

Colby



Colby Quarterly

Volume 1
Issue 3 *June*

Article 5

June 1943

Notes And Queries

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cq>

Recommended Citation

Colby Library Quarterly, series 1, no.3, June 1943, p.51-55

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colby Quarterly by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Colby.

Colby Library Quarterly 51

disapprove of humor if he *knew* what it is. There is no indication in all his works that he has a suspicion of this; and what tricks the absence of a sense of it plays him! What a mess it has made of this abominable *Nana*! The presence of it, even in a limited degree, would have operated, to some extent, as a disinfectant, and if M. Zola had had a more genial fancy he would also have had a cleaner one. Is it not owing to the absence of a sense of humor that his last and most violent expression of the realistic faith is extraordinarily wanting in reality?

Anything less illusory than the pictures, the people, the indecencies of *Nana*, could not well be imagined. The falling-off from *L'Assommoir* in this respect can hardly be exaggerated. The human note is completely absent, the perception of character, of the way that people feel and think and act, is helplessly, hopelessly, at fault; so that it becomes almost grotesque at last to see the writer trying to drive before him a herd of figures that never for an instant stand on their legs. This is what saves us in England, in spite of our artistic levity and the presence of the young ladies—this fact that we are by disposition better psychologists, that we have, as a general thing a deeper, more delicate perception of the play of character and the state of the soul. This is what often gives an interest to works conceived on a much narrower program than those of M. Zola—makes them much more touching and more real, although the apparatus and the machinery of reality may, superficially, appear to be wanting. French novelists are at bottom, with all their extra freedom, a good deal more conventional than our own; and *Nana*, with the prodigious freedom that the author has taken, never, to my sense, leaves for a moment the region of the conventional. The figure of the brutal “fille,” without a conscience or a soul, with nothing but devouring appetites and impudences, has become the stalest of the stock-properties of French fiction, and M. Zola’s treatment has here imparted to her no touch of superior verity. He is welcome to draw as many figures of the same type as he finds necessary, if he will only make them human; this is as good a way of making a contribution to our knowledge of ourselves as another. It is not his choice of subject that has shocked us; it is the melancholy dryness of his execution, which gives us all the bad taste of a disagreeable dish and none of the nourishment.

London, February, 1880.



NOTES AND QUERIES

A SHY young man once met Henry James and tried to express his admiration. James patted him on the shoulder and said: ‘That’s right, my dear boy: we *can’t*

52 Colby Library Quarterly

have too much of it!"—Harold Child; *London*, January 4, 1943.

The name of a well-known Maine poet and HENRY JAMES call to mind a subject in which students of American letters of the nineteenth century are necessarily interested—the custom of anonymity among authors. Early in the century many works were published anonymously; late in the century, few. In an essay called "Anon Is Dead," Henry Seidel Canby marked the passing of anonymity and placed its time. Before 1850, he says, "as many important books, essays, and magazines were first published anonymously . . . as with the name of the author attached." When *Putnam's Monthly* was projected as a new magazine, the publisher sent an inquiry to prospective contributors. Would they be willing to have their names announced?

HENRY JAMES, Sr., was willing, "You are at liberty to use my name." Henry W. Longfellow was not. "I shall be very happy to contribute, but wish to do so anonymously." Longfellow's letter to the editor is now in the Colby College Library.

Thus James and Longfellow together perfectly illustrate the changing taste. Although Henry James, frankly willing to be announced, represented the new and coming use, Longfellow, preferring anonymity, seems to have dictated the magazine's policy. For when the first issue appeared in January, 1853, *all* the writing was anonymous.

Colby Library Associates have not forgotten that President Bixler's first appearance in Waterville was under their auspices, on the centenary of William James, January 11, 1942. Several weeks before that occasion Dr. Bixler had presented a paper on "Two Questions Raised by [William James's] *The Moral Equivalent of War*" at the Conference on Methods in Philosophy at the New School for Social Research in New York City. In 1942 this paper was published, along with fifteen other essays, in a volume

Colby Library Quarterly 53

(now in the Colby Library) entitled *In Commemoration of William James*. In reviewing this book in *The Nation* (156: 208-9), New York, February 6, 1943, Jacques Barzun said that the essays "deal with James in his various avatars . . . Some consist mainly of re-exposition . . . Others—of which Mr. Bixler's . . . is perhaps the best—offer important doctrinal criticism."

In the March issue of this *Quarterly* it was noted that *Modern Painters*, "by a Graduate of Oxford," appeared in May, 1843. Regret was expressed that "in May, 1943, the Colby Library can exhibit no copy of this famous publication, for it has none." Library Associate Frederic E. Camp has generously amended this statement; and when the centenary of John Ruskin's first appearance in English literature arrived, the book was on hand in the Colby Library, ready for exhibition. We regret that there is not space here to reproduce its interesting title-page.

In a volume presented to the library by Carroll A. Wilson, Esq. (LL.D., Colby, 1940), the following incident was found recorded in an unidentified handwriting:

Dr. Weir Mitchell, while travelling in England, is quoted as saying: "I fell into conversation with a stranger who proved to be a man of great intelligence and culture. We discussed recent novels. I expressed my opinion of *Tess*, some parts of which I thought were very melodramatic—special emphasis being laid on the first part of the compound word. 'In fact,' I said, 'they are so *mellow*, they approach the state of rottenness.' As we were parting, the gentleman said: 'You may be interested to know that my name is Thomas Hardy.'"

Mark Twain is said to have once had a similar experience with Hardy.

At the sale of A. Edward Newton's library on April 17, 1941, Robert Burns's *Poems*, Kilmarnock, 1786, described in the catalogue of the sale as "the rare first edition of one of the most famous books of the eighteenth century, . . .

54 Colby Library Quarterly

apparently the first copy in the paper-backed boards to appear at public sale in America," was sold for \$2,950. Only 612 copies of this edition were printed, and few of them seem to have survived. The extreme improbability that the Colby Library will ever have the good fortune to acquire a copy may therefore be taken for granted. In the light of these facts, the library is greatly indebted to Walter Cary, of the Class of 1890, for the gift of a splendid facsimile reproduction of the *Kilmarnock Burns*—one so expertly done as to deceive the eye of any casual observer. Mr. Cary has also presented to the library a copy of *The Story of the Kilmarnock Burns*, in which 150 years of Burns history is gathered into useful and compact form.

At the meeting of the Colby Library Associates commemorating the centenary of Henry James on April 15, 1943, Miss Mary E. Raymond presented to the library eight letters and a postcard written by the novelist's brother, William James. Miss Raymond was a student under Professor James in one of his early classes at Radcliffe College. The letters, all in his autograph, were written to her over a period of years, from 1895 to 1908.

On the bicentennial anniversary of the birth of Thomas Jefferson, early in April, the Colby Library opened an exhibition (arranged by Miss Mary D. Herrick) of books by and about him. The oldest book in the exhibit was Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. First printed in Paris in 1785, this book appeared in America in 1788. The Colby copy, the second American edition, was printed in Philadelphia for M. Carey, November 12, 1794.

A prominent position in the exhibition was given to the *Catalogue of the Library of the United States*, Washington, D. C., J. Elliot, 1815. In this catalogue Jefferson's fine private library is listed; he had offered it, in 1814, to the Library Committee of Congress, to help replace the volumes lost in the burning of the Congressional Library in the

Colby Library Quarterly 55

fall of 1814. Extreme opposition was encountered, and of the 49 college graduates then in Congress 34 voted against accepting Jefferson's library. Fortunately the opposition was unsuccessful. The Colby copy of the *Catalogue* was presented to Waterville College in 1822 by Mark L. Hill, a Trustee of the college from 1821 to 1826.



THE BOOK ARTS COLLECTION

BY HAROLD E. CLARK

ON May 24, 1939, Dr. Edward F. Stevens, '89, wrote to Professor Rush: "Does the Colby Library 'go in' at all for the 'Arts of the Book'?", adding the remark that there were items in his private collection which he would be pleased to donate to the library. Professor Rush replied that there was interest in a book arts collection, that only lack of funds prevented his pressing the matter, but that any material which Dr. Stevens might donate would be received eagerly and cared for properly. Such was the beginning of the Book Arts Collection of the Colby Library. During the four years which have since passed, many letters have been received from Dr. Stevens giving wise counsel on the Book Arts Collection; and many letters have heralded the arrival of some new gift from him, of which the Library could be justly proud. Commencements and college anniversaries have been occasions which have been made notable by the gift of a memorial book from Dr. Stevens's library.

Gradually the Colby library staff has been culling the open stacks, the librarian's office and the locked cases, and has removed the bulk of the material which should be contained in the Collection. This included, of course, the library's only incunabulum, also examples of early English printers and some especially interesting Dutch folios, facsimiles of fifteenth-century printing, manuscript pages, all D. B. Updike, Thomas Mosher, Bruce Rogers, and Fred