

## GIFTS AND ACQUISITIONS

WHEN THE LAST ISSUE of the Journal was being prepared, the Library had just completed its move from the old to the new building. Since that time, besides carrying on the normal run of business, the Special Collections Department has been flexing its elbows and adjusting to its larger spaces.

Many additions to the manuscript collection have been recorded since the move, of which a few can be noted: "Corporation for the Relief of Poor Children in the City of New Brunswick," minutes, 1809-1946; original New Jersey population schedules, U.S. 1880 census (22 vols.); Piscataway Township minutes and other records, 1682-1942 (12 vols.); William Burroughs' ledger of the sloop *Charming Betty*, tavern accounts, etc., Salem County, N.J., 1725-55; Jacob J. Janeway records concerning trusteeship of New York properties, 1840-57 (1 box); Elmer T. Hutchinson bibliography and notes concerning Shepard Kollock, early New Jersey printer (2 boxes); Samuel B. How papers, c. 1810-1920 (6 boxes); Gerald Kersch, *The Weak and the Strong*, original manuscript (two chapters), c. 1940-44; Yznaga del Valle & Co. (New York), records of a sugar brokerage, a Cuban railroad, a Louisiana plantation, etc., 1850-80 (30 vols.).

From Mrs. Joseph S. Frelinghuysen have been received nine additional boxes of her late husband's papers, 1916-43, including some hundreds of political and other speeches, many delivered in the U.S. Senate; letters from Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and other American political leaders. Donors of other manuscripts are: Mrs. John C. Conger; Andrew Cerutti; Mrs. Joseph H. Edgar; Norman C. Wittwer; Mrs. Elmer T. Hutchinson; Willard R. Van Nostrand; Miss Helen M. Wright; Mrs. Asher Atkinson; G. Clifford Nevius; Dr. Leigh W. Kimball; Elmer T. Smith; Mrs. Martin Mueller; H. Kels Swan; I. Heyward Peck; Mrs. Alice H. Kennedy; Edward H. Quick; Professor C. Rexford Davis; and Mrs. Gerald Kersch, through I. Robert Kriendler '36.

## THE MONEY-MAKER

Among the books acquired recently, one small item has particularly interested the writer and drawn him into a bit of research

concerning it. The book may be unique—at least, we have located no other copy, or reference to one, thus far.

A small quarto volume of forty pages, it bears the caption-title, *The Life & Adventures of M'D. Campbell; The Money-maker*. The book is printed on a somewhat coarse woven paper, inferior for its day, grayish in color, toned by numerous blue fibres. For lack of the title-leaf, the publication date is not known. Nevertheless, internal evidence places it certainly after 1804; and there are fainter clues which seem to suggest a time before 1818.

McDonald Campbell, the narrator, subject, and hero of this little book, has given us a curious account of himself and, incidentally, some interesting vignettes of late eighteenth-century morality (or lack of morality). The book was written, he modestly explains, "at the particular request of a number of my friends. The money-making has been a subject of unceasing conversation for a number of years, and some say I have been as much celebrated for that act as Sancho Panza was for the discovery of the Island of Barataria." Of equal inspiration seems to have been the hope of monetary gain: "I have thought proper to have a large number of them stricken off, in order that my friends may be fully supplied."

Whatever the purpose, he has accomplished it by painting himself in unflattering colors. The likeness, moreover, he clearly relished. Perhaps with some romantic literary prototype in mind, Campbell quite fancied himself in the role of a dashing rogue. If the book finally shows him as more rogue than dashing, one suspects that it is close to the fact.

Of particular joy to the writer were the memories of himself as a counterfeiter, but he gives us some details about other heroic events of his life. As a young man of twenty-odd, he enlisted in the army soon after the Revolution began. He served first as a messenger, being with the American forces in Canada and at Albany. Although involved in some military action, he evidently was ill much of the time, suffering from smallpox, "camp fever," and the rigors of campaigning generally. "Owing, I suppose, to my having been tenderly brought up, I felt those hardships the more severely."

On returning to the home of his parents near Bonhamtown, New Jersey, he lay for some time recovering from his ills. The British were then in possession of the area and plagued the inhabitants with foraging and looting. They were harassed in turn by nearby Amer-

ican forces, and Campbell served the latter as a guide. In the spring of 1777, he joined a company of rangers which one of the more indignant local citizens had raised (without authorization), and participated with it in an attack, which the book describes in some detail, on the British regiment occupying Bonhamtown.

A subsequent enlistment was ended unexpectedly by personal difficulties of a delicate nature. "The year before I had formed an acquaintance with a young woman in Somerset county . . . with whom I had been too intimate. Her father sending for me to come and see him, I left the army . . . and was married to the aforesaid girl in March 1779."

Soon bored with domestic life, Campbell went back to the army for a time, this time as an express rider. Home again, he made several trips as a spy to British-occupied Staten Island. Some of his American neighbors shortly accused Campbell of Tory sympathies and trading with the enemy. Meanwhile, the British too had become suspicious of his activities, so the intrigue ended suddenly.

After the war, he encountered financial difficulties, moved to Sussex County, lost his wife, remarried, and finally managed a comfortable living at his trade of shoemaking. "But, alas! how easy is innocence betrayed!" One day his brother-in-law and a man named Swan appeared at the house. "They told me, that as to honesty, it kept a man always poor, and that I had been poor too long already." Campbell was willing to be shown the path to riches and not at all disturbed to learn that his visitors proposed to sell him counterfeit dollars of their own making. He was later to learn that they were also swindlers.

A classic picture of the country rube about to be "taken," he proceeded to New York carrying, for the purchase of counterfeits, not only money of his own but a similar amount, as well, obtained from two neighbors who wished to become rich too. In the big city he was approached by a stranger, purportedly an agent of Swan, and trustingly delivered the money to him. Swan appeared afterward, professed great astonishment, and theatrically informed Campbell that the recipient of his money was an impostor and thief, already embarked for the West Indies with his stolen gain.

Campbell, drawing on a well-developed instinct of his own for knavery, sensed that he had been the victim of a gang which included

Swan. He then proceeded to arrange some counter-trickery. Returning to New York soon after, he this time deliberately acted the part of a rustic innocent, and allowed himself to be enticed into a card game by members of the same gang. After they had permitted him to win for a time, intending later to substitute a "fixed" deck, Campbell succeeded in escaping with his winnings before the switch could be made. Moreover (if we dare credit the story fully), he managed to outwit the gang by different tricks on one or two other occasions.

Campbell seems to have had more dishonest relatives than the average person. His brother one day arrived on the doorstep with the glowing announcement that he had come into possession of some counterfeiting tools. The two were soon happily launched upon a new business enterprise, making brand-new tin dollars. Sales and profits were growing comfortably when the sheriff finally stepped in. The brother decamped, leaving our hero to face the law. After some adventures as a fugitive (probably enlarged in the telling), Campbell hired a lawyer, who discovered that his client had committed no crime at all. The law, he found, prohibited the *passing* of counterfeits, while all that Campbell had done was to *sell* them (at a discount). Freed of legal embarrassments, the latter went back to his counterfeiting and continued it profitably until belated twinges of conscience finally brought the operation to an end.

Although he no longer practiced the craft, Campbell continued to enjoy the reputation of his counterfeiting which lingered long about him. Indeed, he was able to make profitable use of it from time to time. Strangers and even neighbors still came to him on occasion with cash in hand, begging to buy either counterfeit money or the tools with which he had once made it. Some of these he cheated of their money without any qualms, on the pious ground that dishonesty and greed deserve no other pay.

A curious story, of course—but is it a true one? With allowance for some exaggeration and for simple errors of fact, the answer is apparently yes. Most of the memoir can not be checked in any way; however, there are a number of minute details scattered through which can be. For example, pre-revolutionary court records do reveal the name of one Swan, a persistent counterfeiter. The Bonhamtown raid is history. The localities mentioned are real ones. So are

the names of many persons—Campbell's relatives, neighbors, associates—who can be identified in contemporary sources.

Could McDonald Campbell himself have been fictional, despite the realistic setting—or was the name perhaps a pseudonym? Not so! Though an obscure man, he can be traced dimly through other records. He did indeed serve in the Revolution, under the very officers named in his account. The picture of himself as a restless, rootless man appears also to be a true one. Born in 1754 in Woodbridge Township, New Jersey, he lived there in several neighboring locations before the Revolution; during and after the war, in Somerset, Morris, and Sussex counties; by the middle 1820's, in four counties of Pennsylvania; subsequently in at least three Ohio counties. As to worldly goods, one might well expect a prudent counterfeiter to lay up something for his old age—but not so McDonald Campbell. On his application for a veteran's pension in 1818, he was described as in "reduced" circumstances. This low estate may be related to the fact that Campbell, before his death at the age of ninety-one, had survived three wives and fathered twenty-six children. While feeding this hungry mob, year after year, the harried father must have considered once again the virtues of counterfeiting.

Actually the book, while interesting for its pictures of a counterfeiter, is even more so for the accounts of the various swindling or confidence operations in which Campbell was involved. The devices of "con" men in the 1790's were strikingly like those still practiced on the gullible today, exploiting two main weaknesses of the victim—greed and latent dishonesty.

As a matter of fact, the modern reader of this memoir is astonished repeatedly at the indifference of apparently moral citizens to certain acts of law-breaking or of bad ethics. For example, Campbell's counterfeiting and sporadic swindling activities seem to have earned him the amused admiration of his neighbors and a reputation for cleverness. Evidently the latter, like Campbell himself, thought of counterfeiting as a mildly hazardous sport, while any sort of trading was a contest, the pitting of wits and no holds barred.

D.A.S.