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Midsummer Restrospect

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NOW that another college-year has ended, the Colby Library Associates can profitably cast their eyes back over the road just traversed and enjoy a momentary breathing spell before setting out on a further climb. The last occasion which has been reported in these pages was the one-hundredth anniversary of the publication of Longfellow’s Evangeline. The poet’s journal contains the record on October 30, 1847: “Evangeline published.” On October 30, 1947, the Colby Library Associates observed this anniversary with a meeting which was reported in our pages for November 1947. Let us review what has happened since that date.

At the November meeting of the Associates Mr. Benjamin W. Early spoke both entertainingly and informatively on “Robert Southey, Poet Laureate.” The December meeting marked the official opening of the Edwin Arlington Robinson Treasure Room in the Miller Library, and on this occasion Mr. Philo C. Calhoun spoke on, and read from, Dickens’ Christmas Carol. On exhibition at this time were many breath-taking copies of the Carol from Mr. Calhoun’s own unrivaled collection.

Jacob Abbott (whose portrait faces this page) was the subject of the next meeting of the Associates. In January 1848 Abbott wrote the preface to his Summer in Scotland, published later in the same year, and January 1948 therefore provided a convenient centennial occasion, not only for surveying the life and work of this prolific author, but also for exhibiting the extensive Abbott Collection in the Colby College Library. A group of undergraduate mem-
bers of the Associates addressed the meeting, calling attention to Jacob Abbott's success as a teacher (among his pupils was Henry W. Longfellow), his notoriety as a religious writer (he called forth a hostile attack by Cardinal Newman in one of the famous Tracts published in the days of that earlier Oxford Movement), his immense success as a writer of juvenile stories (generation after generation of boys throughout the nineteenth century was brought up on "Little Rollo"), and his high repute as a popular historian (Abraham Lincoln testified from the White House that almost all the history he knew had been gleaned from Abbott's histories). Jacob Abbott was the author of more than two hundred books, and more than four hundred copies of these books are now in the Colby collection.

The collecting and exhibiting of these volumes provided an opportunity for investigating other Abbott collections than our own. In various libraries throughout the State of Maine, in the Boston and New York Public Libraries, in the Harvard and Columbia University Libraries, in the collections of the American Antiquarian Society and the Massachusetts Historical Society, as well as in various private libraries where Jacob Abbott has been collected, copies of his numerous books have been compared with those in the Colby College Library. The result of this investigation has been the accumulation of a large body of bibliographical information about Abbott, beyond anything heretofore available. Under the editorship of Professor Weber and with the assistance and active interest of Librarian Humphry, this information is shortly to be placed at the service of students, librarians, collectors, and all who are interested in Jacob Abbott, through the publication, by the Colby College Press, of A Bibliography of Jacob Abbott. Ten years ago there were only five or six Abbott books in the Colby Library; the Bibliography, which ought to be ready for early Fall publication, will now run to over a hundred and fifty pages, listing hundreds of editions.

The February meeting of the Associates was marked by
an exhibition of books in fine bindings, borrowed for this occasion from the Portland library of Mr. Henry F. Merrill, whose collection of Standard Authors in Limited Editions—all of them bound in sumptuous leather or artistically handled cloth—is well known in southern Maine. The meeting at which this exhibition was opened was addressed by Librarian Humphry on the history of book-binding as a fine art.

In this same month, college officials were notified that the little book of *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett* (reviewed in our pages last November) had been chosen as one of the Fifty Books of the Year by the jury of the American Institute of Graphic Arts. This book and its forty-nine companions went on exhibition in New York in March, and shortly thereafter began a national tour. The exhibition of these Fifty Books will arrive on the Colby campus in September, in time for the opening of the new college year. Among those to whose attention the *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett* came was Emily Hanson Obear (Colby, ’14); her long-continued interest in Miss Jewett’s work has resulted in the two sonnets which we print on page 124. The first of these sonnets has previously appeared in *Maine and Vermont Poems* (edited by Henry Harrison) in 1935, but the second is here published for the first time.

The March Revolutions of 1848 are well known to all students of European history. March 1948 provided a suitable occasion for Professor Carl G. Anthon to address the Library Associates on “1848—Year of Revolutions.” The text of his address has been printed in the April 1948 issue of the *Colby Alumnus* (pages 7-10). In April Professor Herbert L. Newman spoke on “The Greatest Book in the World”—the Bible. Both occasions were accompanied by appropriate exhibitions in the new cases in the Robinson Treasure Room.

In May we exhibited the Cuala Press books presented by Mr. James A. Healy (as announced in our February issue). This exhibition was opened at a meeting of the Associates,
to whom Dr. Richard Ellmann, of the English Department at Harvard, spoke on William Butler Yeats.

For Commencement in June, the exhibition cases were filled with the "Sentimental" books or association-items which were listed in the pages of our May issue. Since the publication of that issue, our collection of such presentation-copies and inscribed volumes has been greatly enriched by the gift of many more that belong in this category, all presented by Miss Margaret Perry, of Hancock, New Hampshire. It was Miss Perry's mother who painted the portrait of Edwin Arlington Robinson that now hangs in the room dedicated to his memory.

For July, an exhibition in the Treasure Room was proposed, commemorating the sesquicentennial anniversary of the invention or discovery of lithography. But that far-off event of 1798 seemed so likely to have little success in attracting attention away from the conventions in Philadelphia, that we have allowed the month to slip by without making any lithographic survey. May the ghost of Alois Senefelder not haunt our quiet hill!

LINES FROM AN EXULTANT BOOK-COLLECTOR

on receiving a copy of a coveted First Edition

By David Patterson

Ah! I've got it! Lucky me!
It's the right book, you can see:

Here on page two-ninety-nine,
See that printer's error shine!

Late "corrected" copies lack
This prized error near the back.

Now I'm "set" to gloat and shout:
For here's the book that reads without!