

# Colby



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specially dear to me as opening my eyes to that dear despised foolish and brilliant 18th century in Italy, which no one saw till you told us to look. Do send me a copy, and of the other book also, of which I have not heard.<sup>6</sup>—I don't send you my "opuses," as they are novels nowadays, and I know novels bore you. They do me too—I mean the new ones, and my own among them.

Dear Miss Paget, I must end as I began, with a word of very deep, very real sympathy.

Yours sincerely

EDITH WHARTON

P.S.

Would you kindly tell Mrs. Scott that I have her letter and her photos of the Villa Capponi, and that I will speak of it if the occasion arises—though this year no one is buying anything chez nous! We are all trying to sell instead.<sup>7</sup>

I send the message through you because I can't remember just how she should be addressed!



### AN ARNOLD-FORMAN-WISE ITEM

with a letter from "Tom Wise"

ON June 12, 1840, a seventeen-year-old schoolboy at Rugby recited with great "roll and vigour" (as one of his listeners reported) a poem entitled *Alaric at Rome* which had just been awarded the annual Poetry Prize at the famous school. A Rugby firm, Combe & Crossley, shortly printed, anonymously, a few copies of the prize poem,

<sup>6</sup> This "other book" may have been *The Spirit of Rome*, which had recently (1906) been published by John Lane.

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Wharton was not in the market for a villa of her own, it would seem, although it was about this time that she and her husband gave up their New York quarters and went to Paris to live. The financial depression in America from the spring to the end of 1907 perhaps accounts for her comment in the postscript.

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bound them in pink paper wrappers, and offered them for sale at sixpence each. Eventually the entire edition disappeared from sight and, in time, from memory. Forty-eight years passed. Then, early in 1888, a copy of *Alaric at Rome* came into the possession of Edmund Gosse. Someone with a childish handwriting had written "By M. Arnold" on the pamphlet, which by this time had lost its pink cover, but Gosse was skeptical about the authorship (for apparently no one in literary circles had ever heard of the pamphlet before). Gosse accordingly wrote to Arnold himself. "Yes!" replied Matthew Arnold, "*Alaric at Rome* is my Rugby prize poem, and I think it is better than my Oxford one, *Cromwell*."

After reading the poem Gosse agreed. Declared he: "As the work of a boy of seventeen it is remarkably accomplished; the versification is correct and even vigorous, [and] the thoughts are not unworthy of the subject. . . ." Gosse's discovery stirred other book-collectors to action. By 1892 Thomas J. Wise had (with the help of "a provincial bookseller") secured a copy and by December, 1893, two more copies had turned up. Wise remarked: "It is unlikely that more than a few examples are in existence in addition to the four already noted."

Thereupon, in characteristic fashion, Wise decided to print "a few copies for private circulation only." Accordingly, in 1893, he had Richard Clay and Sons, Ltd., print "a type-facsimile reprint of the original edition," and a copy of this reprint has now been acquired by the Colby College Library. This is a most interesting acquisition, and interesting for a number of reasons. First of all, it makes available for the first time at Colby the text of this early composition by a famous poet; for *Alaric at Rome* is not included in any volume of Matthew Arnold's *Poetical Works*, and it has, therefore, been heretofore inaccessible at Colby. Second: it was through their study of the type of this acknowledged reprint that those famous literary

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detectives, Messrs. Carter and Pollard, were able to trace to the print shop of Richard Clay the puzzling hybrid font of type used in the fake "1847" Reading *Sonnets* of Mrs. Browning, which eventually led to pinning the notorious forgeries on Thomas J. Wise. Third: it was from this same setting of type that Wise printed what is now known to be his "1840" forgery of *Alaric at Rome*. Carter and Pollard did not include this title in their 1934 list of Wise's forgeries, but Roland Baughman later proved (in the *Huntington Library Bulletin*, April, 1936) that the *Alaric* for which J. H. Wrenn paid Wise nearly \$200 (i.e., the copy now in the University of Texas Library) is really a forgery printed from the same type as that used in printing the 1893 edition now acquired by Colby.

And there is a fourth reason for the special interest that attaches to our copy of *Alaric*. When the *Pall Mall Budget* (London, December 3, 1891) announced the forthcoming publication of the poem, it stated (page 2046): "A facsimile reprint of it, with an introduction by Mr. Buxton Forman, is to be produced for private circulation." But when the reprint finally appeared, two years later, it had no "introduction by Mr. Buxton Forman" but, instead, a Preface by Thomas J. Wise. In her *Further Inquiry into the Guilt of Certain Nineteenth-Century Forgers* (New York, Knopf, 1944), Miss Fannie E. Ratchford remarked (page 96): "That Forman saw the [1893] pamphlet—if indeed he did not actually help it through the press—is testified by the presence of a copy in his library as sold in 1920." The Colby copy helps to clear up the uncertainties about the editing of the book. For, laid in at the half-title, there is an autograph note from Wise to Forman which reads as follows:

[Office of] H. Rubecck's,  
59, Mark Lane, London,  
16—11 [i.e., November]—1893

My dear Forman

Thanks for your corrections: they improve the preface wonderfully.

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Will you add to your kindness by returning the enclosed as promptly as you did the copy?

A[lwa]ys y[ou]rs  
TOM WISE

The Preface, in our printed copy, is dated "*December, 1893.*" There is no indication how many copies were printed: "a few," according to a note on page v. The Colby copy bears the bookplate of Donald Malcolm Campbell, Jr., but the presence of the note to Forman invites one to surmise that this book was once in the library of H. Buxton Forman and may be the very copy to which Miss Ratchford refers.



### ANOTHER LETTER OF SARAH ORNE JEWETT

**L**ETTERS from the gentle and gracious writer who made South Berwick, Maine, famous continue to turn up. Thanks to the interest and generosity of Mr. John Frost, of New York University, we have been able to add Letter No. 46 to the Jewett Collection at Colby. A small portion of the paper has been torn from the head of the letter, removing the record of the place from which it was written; but from the statement in the third paragraph that "Mrs. Fields . . . is here" we may infer that the letter was written from South Berwick, and that Mrs. Fields was visiting Miss Jewett there, instead of being at her home in Boston. We conjecturally supply five words at the end of Miss Jewett's first paragraph where the paper is torn.

Mr. Frost has not only given us the autograph but has also supplied information about the recipient of the letter and about various matters that are mentioned in it. It was written to Fred Holland Day (1864-1933) of Norwood, Massachusetts, and Five Islands, Maine. He was a wealthy and eccentric bachelor who in 1893 founded the publishing firm of Copeland and Day. Shortly after Fred Day's