

## NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

*A WHITMAN LETTER*

A FEW months ago the Reverend John H. S. Putnam of the Class of 1913 presented to the Rutgers Library a manuscript letter written by Walt Whitman in Washington, D.C., to Peter Eckler of New York. It is of interest for the light it throws upon the printing of the poet's Civil War volume, *Drum-Taps*. The letter follows:

Washington  
May 2 1865.

Mr. Eckler:

Dear Sir:

I enclose \$20 in further liquidation. I wish you would send me a copy of each of the printed sheets, by mail—as I suppose Alvord has printed them.

Before I left New York I paid Bradstreet \$20 in advance for binding the first 100.

I rec'd the copy right & receipt. I thank you for your kindness in getting the copy right.

Walt Whitman

Although the communication does not mention *Drum-Taps*, it undoubtedly refers to that small book, which came out in the early summer of 1865 and was Whitman's sole publication of that immediate period. One gathers that Eckler, himself a printer and, as Whitman had recently been, a resident of Brooklyn, assumed responsibility for getting the book printed (at Whitman's expense) and entrusted the work to Coridon A. Alvord, a well known printer of the time, whose

shop was at 15 Vandewater Street, New York. What the total cost of printing *Drum-Taps* was we do not know, because we have no information concerning the previous payments indicated in the letter by the phrase "in further liquidation," but we do know that on the next day Whitman wrote again to Eckler enclosing \$14.85 as "payment in full." (See *Journal of the Rutgers University Library*, December, 1938, p. 6, note.)

The Bradstreet who received \$20 for binding the first hundred copies must have been the proprietor of the Bradstreet agency, which for years ran a bindery at 247 Broadway. But it would seem that he did not bind all the copies of the book, for in the letter of May 3rd, already mentioned, Whitman instructed Eckler to deliver some unspecified sheets to Abraham Simpson at 8 Spruce Street, New York, who was likewise a printer and who presumably bound further copies of the volume.

Just why four printing and binding concerns were required in the publishing of a book of only seventy-two pages would not be easy to explain, but that such was the case seems to be established by the evidence of the recently acquired letter.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Miss Dorothy C. Barck and Mr. Oscar Wegelin, both of the New-York Historical Society staff, for information concerning the printers and binders herein discussed.

### THE SPIRIT OF THE FAIR

SHORTLY after the outbreak of the Civil War, in order to give form and direction to the efforts of the millions of women and other non-combatants who were working to furnish the Northern armies with medical supplies, the United States Sanitary Commission was organized. One of the means which the Commission employed to raise funds was to hold "Sanitary Fairs," as they were called, in the large cities. One of the greatest of these undertakings was the Metropolitan Fair, held in New York from April 4 to 23, 1864. In addition to the money made from the various exhibits, the committee in charge raised over \$2,000 by the sale of a daily literary periodical entitled *The Spirit of the Fair*, which sold for ten cents a copy. Two complete files of this magazine are in the Library.

*The Spirit of the Fair* is noteworthy for its truly literary quality, and for the fact that every contribution was "original." People of that time evidently could not believe their eyes when they found themselves paying so little for articles by the most notable men and women of letters of the day, for in the fifth number we find a special discussion of "Our Contributors." There the editors proclaim, "we beg distinctly to state that no matter whatever is admitted into our columns, that has ever been published before." They go on to say that all the contributions are donated as a charity, although the authors are accustomed to receiving large

sums for everything they write. Then follows a list of some twenty-five names, including Bryant, Boker, Lowell, Taylor, and Halleck. Bryant had sent "A Morceau from Metastasio" to the first number and was to donate an interesting article on "The Devotional Poetry of Dr. Watts" to the ninth. When the last number went to press the editors could truly claim, "There are few of those eminent in literature in America who have not hastened to offer through us the fruit of their culture to the cause of charity."

A few names, however, were missing, among which the most prominent were probably those of Emerson and Longfellow. Why they did not contribute to such a popular charity is hard to guess three quarters of a century later. It is interesting, however, to find that on April 9, 1864, when the Fair was just half over, the newly established New York *Round Table*, "A Weekly Record of the Notable, the Useful and the Tasteful," did publish poems over the initials of these men, and two other well-known poets, introduced by the following note:

The editors of the *Spirit of the Fair* having more copy on hand than they know what to do with, we are enabled to present a specimen of it this week in the shape of four poems, the paternity of which will be at once apparent to poetical readers. These poems are not to be understood as having been rejected by the editors of the *Spirit of the Fair*, but as being

superfluous for their purpose, and *embarras du* [sic] *richesse* by which the ROUND TABLE profits.

Then follow the four poems, each signed by the initials which are still "at once apparent to poetical readers": "The Enigma" by R. W. E[mer-son]., "Supper" by T. B. A[ldrich]., "The Legend of the Abbot of Wittibold" by H. W. L[ongfellow]., and eight lines without a title by R. H. S[toddard]. In order that the reader may examine some of this verse for himself, the poems by "R.W.E." and "H.W.L." are here appended:

*The Enigma*

Who is nature's worshiper,  
Favor never gets from her.  
Say, he seek her in the wood,  
(One to her are Ill and Good!)  
By her shade he is pursued:  
She dogs, yet flies, the solitude.  
Turn he to the face of Man,  
White as a lily, or brown with tan,  
(Caucasian or African,)  
Let him catch her—if he can!  
He may track her trail in the  
evening's fire,  
But her stealthy steps like  
brands expire.  
Under the sea, and aloft in the  
air,—  
Here and there, and everywhere,—  
The goddess hides, and aye abides:  
Farther would you know, and  
see—  
I am Her, and She is Me!

R.W.E.

*The Legend of the Abbot Wittibold*  
In his cloister's still seclusion,  
Sat the Abbot Wittibold  
Poring o'er a quaint old volume,  
With a heavy clasp of gold.

While he turned its pictured pages,  
He was suddenly aware  
Of a Shadow standing by him,  
With unearthly scowl and glare!

"*Qui est tu?*" the Abbot questioned,  
As he told his beads again;  
"*Me Sathanas, ad Infernum!*"  
Was the Spirit's sad refrain.

"*Ave Maria!*" sighed the Abbot,  
Passed the demon dark and grim;  
For the sacred organ sounded,  
And arose the vesper hymn.

Mortal, when thy life is darkened,  
In the cloisters of the heart,  
Say an *Ave*, like the Abbot,  
And the tempter will depart!

H. W. L.

Two scholars who have examined these poems have suggested that they are not genuine, that somebody was indulging in some sort of hoax. Perhaps the *Round Table* was playing a joke on the literary pretensions of the *Spirit of the Fair*, perhaps on poets who did not contribute to this little magazine. We should be glad to have somebody explain the puzzle.

RUDOLF KIRK

### FOR BIBLIOPHILES

*Bookmaking & Kindred Amenities*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Earl Schenck Miers & Richard Ellis. Rutgers Press.

Bliss Carman wrote an amusing essay some years ago which began: "Book-loving is a malady like any other kind of loving. And like all maladies it is apt to range with intermittent fury over a continent." The "fury" of this pleasant malady seems to have been at its height during the composition of the fine essays here presented for bibliophiles of every taste, if one is to judge from the enthusiasm of the eleven authors whose work is brought together within the covers of a truly beautiful book.

Richard Ellis gives a pleasant panorama of "The Book in History." Beatrice Warde, English typophile, writes on what books mean to Englishmen in these days ("A Voice from Embattled Britain"). Carl Purington Rollins, printer to Yale University, discusses the relationship of printer to customer as it affects the ideals of the craft ("Gilding the Lily"). The human frailties of authors are discussed amusingly by two commercial publishers, Bennett A. Cerf, president of Random House and creator of the Modern Library ("Publisher Bites Author"), and George Stevens, managing editor and vice-president of J. B. Lippincott Co. ("Author's Nursemaid"). And in "Academic Midwifery" Earl Schenck Miers, manager and editor of the

Rutgers University Press, indulges with friendly raillery in what he calls the "reflections of a rake among scholars."

"The Revolution in Reading," by Philip Van Doren Stern, Rutgers graduate and author of a recent best-seller, "The Drums of Morning" (published incidentally after he had written this essay) tells why the best-seller has come to stay. The contagious enthusiasm of Arthur W. Rushmore exudes like printers' ink from his reminiscences of his private press, hight romantically "The Golden Hind" ("The Fun and Fury of a Private Press"). A realistic account of daily book reviewing is given by Lewis Gannett of the New York *Herald Tribune*, who dubs himself "A Versatile Hack."

The volume is topped off with two essays by lovers of rare books. One is by Lawrence Gomme of Brentano's, who writes of certain problems and pleasures of the book-seller; the other, by Lawrance Thompson, curator of the Treasure Room of the Princeton University Library, who ranges from the clay tablets of the Assyrians to book-broadcasting and the microfilm.

Here indeed is God's plenty for typophile, bibliophile, and just the ordinary reader who has some interest in the art of bookmaking.

It should not pass without notice that the editors have paid their tribute to Frederic W. Goudy, the greatest living type designer, by using his graceful "Deepdene" type.

LESLIE A. MARCHAND