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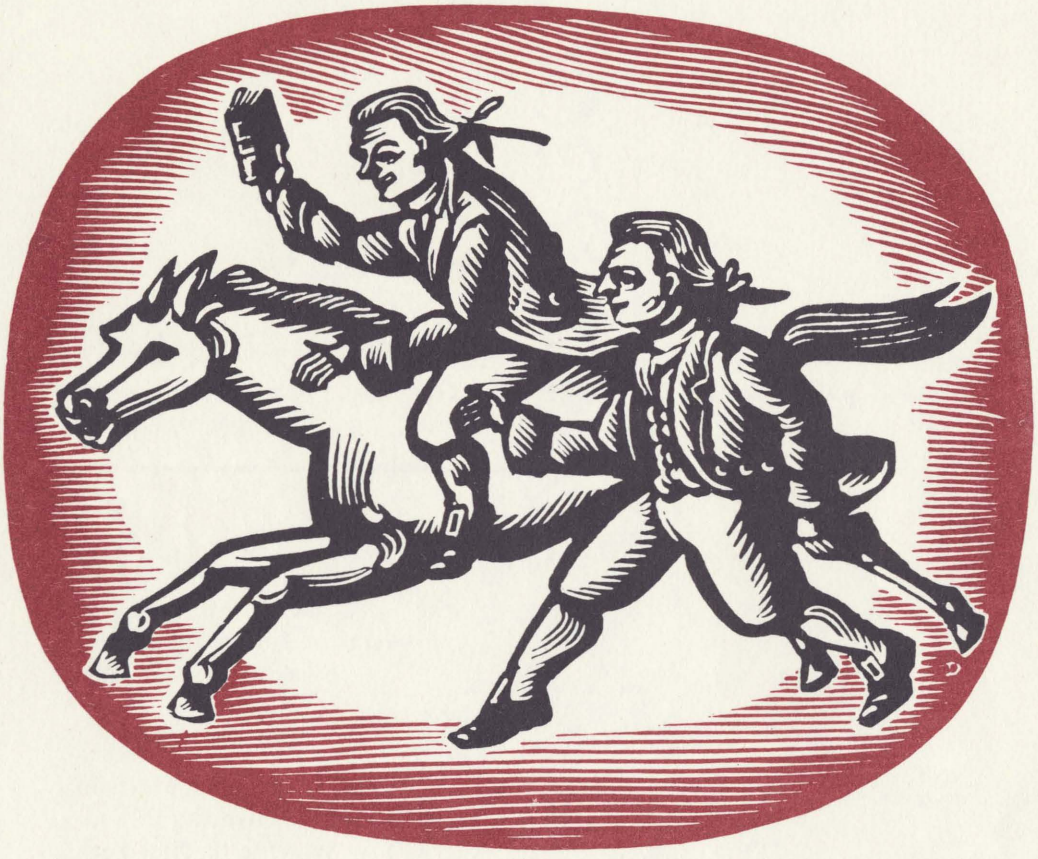

THE COURIER

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ASSOCIATES | DECEMBER 1962

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VOLUME II, NUMBER 4, WHOLE NUMBER 16, DECEMBER 1962

On Collecting the Writings of Stephen Crane
A Recollection by Ames W. Williams

Note: Mr. Ames W. Williams, a native of New Jersey, now an adopted son of Virginia, and an in-law relative of the District of Columbia where he serves in a legal capacity with the small centralized federal government located there, spent many years collecting an excellent and enviable library of valuable materials by and about Stephen Crane, famous American author and journalist, erstwhilom student and baseball player at Syracuse University, 1891. Mr. Williams, with other splendid attributes, is a recognized Crane expert, and culminated his collecting accomplishments with the publication in 1948 (with Mr. Vincent Starrett as co-author) of a Stephen Crane bibliography which was readily and is still deservedly regarded as the standard authority on that subject. Mr. Williams's Stephen Crane collection now graces the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room at Syracuse University Library through the beneficence of the late George Arents. (For an account of Mr. Williams's gift to Syracuse University of a collection of original letters and rare and first editions of the works of Harold Frederic, a fellow-novelist and one of Stephen Crane's friends, see the Courier, *Vol. I, No. 12, December 1961, pp. 7-10.)*

Crane's literary production comprises four categories: novels, short stories and sketches, war correspondence, and poetry. His first book, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, *though it attracted no attention at the time it was first issued (1893), is now regarded as the first distinctively modern stark realistic American novel.* The Red Badge of Courage

(1895), a remarkable and startling analysis of the psychology of courage and fear during the Civil War by one who had never been within a thousand miles of any kind of battle, made Crane famous overnight, and caused Ambrose Gwinett ("Bitter") Bierce to declare: "This young man has the power to feel. He knows nothing of war, yet he is drenched in blood. Most beginners who deal with this subject spatter themselves with ink." The Open Boat *(1898) was called by Herbert George Wells "the finest short story in the English language."* The Blue Hotel *and* Whilomville Stories *are particularly outstanding and memorable among his other short pieces of fiction. Crane was one of the earliest of American pioneers in writing free verse, and his epigrammatic tang in* The Black Riders and Other Lines *(1895) and* War Is Kind *(1899) has rarely been equalled by any poet here or abroad. Of his work as a whole Enoch Arnold Bennett stated: "In my opinion Crane must rank with the best writers that America has produced, and as one of the finest descriptive experts of modern times."*

The following personal reminiscence by Mr. Williams, a member of Syracuse University Library Associates, appears here for the first time in print.

MY interest in Stephen Crane was aroused many years ago by a college survey course in American Literature. The course was a potpourri of good, bad, and indifferent writings designed more, it seems in retrospect, to give a smattering of ignorance and to satisfy some curricular requirement than to encourage independent sorties into libraries, bookshops, and other sources of learning.

Upon encountering the excerpt from *The Red Badge of Courage*, I felt it was remarkable for a couple of outstanding reasons. First, the characters had no names; and second, the figures of speech were compellingly unusual and peculiar. An instance of the latter is found in the account of the killing of the tall soldier: "His spare figure was erect, his bloody hands were quietly at his side. He was waiting with patience for something that he had come to meet. He was at the rendezvous."

These words make one wonder whether they inspired Alan Seeger's immortal verses entitled: "I Have a Rendezvous with Death."

Wax wafers or paper seals on official documents have lost much of their significance over the years, and their use today seems rather like an Edwardian affectation; but in Stephen Crane's time they were commonly employed, and one recognizes at once how splendidly descriptive was his sentence: "The red sun was pasted in the sky like a wafer."

Some time after this brief exposure to the charm of a fellow native of New Jersey, I ventured to Washington, D. C., much in the same spirit that motivated the heroes of Horatio Alger, Jr., to go to Gotham during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Washington was the Mother Lode during the early days of the New Deal, and perhaps it is fulfilling a similar role today, although the New Frontier dollar assays considerably less than its counterpart in the reign of Franklin Roosevelt.

In any event, it was not long after I joined the ranks of the employed that I hastened one day to get under the protective awning of an old secondhand bookshop on lower Pennsylvania Avenue to escape a sudden summer cloudburst. To pass the time, I stepped inside the establishment to look around. The proprietor was not an exponent of the Dale Carnegie School, but while his manner was offensive in what I now recognize as an historic tradition in some segments of the trade, his shelves were well stocked and the prices of his wares were modest.

The *B* and *C* sections of his fiction stock for some reason attracted my attention and I tarried unusually long looking over a number of books by Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane. The rain over, I left after purchasing a Stephen Crane book—*The Little Regiment*—an attractive little volume bound in buff cloth and stamped in red and gold, and at a remarkably attractive price, too. I think it was a dollar and a half. This was the beginning. I acquired a book and the virus of bibliomania Craneana found a host.

At home that evening I read *The Little Regiment* from cover to cover without leaving my chair. This was not a notable accomplishment since the stories are relatively brief. Their appeal, however, was unusually magnetic.

Some time later I revisited the bookshop with the intention of acquiring another Crane story, but to my surprise there was nothing left. To this very day the disquieting thought haunts me: what treasures did I leave neglected upon the shelves on my first visit? I know there were many more books, perhaps the black tulip of any Crane collection, a yellow, paper-covered *Maggie*. Every time I think of this lost opportunity, the number of rare volumes I left on the shelves gets larger and larger.

I sought out the other old bookshops in Washington, and before I realized it, my visits were becoming frequent, regular, and more costly.

A trip to the Library of Congress was quite enlightening and productive. I was amazed at the number of entries under *Crane, Stephen, 1871-1900* in the card catalogue and at how many were restricted in

circulation, the cards being marked: *Office*. This, I discovered, meant that such books were kept in the Rare Book Division under special care.

Probably no one more ignorant of rare books, bibliography, and similar arcana than I was ever visited that imposing department of the Library of Congress for the first time. After filling out a sheet for all the titles marked *Office* in the card catalogue, I was impressed by the regulation that only one book at a time would be delivered to my desk.

It was in this sanctum that I learned the facts of life as far as rare books are concerned. Thanks to the patience of that great lady, the late Miss Alice Lerch, I discovered *Book Prices Current*, specialized author bibliographies, points, editions, issues, states, and all the other rites and mysteries of the book collecting cult.

An old booksellers' trade directory opened a new, expansive, and expensive field for exploration. Postcards (a penny then) scattered far and wide called for quotations on any available Stephen Crane stock, and brought unhoped-for responses and possibilities. One bookseller replied with a hand-drawn cartoon of the behatted and cigarred proprietor weeping because his shelves were bare. Later my acquaintance with this distinguished bookman, the late and revered Alfred F. Goldsmith of New York City, ripened into a warm friendship I shall always cherish. The rare book trade is vastly poorer for the passing of this kind soul who, along with his enthusiasm and genuine scholarship, probably gave away more books and manuscripts from his basement establishment—*The Sign of the Sparrow* on lower Lexington Avenue—than he ever sold. Mr. Goldsmith, over the years, located many obscure and ephemeral Crane items for me that greatly enriched my collection and, I am sure, at very little monetary profit for himself.

Almost immediately, I became an avid follower of the New York City book auctions, and my weekends were devoted to searching the bookshops in neighboring cities such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, Camden, and Richmond. My attention was not limited to those bookshops listed in the yellow pages of the telephone directories, but extended to every antique and junk shop within range. In all my searching, and contrary to the memoirs of many celebrated bibliophiles, I never found a real diamond in a dustbin.

I remember that I had considerable difficulty in locating a copy of Mr. Vincent Starrett's fine little *Stephen Crane Bibliography*, published in 1929. In despair of obtaining a copy, I requested and eventually received a photostat from the Library of Congress. This service, in keeping with the usual obstacles set up by bureaucratic organizations for the harassment of their benefactors, I was informed, could

not be supplied without the written waiver of the compiler, Mr. Starrett. I then wrote to the Crane bibliographer for his permission, and along with granting it he most graciously sent me his personal copy of the book with his blessing.

My collecting and, up to this point, superficial bibliographic research were sufficient for me to recognize that the 1929 book was far out of date; and the idea occurred to me to compile a new Crane bibliography, one so comprehensive as to be considered "definitive." Mr. Starrett informed me that, though he would like to revise and update his bibliography, he was far too busy channeling his efforts into making a living to take on such a philanthropic project. He was again gracious in telling me he would be quite willing to give me every assistance possible if I should decide to undertake the task.

So began the new Stephen Crane bibliography—a friendly collaboration by mail extending over a period of almost six years, including the World War II years.

Mr. Starrett, I believe, has done more to encourage reading and collecting than any other contemporary critic or bibliophile. He is not a critic in the ordinary sense; he is more an appreciator or connoisseur of fine writing and good books. His literary pantheon is truly an international airport, with new arrivals and departures every few minutes. So great is his enthusiasm for the works of others that he has allowed it to impede his own fine literary achievements.

The Crane collection increased like a snowball rolling downhill. Duplicate copies multiplied to fabulous proportions, and comparison of the copies produced notable variants. Copyright records did much to establish priority issues. The files of *Publisher's Weekly* and similar British publications were invaluable. Advertisements in old periodicals were rewarding: a *Bookman* advertisement for the publishing house of Copeland and Day, Boston, for example, firmly established that the rare and expensive green ink edition of Crane's *Black Riders* was actually the second edition of this work.

A copyright deposit copy of the American edition of *Whilomville Stories,* resting for many years on the reserve storage shelves of the Library of Congress, turned out to be the rarest item of all since it carried a copyright notice by Stephen Crane issued after the author's death. No other such copy of what is otherwise a fairly common book has ever been discovered.

One of the most real and vexing problems that confronted me in preparing the Crane bibliography was how to describe a book. I had never before realized the technical aspects involved in such an apparently simple task. I had always thought, for instance, that a signa-

ture was a person's handwritten name, but to my surprise now I found it was a group of leaves assembled from a printed folded sheet.

The only book that remotely filled the prescription of how to do a bibliography for certain fun and dubious profit was Ronald Brunlees McKerrow's *Introduction to Bibliography.* That was a book indeed, and it should be read and digested by all book collectors! After studying this brilliant work for some time I felt that I was remotely qualified to describe some of the oldest treasures in the great Library of Congress, but McKerrow did not help very much with the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century books of Stephen Crane. Contemporary bibliographies of Hawthorne, Whittier, Melville, Hearn, and the like were not consistent in method, and therefore were confusing and uninformative. Finally, with the assistance and cooperation of Mr. Frederick Goff, Chief of the Rare Book Division in the Library of Congress; Mr. David Randall, at Scribner's Book Store in New York City, now Librarian of the excellent Lilly Library at Indiana University [Editor's note: See "Leave the Books Alone!", the *Courier,* Vol. I, No. 11, September 1961]; and Mr. Jacob Blanck, Editor of the *Bibliography of American Literature,* I worked out a fairly consistent pattern to follow in revising the Crane bibliography. My formula was probably too detailed but, as in the trial of a lawsuit, I felt that it is better to have too much in the record than too little.

One of my objectives was to locate and include a reference to every bit of Crane material in print. This was a formidable goal since my author was first and last a journalist and newspaper man. Much of Crane's early material appeared without his name, but his inimitable style was quite sufficient to identify his unsigned pieces. To do this satisfactorily required several years of work at the Library of Congress, leafing through countless bound volumes of yellowing and disintegrating periodicals for a period of ten or twelve years.

The search was rewarding. Many new and quite a number of supposedly lost pieces of Crane's work came to light, along with a host of biographical details and data. Among the latter were the contemporary accounts of the sinking of the filibustering steamer *Commodore* off the Florida coast, an incident that supplied the material for Crane's great short story, *The Open Boat.*

While searching for Crane's war correspondence during the Greco-Turkish War, the background of his novel *Active Service,* I came across not only his published dispatches, but also those of his later common-law wife, Cora Haworth Taylor.

An excellent biography of this fascinating and talented woman was published not long ago, and many questions long unanswered about

her life and her relationship with Stephen Crane are answered in its pages. The book is without sensationalism, as it should be, and in my opinion is an excellent contribution to literary scholarship. [Editor's note: See "A New Crane Book," the *Courier*, Vol. I, No. 10, July 1961; the book is *Cora Crane: A Biography of Mrs. Stephen Crane*, by Lillian B. Gilkes, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana.]

The Spanish-American War correspondence of Stephen Crane is scattered through the brittle pages of Joseph Pulitzer's New York *World* and William Randolph Hearst's New York *Journal* along with the reports of Crane's more glamorous and sophisticated fellow-correspondents such as Richard Harding Davis, Sylvester Scovel, Ralph Paine, and John Bass. In retrospect, it seems possible now to draw a comparison between Crane's reports and the popular dispatches of the late Ernie Pyle of World War II fame.

My military service in this war interrupted most of the academic research I was doing, but it did present to me the opportunity to follow Stephen Crane abroad and to search the bookshops throughout the British Isles.

In England I talked with a number of Crane's surviving contemporaries, among them A. E. W. Mason, a fine and accomplished gentleman who once considered completing Crane's last novel, *The O'Ruddy*, which was only partly written at the time of Crane's death.

A solicitor's firm in Surrey, Nightingale & Nightingale, still maintained a file on Crane: overdrawn bank accounts, dishonored drafts, and tradesmen's pleas for remittances.

While waiting in the dusty, disorderly, and dilapidated office of a firm of literary and theatrical agents in Haymarket—Richard Savage, successors to James Pinker—I noticed a number of letters by Crane on top of a bundle of old files, tied together with the ubiquitous red tape common to our civilization. The agent informed me that the office never catches up in its filing, even some fifty years after the fact. I often wonder whether the files survived the German bombs.

Many changes apparently had taken place in Crane's residence at Ravensbrook, Surrey, since his tenancy. It had long since been divided into numerous apartments, and remodeled so that the residue bore little resemblance to the original mansion.

Brede Place, Sussex, another Crane residence, fared much better. It is now part of the National Trust, which is devoted to the preservation of the stately and historic homes of England. The house, built over a period of five centuries, has long been owned and maintained by Claire Sheridan, daughter of one of the Jerome sisters of New York and a cousin of Sir Winston Churchill. Crane spent a relatively peace-

ful interlude in this charming south coast house following his trying experiences in Cuba.

I visited Brede Place during the month of May, ordinarily a beautiful time of the year, but unfortunately it rained and was quite foggy during my stay. In consequence, the photographs I took leave much to be desired. No physical changes had taken place in the house since Crane's brief residence.

The house itself is big, drafty, and rather somber in its Tudor fashion. The conveniences are less than minimum. There is no central heat, but each room contains an immense fireplace. There is a large cathedral-like chapel, and the dampish cellar dungeons lend a touch of the melodramatic. Not far from Brede Place were a number of thatched cottages still in use whose days, I was told, were numbered, for the thatching craft seems to be all but extinct.

London produced a treasure-trove for me in a packet of about sixty letters by Stephen and Cora Crane to Stephen's literary agent, Pinker. I found the correspondence in a curio shop in New Bond Street quite unexpectedly after spending several fruitless hours in nearby Meyer's Bookshop, a place well known to most book and manuscript collectors. Holmes's Bookstore in Edinburgh also produced a number of English and colonial editions which enriched my collection.

Each time I sailed to New York during the war, I managed to visit Mr. Jacob Blanck, at that time connected with *Publisher's Weekly*, and secure from him a bale of book catalogues, which I would read and study during the next voyage out. A number of them contributed valuable fragments of information, which went into the Crane bibliography. I became, as any book collector should, an ardent student of second-hand booksellers' catalogues and lists.

My search of old newspaper files and periodicals at the Library of Congress resulted in the location of much new and some forgotten Crane productions. At Mr. Starrett's suggestion, I put together an anthology of sorts with a short introduction rather than a critical preface. By a strange circumstance, the publisher to whom the collection was sent evidenced some interest in issuing it in book form. H. L. Mencken was called on for his opinion and, if agreeable, for one of his prized introductions. Mr. Mencken's opinion, it developed, was that the material should stay buried like Stephen Crane and that its publication would be a distinct disservice to Crane's established reputation. That was the end of the project.

This was a disappointment, but on reflection I am sure the late Sage of Baltimore was correct in his criticism. On the other hand, it should be recorded that in recent years practically all the material has

found its way into hard-cover books, and apparently not to any serious detriment to Crane's reputation as a man of literature.

Shortly after the war, the manuscript of the Crane bibliography, together with a fine introduction by Mr. Starrett, was ready for a publisher. Strangely enough, none seemed too eager to undertake the publication of this valuable contribution to scholarship, even though its production would undoubtedly insure a substantial loss for income tax purposes. Finally, the manuscript appealed to Mr. John Valentine of Glendale, California, a bookseller turned philanthropist, and he commissioned Mr. Ward Ritchie to design and print the book. To Mr. Starrett and me, the result was a beautiful product, the culmination of a wonderful experience in collecting, but in the material sense it was quite profitless, even from the tax-loss viewpoint. However, if we had it to do over, the chances are that it would not be done any differently.

As to Stephen Crane: his brief career during those few years before the turn of the century can be compared poetically to the passage of a meteor through the earth's atmosphere. It burned brightly and swiftly with the brilliance of genius, and then disappeared into the darkness. It is idle to speculate upon what he might have written had he lived longer than his meager span of twenty-nine years. [If he were alive today he would be ninety-one years of age.]

Crane was a psychologist and a poet. His vision was acute, particularly in detail, but his presentations are often subtle, leaving the principal theme to be felt, sometimes with horror, sometimes with pity.

In the short story entitled "The Monster," the Negro handyman who rescues the doctor's boy from the burning stable and becomes a local hero was badly burned and disfigured during the act. Sentiment toward him changed with the passage of time, and his bravery became obscured by his hideousness. In this story, the ignorance, prejudice, and cruelty of the average man are focused as converging rays through a magnifying glass, and one is ashamed of his fellow man. The ugliness of the one-time hero is described completely in the single terse sentence: "He had no face."

One of the finest pieces of irony in American literature is found in Crane's story "The Blue Hotel." A stupid and neurotic Swede manages to provoke a quarrel and get himself murdered in a dismal frontier hotel painted a hideous blue. The story fills not many pages, but in those few the injustice of the world, the upside-downness of creation, and the fundamental inequality of men are presented clearly and adroitly. The incident of the murdered Swede is really not important. The Swede was slain, not by the gambler whose knife pierced his heart; instead he was the anonymous victim of forces for which he was no more to blame than the man who actually stabbed him.

Crane, in the manner of a Greek chorus, says, "We are all in it! This poor gambler isn't even a noun. He is a kind of adverb. Every sin is the result of collaboration. We, five of us, have collaborated in the murder of this Swede. Usually there are from a dozen to forty women really involved in every murder, but in this case it seems to be only five men—you, I, Johnnie, old Scully, and that fool of an unfortunate gambler came merely as a culmination, the apex of a human movement, and gets all the punishment."

The story's final shaft of irony is contained in these lines: "The corpse of the Swede, alone in the saloon, had its eyes fixed upon a dreadful legend that dwelt atop the cash-machine: 'This registers the amount of your purchase.' "

One cannot help being fascinated by Crane's use of colors—red, blue, violet, purple, carmine, black, white. The effects are unusually striking. In *George's Mother*, for example, Crane writes: "The reflection of the street light, red on the wet pavement, is likened to the stain left by a slain spirit." There is, as Mr. Starrett has pointed out, the finest of poetic imagery in the suggestions subtly conveyed by Crane's tricky adjectives. Crane was an imagist before the modern species of imagists was known; early in his career he declared: "I understand that a man is born into the world with his own pair of eyes, and he is not responsible for his vision—he is merely responsible for the quality of his personal honesty."

So much for Stephen Crane. He seems to have caught the popular fancy in the last decade, and many of his works have reappeared, some in paperbacks, some distorted and brutally condensed in comic books. Several critical volumes have been sponsored by university presses, and more are in the making. Even some of Crane's contemporaries, Richard Harding Davis and Harold Frederic, are sharing in the revival of interest in this period of American literature.

My collection of Stephen Crane was complete by the time the bibliography was issued in 1948. A while later, Syracuse University, where Crane had once been a student, expressed interest in acquiring the collection *en bloc*, and possibly with the thought I could find a new field to explore, I disposed of everything—quite reluctantly.

It was the best idea though that the collection be placed in the library of an institution of higher learning so its existence and whereabouts would be advertised and known throughout the scholarly world, and students and researchers, biographers, editors, and other collectors could examine and use it. Getting the collection off my shelves and in proper arrangement for shipment took on the atmosphere of a wake, and even a tear or two may have dropped into each packing case. When

the job was finally accomplished, I felt not unlike one bidding farewell to an old and faithful friend.

Shortly after parting with my Stephen Crane collection, I had a very vivid dream, distinct in every detail, which gave me considerable pause for thought. As clear as could be, it seems that I visited Stephen Crane at the Lord Warden Hotel, Dover, where he was waiting for passage across the English Channel on the way to his final rendezvous in the Black Forest. He was sitting in a large wicker rocking chair, peculiar to seaside hotels of the period, dressed in a great padded dressing gown; and when he spoke, he said that he was impressed with all the time, money, and effort I had devoted to seeking out the details of his life and letters. It was, however, he said, a lot of waste, and that there was a much easier way to have achieved the same result. "What was that?" I asked. "It was quite simple," Stephen Crane said, "Why didn't you just come and ask me?"

Shortly after this occurrence I developed a keen interest in the Civil War, but up to this point, I have not, I assure you, had any conversations with Robert E. Lee or U. S. Grant.

The Most Mysterious Manuscript

The House of Kraus (Hans P. Kraus, Prop., 16 East 46 Street), New York City, long-time merchant dealing in Incunabula, Illuminated Manuscripts, Americana, Atlases and Travels, Early Science, and Bibliography (the firm's well-known book authority and goodwill ambassador, Mr. Hellmut Lehman-Haupt, is a frequent visitor to Syracuse University where he displays valises full of mouth-watering vellum volumes), owns what is regarded as the most mysterious manuscript in the world today.

Though not a single word on the 235 vellum pages, richly decorated with all sorts of designs in various colors, can now be read, the asking price for this little item is the mere sum of $160,000. Mr. Kraus believes if and when it is deciphered, it would be worth something close to half a million ducatoons.

The small volume, approximately 6x9 inches in size, dates from circa 1608, or possibly earlier, and from the names of the people supposedly connected motely and remotely with it, the item might be denominated as the Roger Bacon—John Dee—Jacobi de Tepenecz—Emperor Rudolph—Johannes Marcus Marci—Athanasius Kircher—Mondragone—Wilfrid M. Voynich—Hans P. Kraus manuscript of mysterious ciphers. It has been in the United States for the past half a century,

and has defied all attempts at decipherment by such experts and authorities as Prof. William R. Newbold, University of Pennsylvania, Prof. John M. Manly, University of Chicago, Joseph Martin Feely, a Rochester, N. Y. lawyer, Prof. Leonell C. Strong, Yale University (School of Medicine), William F. Friedman (Col. USA, Ret.), and a multitude of specialists in philology, paleography, ancient, classical, and mediaeval languages and literature, Egyptologists, hieroglyphologists, Dead Sea scrollers, mathematicians, research scientists, and cryptologists who have employed all sorts of keys including that used by Edgar Allan Poe in his ingenious story "The Gold-Bug," 1843. (The cryptograph on which this story depends is a development of the interest that prompted Poe's essay on "Cryptography," which appeared in *Graham's Magazine*, 1841.)

Mrs. Friedman, writing as Elizabeth Smith Friedman in a recent issue of a Washington, D. C. newspaper, gives a brief account of this enigmatic work, and reveals that Col. Friedman, her husband, has been granted free-time use of one of its modern electronic computers, the 301, by the Radio Corporation of America in a more determined attempt to decipher the manuscript.

This is indeed gratifying news. Down through the centuries Literature has served Science in many, many ways. It is high time that Science serve Literature.

Since a team of electronic scientists, engaged in research and information retrieval, steadily working with an earlier model computer over a period of eighteen consecutive months, was able recently to establish irrefutably what were the last words of the Maid of Orléans, Joan of Arc, burned at the stake, 1431, there is a great likelihood that Col. Friedman will be successful in his forthcoming decipherment project. Col. Friedman should be cautioned however: The machine is perfect and infallible. The *homo sap.* who feeds it is not.

Missing Numbers

Members of Syracuse University Library Associates who find that their file of the *Courier* is incomplete may obtain copies of the missing numbers free gratis for nothing without any charge simply by making their request known to the Editor. Vol. I consists of twelve numbers issued during 1953-61, and copies of each are available for the asking.

Beginning with Vol. II, No. 2, July 1962, *extra* copies for members are $2.00 (£0/14/4) each. *Non-members* of Syracuse University Library Associates may purchase single copies at the same amount.

Memorials

Friends and families have established Memorial Funds for the purchase of library books inscribed in memory of:

Mrs. Wenona Foxall
Theodore P. Gould
Mrs. Isobel LaBombard Picard
Sidney Sukoenig
Clifford R. Walker
E. Frank Zepp

The Barbara Hotze Memorial has been created by her father, Clifford R. Hotze, Fayetteville, New York, through the gift of his daughter's personal collection of books.

Additional contributions have been made to existing Memorials as follows:

Michael J. Alama Library Memorial Fund
Blanch Merritt Baker Library Memorial Fund
John W. Brooks Library Memorial Fund
Irene Cuykendall Garrett Library Memorial Fund
William Pratt Graham Library Memorial Fund

Vachel Lindsay: The True Voice of Middle America
By H. L. Mencken

In 1931 when Nicholas Vachel Lindsay died, H. L. Mencken and I were corresponding, and though I had full knowledge of his cynical attitude regarding poets in general and modern ones in particular, I asked him for an expression of his feeling toward Lindsay so I might have it printed and distributed among those who had known the man and admired his work.

From his home in Baltimore shortly thereafter, the great editor sent the original manuscript signed of his pungent and pithy composition. "I am enclosing a brief note about Lindsay," he wrote, "and hope that it will meet your purposes."

A multitude of unexpected things intervened and interrupted and the little project was laid aside and postponed from month to month and from year to year, and then almost forgotten—until 1947, when the idea occurred to me to go ahead with the printing. "If you can spare them," H. L. M. wrote on 3 April 1947, "I'd like about eight or ten copies of the pamphlet, one for myself and the others for collectors of Menckeniana. Such enthusiasts, of course, are always especially eager

to have privately printed items. If you can't spare so many, send me as many as you can."

The type was thereupon set up by a hole-in-the-wall jobber doing business as The Keystone Press, 510 F Street, N.W., Washington, D. C., Mencken checked the proof, and the eight-page small octavo, with self-printed wrappers, stapled, all edges trimmed, was completed on 11 April 1947, with the following colophon: "This tribute to the poet—written shortly after his death—is printed here for the first time. The edition consists of one hundred numbered copies of which this is Copy Number __ ." When I numbered the copies in ink, I noticed that two kinds of paper had been used: Gilbert Bond *and* Hamilton Bond. *The printer's bill for the 100 copies, marked PAID by J. Ose, shows that the total cost was $22.00.*

Twenty copies were sent to Mencken—in August he requested and received six more—and I gave and traded away some of the rest of the edition. In Mencken's acknowledgment of the first batch he wrote on 19 May 1947: "I find the books on my return to Baltimore, after a week's absence. My very best thanks. It seems to me that your printer has done an excellent job, and I am surely delighted to see the little note in print. I am sending those extra copies to persons who collect my books." And then he added an unusual sentence: "The print will be a very rare item, and in a little while you'll probably hear of it bringing high prices among the second-hand dealers." Was he being caustic, facetious, ridiculous, or prophetic?

Mencken died in 1956, and the "little while" he predicted expired the same year when I noticed copies of his Vachel Lindsay *being offered in catalogues at $10.00 and $15.00 each. One of the copies sent to the Copyright Office in the Library of Congress had already been consigned to the Rare Books Division there.*

For the past quincade I have not seen any copies of Mencken's "little note" offered in second-hand book dealers' catalogues—it is apparent most owners are reluctant to relinquish their copies—but just the other day I saw one included (item 129) in the recently issued List No. 181, compiled and distributed by Mr. Allen W. Schultz of Smith's Book Store, 805 North Howard Street, Baltimore 1, Maryland. (Mr. Schultz is an eminent bookman, an authority in many fields, who specializes in Menckeniana; see The Courier, *Vol. I, No. 11, Sept., 1961.) The price of item 129 is shown as $30.00, eight more than it cost me to have the entire edition of 100 copies printed fifteen years ago!*

Whether this rapid rise in value is due to the subject or the author is a matter of conjecture or prejudice; perhaps it is a combination of

all the elements and developments attendant. In any event, it appears appropriate to present here for the benefit of Library Associates and their friends the contents of this now rare thirty-dollar leaflet since it is highly improbable they will ever have the opportunity to acquire a copy of the original edition.

The following constitutes the second appearance in print of H. L. Mencken's remarkable tribute to the illustrious Vachel Lindsay, and it is good for me to see it given wider circulation in such a dignified manner. The text here varies only slightly from that of the edition of 1947. JOHN S. MAYFIELD.

Of Vachel Lindsay's lasting importance there can be no doubt. He was the only poet since Walt Whitman to strike a really original note in American poetry, and though his direct imitators were as few as Whitman's, his influence will probably be as lasting. As Dr. Hazelton Spencer has well said, he was a genuine bard, and not a mere versifier. That is to say, he was a poet who felt his poems profoundly, and really lived them. They were not pretty things fashioned at a desk; they were passionate realities that he had genuinely experienced. I well remember sitting with him one day while "The Trial of the Dead Cleopatra" had possession of him. To me it was a piece of relatively small interest, and I believe that most critics acquiesce in that judgment of it, but to Lindsay, as it took form in his mind, it was overwhelming. He marched up and down chanting it in the manner of a man moved by some tremendous discovery. It was, to him at least, less a conscious work of art than a spontaneous reaction to a vast and baffling series of natural phenomena.

Such emotions, of course, were bound to wear out. He outgrew them inevitably. Thus such things as "The Congo" lost their power to move him—that is, their first power, their full and irresistible power. But the needs of his daily life obliged him to keep on mouthing them. His customers wanted to hear him intone them; he had to do it to keep up his trade as a reciter among women's clubs, poetry societies, and other such dismal congregations. It was a hard burden, and I believe it helped to shorten his life. Having, like most great instinctive artists, little if any sense of humor, he could not laugh at his necessities. Indeed, he fretted against them, longing for the free time and the free mind that his ever new and newer ideas called for. He planned yet more revolutions; yet more barbaric assaults upon the ivory tower. But the people who crowd into stuffy halls wanted to hear what they had heard before, and so he kept on declaiming "The Congo" and "General Booth" to the end of the chapter.

The professional tasters of poetry have treated him a bit patronizingly. They prefer more intellectual poets, which is to say, poets who are more decorous and timorous. Their predecessors of two generations ago took the same attitude toward Whitman. He was cried down for many years, and such elegant fellows as James Russell Lowell were cried up. But Whitman is alive today and Lowell is dead. I believe that Lindsay will live longer than any of his contemporaries, save maybe the Edgar Lee Masters of the *Spoon River Anthology*. There was an immense sincerity in him. He could write pretty stuff too, but he did very little of it. In the main he fetched his dithyrambs out of the very depths of his being. He was, in more than one way, the true voice of Middle America. He will be remembered.

Mary Todd Lincoln and Homer Croy

Mary Todd Lincoln had had a tragic life. Three of her four sons had died. In the war years she had been accused of having Southern sympathies. She had been pilloried in the newspapers for her extravagance. Her character had been blackened by former friends; and in the final blow, her husband had been killed before her eyes—the two were holding hands at the time and his head fell over on her shoulder—at Ford's Theater.

Mrs. Lincoln's only living son, Robert Todd, and she were estranged, for her daughter-in-law did not like her. Homeless, she wandered from hotel to hotel. Her few friends, really only acquaintances, were charmed by her wit, her intelligence, and her knowledge of world affairs, and put off by her moodiness, her deep depressions, and her growing eccentricities.

This unhappy woman, badly scarred by tragedy and with little to live for, was suddenly and without warning hustled into the county court of Cook County at Chicago one day in 1875, and before she knew what was happening, her son, her own flesh and blood, had had her declared a legal lunatic.

The Trial of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln is Homer Croy's recently published (Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York) dramatic and moving account, based on new research, of an extraordinary ordeal of the human spirit, and the sad aftermath of that court action.

Homer Croy, who has produced such splendid books of *Americana* as: *Jesse James Was My Neighbor, Our Will Rogers, The Lady from Colorado, Trigger Marshal: The Story of Chris Madsen, Goody Twoshoes, Star Maker: The Story of D. W. Griffith,* the incomparable *West*

of the Water Tower, and his best-selling autobiography *Country Cured,* discovered not long ago that the reason the story of the sanity trial of Mary Todd Lincoln had never been told in factual form was that the legal papers and documents had been mysteriously destroyed, that the court reporter's shorthand notes had disappeared, that all the pertinent files were missing, and that it seemed an impossible task to come by the untampered truth.

With the thoroughness for which he is noted, Homer Croy dug deeply and profitably, and this volume is the result of his diligent research. No one else could have performed such a splendid feat of historical endeavor, and the author is to be congratulated also for the excellent manner in which he has assembled his findings and presented the story of these sad and melancholy events.

Swinburne and The New Yorker

Not since 1887 has as much bio-critical material been published in one piece about Algernon Charles Swinburne as appeared in the 16 October issue of *The New Yorker* magazine without a single factual error creeping in somewhere.

The eminent and versatile American gentleman of literature, Mr. Edmund Wilson, has here employed the occasion of the recent publication (by Yale University Press) of the latest volumes (Nos. 5 and 6) of *The Swinburne Letters,* edited by Dr. Cecil Y. Lang of the English Faculty of Syracuse University, as a backdrop for thirty-odd columns of scholarly narration and lucent criticism under the title: "Swinburne of Capheaton and Eton."

The contents and structure of this brilliant essay make it amply evident it will be regarded as a valuable contribution to the Swinburne bibliography. Indeed, this issue of *The New Yorker* is quite likely to become a collectors' item.

To Think of Charles Dickens

To think of the present month, December, may remind one of Christmas. To think of Christmas may remind one of carols. To think of Christmas carols may remind one of Charles Dickens; and to think of Charles Dickens here and now is to recall that a few days ago there were acquired by purchase several unusual books and pamphlets by this great novelist which have now been added to the ever-enlarging

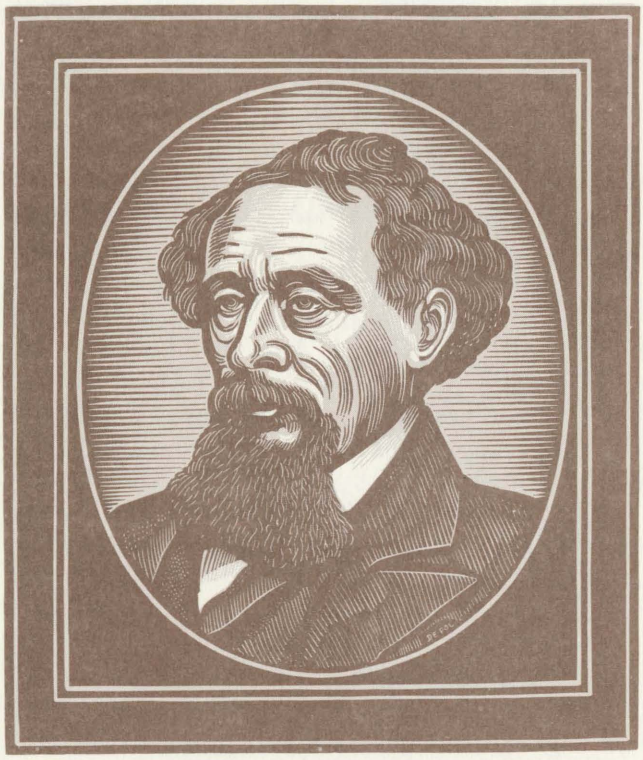
collection in the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room. These may be noted briefly as follows:

Sunday Under Three Heads, a pamphlet of forty-nine pages, written by Dickens under the name: *Timothy Sparks,* and published in London, 1836, on the subject of the freedom of the Sabbath for the poor man. This copy of this rare first edition is in original paper wrappers, clean and unworn, and in excellent condition throughout. The illustrations are by Hablot Knight "Phiz" Browne, and all are present in place. In *The Sterling Library: A Catalogue of the Printed Books and Literary Manuscripts Collected by Sir Louis Sterling and Presented by him to the University of London* (Privately Printed, Cambridge University Press, 1954), the statement is made with reference to *Sunday Under Three Heads* (p. 86): "Eckel [*The First Editions of the Writings of Charles Dickens,* by John C. Eckel, revised and enlarged edition, New York and London, 1932] places the half-title following the dedicatory letter, before the text. In this [the Sterling] copy it precedes the frontispiece." Eckel does nothing of the kind. His collation commences: "Half title, reverse blank; frontispiece, title page, reverse blank; three pages of dedication . . ." The Syracuse copy may be unique in that its collation runs: Frontispiece, title page, reverse blank; half title, reverse blank, etc. Facsimile editions of this rarity are liable to deceive collectors, experienced and wise (the Old Breed), and those inexperienced and unwise (the New Breed), so one should consult Eckel's work, pp. 102-3, before purchasing.

A Child's History of England, three volumes, London, 1852, 1853, 1854, respectively, first editions, original reddish cloth bindings, very good condition, and appear never to have been handled, much less read, by a child. The original tissue guards between the frontispieces and the title pages, so often missing, are present in all three volumes.

Proceedings at the Fourteenth Anniversary Festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, London, 1859, forty-eight pages, first and only edition, original red cloth binding. Dickens, a Vice-President of the organization and a Trustee of the Fund, did not speak at this banquet, 18 April 1859, as he was unavoidably absent, but he was mentioned most complimentarily by several whose speeches are here recorded.

Proceedings at the Fifteenth Anniversary Festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, London, 1860, forty-six pages, first and only edition, original blue silk binding. No speech by Dickens, still a Vice-President and a Trustee of the Fund, is recorded, nor is there any evidence here that he attended. (Does any Library Associate have a copy of the *Proceedings* for 1858? Dickens *did* speak at that one, a



By John DePol

thousand words, and there is *not* a copy in the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room.)

The Christmas Numbers of All The Year Round, nine Christmas numbers, all that were published, of the periodical *All The Year Round,* conducted by Dickens, containing many pieces by him, London, 1859-67, each number forty-eight pages, "the amount of two ordinary numbers," rebound in full hard-wearing goat-skin, span-new condition throughout.

Dombey and Daughter: A Moral Fiction, by Renton Nicholson, London, no date (1850?), first edition, large Royal 8vo, pp. 94, double column, original paper wrappers, illustrations throughout, very rare. The title alone of this simple story, representing scenes of London life, qualifies it as a piece of Dickensana by a man who might very well have come out of any one of several of Dickens's works of fiction. For a brief account of Renton Nicholson (1809-61), known as the Lord Chief

Baron, pawnbroker, jeweller, racecourse speeler, wine merchant, flash editor, and author of several publications, see: *The Dictionary of National Biography,* London: Oxford University Press, 1949-50, Vol. XIV.

Accompanying this copy of *Dombey and Daughter* is a superbly bound (Riviere & Son) copy of the twenty-one numbers of the rare eight-page weekly publication: *Cockney Adventures and Tales of London Life,* London, Nov. 1837-March 1838, each comprising an anonymous yarn by Nicholson, doing his best to mimic the style of Charles "Boz" Dickens.

Bleak House, originally issued in twenty numbers, bound in nineteen monthly parts, distinctive blue covers, London, March 1852-September 1853, all in splendid condition. Part IX is distinguished by having present the inserted slip explaining why one of the illustrations is missing; Part X supplies that illustration; Parts XI and XIII have the mauve slips concerning *Handley Cross*; Part XV has inserted the rare little pamphlet by Mrs. S. C. Hall; and Parts XIX and XX have *The Newcomes* announcement on yellow paper and the advertisement of the *Works of Samuel Warren* on a bright-blue slip (in the present copy inserted upside down). These are some of the characteristics ("points") necessary to establish that these parts are of the earliest issues. *Bleak House,* one of Dickens's important novels, contains sharp criticism of the English Courts of Chancery through its story of the complicated and interminable res adjudicata styled *Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce* in which the litigants spend years trying to conclude the proceedings, during which time the estate is consumed by court and barrister costs and expenses.

Among some valuable and unusual books he recently gave to the Library, Prof. Alfred T. Collette of Syracuse University Faculty, a member of Library Associates, and a collector of great phosonority, included the following works by Dickens: *Household Words,* three volumes, a weekly journal edited by Dickens; Vol. 9 of the collected edition of *All The Year Round,* another weekly publication conducted by Dickens, and a magnificent set of the six original numbers of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* the exciting novel Charles John Huffam Dickens left unfinished when he died the same year Syracuse University was founded.