000 cycles, not because of engineering or economic difficulties but evidently as a matter of policy; because Philco apparently believes that 6,000 cycles is all the public will take.

This is important for us consumers because it represents two familiar attitudes in this and other industries. Reflections of the same viewpoints are appearing elsewhere in the blossoming microgroove field—a number of manufacturers are to offer LP players with pickups that cut off at the abysmally low figure of 4,000 cycles (and these in the plush department too). On the other hand, the well-known Astatic company has a reasonably priced LP pickup and arm which will give good reproduction of the full LP tonal range, the best the records have to offer. A Pickering LP cartridge is available (interchangeable with the standard Pickering) with extremely high performance standards, and no

doubt other high-quality units will follow, not necessarily at great cost either.

The argument as to what we the public will "take" is hardly new. What is new is that in the microgroove field, for once there are no complications; a pickup with limited range is so limited purely and simply because of policy decision, not because of inherent physical limitation. Price has little to do with it.

Why, one may ask, does Columbia bother to make high-quality records, if Columbia's own player cannot reproduce that quality? Why should anyone bother with high-quality components—when, admittedly, the phonograph chain is as strong as its weakest link, and most existing equipment in the public's hands is full of weak links?

Because, first, it is human nature, even in big business, to put out the best product possible. And second (hard-headedly) because the mousetrap proverb may be calculated to work in the long run. The arbitrary limitation of tonal range in these new pickups, the introduction of a deliberately weakened link, impedes progress because it makes progress impossible. Fortunately there will be much good LP equipment soon on the market and let's hope that Columbia lives up to its own promise and provides a cartridge for the Columbia player that can equal the records. With two good links out of a possible four—the battle is almost won!

EDWARD TATNALL CANBY.