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James Humphry, III

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Professor Weber's article in the *New Colophon*, based upon the materials in the rare book room of the Colby Library, at last makes clear what happened. Or isn't it clear, even yet?



AN "UNKNOWN" BOOK-COLLECTOR

By JAMES HUMPHRY, III

THROUGH the generosity of Mr. James A. Healy, of New York City, the Colby College Library has recently received a copy of Eugene Lyons' *Our Unknown Ex-President: A Portrait of Herbert Hoover*. This biographical study throws a clear and much-needed light upon the character and career of our former president, but it is not this fact that holds our attention here and now. It will interest Colby Library Associates to learn that Herbert Hoover shares their love of books, and that in the course of his travels he has assembled a remarkable library. Eugene Lyons' account of one book in that library is worth repeating:

One of the old books that intrigued him was the celebrated *De Re Metallica* published in 1556 by Agricola, the Latin pen name of a German scientist of that century. Though scholars had tried to translate it . . . in the intervening centuries, they had given up the task as hopeless. . . . On and off for years Hoover and . . . Mrs. Hoover . . . had played with the book, translating passages for the fun of it. . . . In 1907 the Hoovers decided to undertake a translation in all earnestness. They carted their notes and manuscripts with them all around the world . . . and in five years they were ready with the first accurate English translation of the classic.

Some years before, Hoover had helped put his friend Edgar Rickard into business in London as publisher of a mining journal. . . . The magazine had prospered. It now sponsored the publication of Agricola in an elegant format, bound in white vellum like the medieval original edition, and reproducing the original wood-cuts and initial letters. It is today a highly valued collector's item.*

* Lyons, *op. cit.*, New York, Doubleday, 1948; page 135.

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In the introduction to Hoover's book, we are told that although very little is known of Agricola's family or early life, his real name was Bauer, meaning "peasant," the name Agricola being the Latinized form. The work *De Re Metallica* was completed in 1550, sent to the press in 1553, and published one year after the author's death in 1555. "As to Agricola's contribution to the science of mining and metallurgy," so Hoover states in the introduction, "*De Re Metallica* speaks for itself. While he describes, for the first time, scores of methods and processes, no one would contend that they were discoveries or inventions of his own. They represent the accumulation of generations of experience and knowledge; but by him they were, for the first time, to receive detailed and intelligent exposition. Until Schuler's work nearly two centuries later, it was not excelled."

Oddly enough, no correct German translation exists, "a sad commentary on his countrymen." There is an Italian translation by Michelangelo Florio, who dedicated his work to Queen Elizabeth. *De Re Metallica* went through four Latin editions and three known German editions. A French edition and a Spanish edition are reputed to have been made, but no copy of either has been found. An English translation was made but not published; Mr. and Mrs. Hoover were the first to translate and publish in English this monumental work of the sixteenth century.

In preparing copy for the printer Agricola experienced a long delay in getting the woodcuts made. Some of them were, presumably, the work of Basilius Wefring. Agricola stated: "I have hired illustrators to delineate their forms, lest descriptions which are conveyed by words should either not be understood by men of our times, or should cause difficulty to posterity." The Hoovers reproduced all these illustrations. An examination of the numerous woodcuts shows some very interesting and amusing conceptions of the problems of metallurgy some four hundred years ago. The excellent typography of the volume is much en-

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hanced by the beautiful and carefully executed initial letters at the beginning of each chapter, and by the interesting devices at the end of each chapter.

What the excerpt from Eugene Lyons' book quoted above does *not* tell is that, after Hoover's 640-page volume had been printed by Albert Frost & Sons of Rugby, England, the author inscribed one copy "To my good friend / Miss Gertrude Lane / from / Herbert Hoover." In time, this copy, along with many other books from Miss Lane's library, reached the shelves of Colby College. Thus, even before Mr. Healy's gift arrived to tell us about Herbert Hoover's bibliographical interests, the sumptuous copy of *De Re Metallica*, by Georgius Agricola, was here. The title-page states that the work was "translated from the first Latin edition of 1556 by Herbert Clark Hoover and Lou Henry Hoover," and the ex-president's inscription links him with Colby College; for it declares that Gertrude Lane, our good friend and honorary graduate (D. H. L., '29), was also *his* "good friend."



TWO MORE "TORRENTS"

IN our February 1947 issue, the fiftieth anniversary of Edwin Arlington Robinson's *The Torrent and The Night Before* was celebrated by the publication of (1) a list of persons to whom Robinson sent copies in December 1896 or later, and (2) a census of extant copies of the little blue book. We were able to list only 112 names of recipients, and of extant copies of *The Torrent* we were able to locate only fifty-six. In our August 1947 issue this number was increased to fifty-nine, and No. 60 was added to the list in our issue for February 1948. It will interest all admirers of Robinson to learn that two more copies have now come to light:

No. 61. Inscribed to "C. C. Everett / with compliments of E. A. Robinson / 16 December, 1896." This copy is now in the Harris Collection in the Brown University Library.