

Colby



Colby Quarterly

Volume 1
Issue 12 *October*

Article 12

October 1945

Anniversaries

Frederick A. Pottle

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

Recommended Citation

Colby Library Quarterly, series 1, no.12, October 1945, p.197-198

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 197

art, and to note the range of countries which they represent—England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Holland, and America. Among many we may note the following: Bonner, *Bredvold, *Davis, Eddy, Gläser, Gwynn, Handro, Heidenhain, *R. F. Jones, Korn, *Leslie, Pons, *Quintana, Reimer, *Taylor, and *Carl Van Doren. The Colby Library already possesses at least one separate publication on Swift by each of the scholars and critics whose names are starred. Herman Teerink's *Bibliography of Swift* we hope to add to the Colby shelf before long.

One indubitable mark of a man's greatness is his power to stir the minds of thoughtful readers. The other day, as I drove through mile after mile of forest in this lovely state of Maine, I was moved to recall those pregnant lines of Swift's which set Carlyle to working out his *Sartor Resartus*: "What is that which we call land . . . but a fine coat faced with green? . . . Observe how sparkish a periwig adorns the head of a beech, and what a fine doublet of white satin is worn by the birch." At that moment, for me, two hundred years after his death, Swift became a Maine author!



ANNIVERSARIES

SEPTEMBER 28 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Louis Pasteur, and October 31 will mark the sesquicentennial of the birth of John Keats. If we had Harvard's wealth of Keats material or could borrow Pasteur's *Oeuvres* from the Bibliotheca Osleriana in McGill University, we might do more than merely mention these dates. But we don't and can't. Trimming our memorial sails to a more modest breeze, we shall on October 19 open an exhibition which has been assembled in observation of a double anniversary. On October 19, 1845, the first performance of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* took place at Dresden; and on the same day in 1745, Jonathan Swift, the fiery and enigmatic Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, died.

198 Colby Library Quarterly

We wish that we could solve what Odell Shepard has called "the riddle of Jonathan Swift." Alas, we cannot. "To think of him," said Thackeray, "is like thinking of the ruin of a great empire." Richard Garnett called Swift "one of the most tragic figures of English literature." But at least one product of his tormented mind has become known all over the world, and on the Swift bicentenary the Associates in Waterville will be privileged to inspect a superlatively fine copy of the first edition of the *Travels* of Lemuel Gulliver. Published in London in 1726, this copy has been borrowed for the occasion from that good friend of the Colby Library, Mr. H. Bacon Collamore, of Hartford, Connecticut. Library Associates remember with pleasure Mr. Collamore's vivid and instructive talks on his Robinson and his Robert Frost books, and will hope that he may be able to be present himself when we open the exhibition which includes his *Gulliver's Travels*.



NOTES AND MEMORANDA

RALPH Waldo Emerson spoke at this college on August 11, 1863. In the course of his address he recalled an episode in the history of ancient Greece—a story well worth repeating:

"Pytheas of Aegina was victor . . . at the Isthmian games. He came to the poet Pindar and wished him to write an ode in his praise, and inquired what was the price of a poem. Pindar replied that he should give him one talent, about a thousand dollars of our money. 'A talent!' cried Pytheas; 'Why, for so much money I can erect a statue of bronze in the temple.' 'Very likely.' On second thoughts, he returned and paid for the poem. And now not only all the statues of bronze in the temples of Aegina are destroyed, but the temples themselves, and the very walls of the city are utterly gone, whilst the ode to Pindar, in praise of Pytheas, remains entire."