

Recent Acquisitions

Of the several hundred titles added during the past year to our various special collections, a fair number have been authored by women, and it may be of interest to pass in review a selection from these recently-acquired books written by ladies of literature.

Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale's *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D., During the Last Twenty Years of His Life* was published on Lady Day (March 25), 1786, and went out of print before nightfall. Our copy of the first edition has recently been joined by a copy of the second edition, containing the rare errata slip, which the publisher had ready within two weeks of selling off the one thousand copies of the first edition. Mrs. Thrale had known Johnson for nearly eighteen years, and Johnson had accompanied the Thrales on trips to Wales and to France; but Hester's friendship with Johnson cooled after her marriage to the Italian musician Gabriel Piozzi. The *Anecdotes* contains texts of many of Johnson's minor poems.

Among the ladies mentioned in Mrs. Thrale's *Anecdotes* is Hannah More (1745-1833), whom Samuel Johnson called "the most powerful versificatrix in the English language." Mrs. More (she never married, but on reaching middle age adopted the courtesy title "Mrs.") was a friend and correspondent of Horace Walpole and of young Thomas Babington Macaulay. For our Leary Collection of children's literature we have recently catalogued eight of Hannah More's penny tracts, similar in size and appearance to the popular chapbooks of the time, but intended to offer moral and religious instruction. Typical of these is *Black Giles, the Poacher*, a story about a rat-catcher, of which we can boast not only the first part but its sequel as well, separately published.

One of the grandmothers of the gothic romance was Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823). She too was an acquaintance of Mrs. Thrale, the two ladies having met at the home of Josiah Wedgwood. Perhaps Mrs. Radcliffe's best-known novel is *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), which our Library owns in a first edition, and which has now been joined by a two-volume near-miniature (12½ cm.) edition of an ear-

lier book by Mrs. Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, our copy bearing an Exeter imprint of 1834. Unlike Hannah More's tracts, Mrs. Radcliffe's romances do not purport to offer moral instruction; they are notable rather for their ingenious plots and their poetical landscapes. Some of Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptive passages evoke scenes reminiscent of landscapes by Claude Lorraine or Salvator Rosa, and among her literary descendants may be named Brockden Brown and Edgar Allan Poe.

Quite different from the mountain vistas of Mrs. Radcliffe and the unpretentious didacticism of Hannah More are the decorous childhood scenes in the illustrated books of Kate Greenaway (1846-1901). Three Greenaway volumes, presented to our Library by Bernice Leary, have recently found a place with several others on our shelves. *Kate Greenaway's Birthday Book for Children* (1880) offers a tiny drawing and a four-line poem for each day of the year, and a full-page colored illustration for each month. The little verses in this book are said to have impelled Robert Louis Stevenson to direct his muse in a similar vein; if so, it is partly to this volume that we owe the inspiration for *A Child's Garden of Verses*.

Kate Greenaway's *Language of Flowers* (1884) was one of her most popular books, though her illustrations for this volume seem not to have appealed to the art-critic John Ruskin. In one of his many letters to Kate, Ruskin wrote of these flower pictures that "they look as if you had nothing to paint them with but starch and camomile tea." Our copy is really more colorful than Ruskin implies. Robert Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, illustrated by Kate Greenaway (1888), is the third of our Greenaway additions, and concerning this title Ruskin, more indulgently, wrote to Kate that "You really have got through your rats with credit—and the Piper is sublime."

The Female Poets of America is a hefty anthology of verse published in Philadelphia at the middle of the nineteenth century by Rufus Griswold. Griswold, as Poe's literary executor, did some disservice to that poet's later reputation, but he does deserve credit for his part in certain other commendable activities, including the establishment of a library in the New York City prison. Three editions of *The Female Poets* (1849, 1856, and 1876), from the library of the late Thomas Ollive Mabbott, have recently been placed on the shelves of our Mabbott-Poe Collection.

Among the ninety-three literary women represented in *The Female Poets* is Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, who was the subject of Poe's "To Helen." But Griswold's anthology ranges back to the Colonial days of Anne Bradstreet; and it includes, among much else, selections

from Phyllis Wheatley (1753?-1784), the black poetess who was brought to Boston in a slave ship when she was eight years old; the noble and eccentric Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), friend of Emerson and Thoreau and author of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (which we have acquired in a first edition); Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), here represented by poems which antedate her famous "Battle Hymn of the Republic" of Civil War days; Lucy Larcom (1824-1893), friend of John Greenleaf Whittier and author of *A New England Girlhood*; and Phoebe and Alice Cary, the bucolic sisters from Mt. Healthy, Ohio.

A contemporary reviewer of *The Female Poets of America* harshly asserted that it was "unfortunate that so many poetical flowers . . . born to blush unseen . . . have been unnaturally forced into the bloom of print, where they look as sadly misplaced as buttercups in a bouquet." But a gentler and perhaps sager view of Griswold's anthology is expressed in a graceful Spenserian stanza which the late Professor Mabbott penned on the flyleaf of our copy of his 1856 edition. We quote the last five lines:

Save one, they did not know the poet's rage
Of heavenly inspiration—yet from towers
And fields and hills they drew reflections sage
Which to my heart in its most stormy hours

Like Zephyrs bring the fragrance of forgotten flowers.

One of the colorful and rebellious spirits of the post-World War One generation was Nancy Cunard (1896-1965), who is said to figure as Lucy Tantamount in Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point*. In the early 1930's Nancy Cunard operated the Hours Press in Paris, where she printed works by Ezra Pound, Robert Graves, Norman Douglas, Laura Riding and others; and she is remembered for the wide-ranging anthology of essays on black culture which she compiled, nearly forty years ago, with contributions from Samuel Beckett, Theodore Dreiser, Langston Hughes, Jomo Kenyatta and many others. We are pleased to have received during the past year copy number seven of the post-humously-published first edition of Nancy Cunard's *Thoughts About Ronald Firbank* (1971), one of 226 copies printed by the Albondocani Press. This attractive little item is a gift to our library from Ronald Firbank's bibliographer, Miriam J. Benkovitz. It was Miriam Benkovitz who persuaded Nancy Cunard to set down her reminiscences of Firbank.

Among the younger poets, we look forward to hearing from Rochelle Holt, whose lines often appear in limited editions from her own Ragnarok Press of Sioux City, Iowa. *A Seismograph of Feeling* (1972),

one of 125 copies hand set and printed by the author and her husband, is a collection of Rochelle's poems, as is the more recent *Wing Span of an Albatross* (1972), "an adult alphabet book" in the form of a set of oblong cards in a slip case.

The latest volume we have received from the Ragnarok Press is an attractive anthology entitled *Eidolons* (1972), one of 300 copies, in which Rochelle Holt has brought together previously-unpublished selections of poems and poetic prose from a diversity of talents. Heading the list of Rochelle's contributors is Anaïs Nin, a writer of singularly feminine perception and fancy, whose monumental diary has been said by Henry Miller to deserve a place beside the revelations of St. Augustine and Petronius. A recent Hawaiian page from the *Diary* opens the Ragnarok Press *Eidolons*, which is rounded out with one of Rochelle's own poems.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DON FARRAN of Rowan, Iowa, is a retired Commander, U.S. Navy. During the late 1930's he was an editor and administrator in the Federal Theatre Project, the American Imprints Inventory, and the Federal Writers' Project. He is the author of a long narrative poem, *Ballad of the Silver Ring*, which was published by the Prairie Press in 1935, and he collaborated with Douglas C. McMurtrie in authoring *Wings for Words: The Story of Johann Gutenberg and His Invention of Printing*.

GORDON S. HAIGHT is Emily Sanford Professor Emeritus of English Literature at Yale University. He edited the seven volumes of *The George Eliot Letters* (1954-55), for which he is preparing a supplementary eighth volume, and he recently edited *The Portable Victorian Reader* (1972). His *George Eliot: A Biography* (1968) is the definitive work on its subject, and he is now writing a biography of George Henry Lewes.

JOHN MARTIN, M.D., neurosurgeon and book collector, now makes his home in Clarinda, Iowa. He has served on the faculty of Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago, as Chief of the Department of Neurological Service at Walter Reed Army Hospital, and as Consultant to the Surgeon General, U.S. Army. His private library of notable books in the history of medicine will form the nucleus of the rare books collection in the new Health Sciences Library at The University of Iowa.