A Surprise Present

Mrs. Clinton H. Haskell of Evanston, widow of a collector who gave to the Library a notable collection of Sherman letters and maps and another collection of Washington family papers, has just made a gift to the Library of 181 books on Washington, plus some letters and prints. This generous act allows us to fill out our collection on the life of the first President and, what is more, by the sale of duplicates we may acquire still more Washington material.

We are indebted to Mrs. Haskell for her foresight in this regard as well as for her generosity and friendly interest. Gifts like this one increase the effectiveness of the Library and give a decided “lift” to the detailed searching and selection and ordering by which our year’s acquisitions are built up.

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A Rembrandt in Easy Lessons

Among current best sellers are “how-to-do-it” books to instruct amateur artists and craftsmen. That this market existed also in earlier times is evidenced by books exemplified in a recent acquisition—The Art of Colouring and Painting Landscapes (Baltimore, 1815). In it, minute directions are given on the selection and preparation of materials, and on how to produce India ink drawings as well as water colors. The author overlooks no suggestion which might guide the faltering hand. He encourages with words of wisdom, “Make choice of the easiest design you possibly can procure for the first essay,” and “In your first attempts from nature let your own discretion be your guide.”

Technical manuals have not survived in large numbers for they, like children’s books, were considered expendable and were not preserved for posterity as family heirlooms.

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Franklin’s Kite

It’s not that Benjamin Franklin’s almanacs are scarcer than hen’s teeth; they just cost more. Almanacs suffered the fate of newspapers: they were thrown away if not worn out at the end of a year.

We took advantage of a recent sale to procure a copy of Poor Richard Improved; Being an Almanack for 1733 (Philadelphia, 1752). This is one of the second series of “Poor Richard” and his philosophical sayings, but we particularly wanted it because it contains Franklin’s report of his electrical experiment with the kite in a thunderstorm. The copy is in especially good physical condition.

Incidentally, this was the first purchase from the accumulated interest in the James Shearer Memorial Fund.

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Geodaesia

“First edition, very rare.”

“Four copies known.”

“None in America.”

When we read such descriptions of a book listed as Americana (alright, Americanum if you insist) our scalp begins to prick and our ears wiggle. There is a title for the Clements Library!

We have just had that experience in examining a Dutch dealer’s catalogue. The book is John Love’s Geodaesia: or, the Art of Surveying and Measuring of Land (London, 1688). What makes it Americana?

In his preface John Love sounds as though he had visited America. He says: “I have seen young men, in America, often nonplus’d so, that their books would not help them forward, particularly in Carolina, about laying out lands.” Furthermore, in his sub-title, Love advises “How to lay out New Lands in America, or elsewhere.” He maintained there was no other book on surveying so easy and detailed as his, and he insisted on the use of the surveyor’s chain only. The fact that most of our surveyors did use the chain for measuring suggests the acceptance of Love’s precepts. The book definitely was for amateurs going to settle in new lands. It contains mathematical tables and many illustrations. We now own it.
SONG

At the Anniversary of the Connecticut Agricultural Societies for Cattle Shows, Fairs, and Exhibitions of Domestic Manufactures for 1822. See Fathers and Sons, and see Mothers and Daughters;

Come forward to grace this occasion;
All's cheerful and lively, no sluggard now loiters,
No pompous parade, or commotion;
Each object is pleasing, and no one is teasing.

For office, for rank or promotion.
The roads are enliven'd with Swine and with Cattle,
The Sheep and the Lambs are all bleating;
The proud neighing Steed fit for service or battle,
And neighbours each other are greeting.

The Farmers now sally, from hill and from valley,
To exhibit the fruits of their labour;
With just emulation, to fill a good station,
With the farmers around, and his neighbour.

There are further verses, but this is enough. The poem is appended to a play, The Connecticut Emigrant (Hartford, 1822), designed to discourage those fair-weather settlers who would abandon Connecticut in order to seek their fortunes in the West. The nostalgic poem celebrates the virtues of the Nutmeg State. We acquired it from the Ely Fund.

Executive Committee

At the December meeting of the Board of Regents, the present members of the Associates Executive Committee were reappointed: Henry L. Newman, Lawrence Reynolds, Mrs. Benjamin S. Warren, and Renville Wheat. To fill the vacancy caused by the death of Ross Kidston, James Shearer II of Chicago was appointed to the Committee. His interest in the Library has been attested to over the last several years, and his enthusiasm will be welcomed by his colleagues.

Associates Choices

The Associates Executive Committee met on December 9 in Detroit, guests of Dr. Reynolds for luncheon. Aside from regular business concerning the membership, the Committee considered several items for purchase. As a result the Library acquired five rare and desirable titles.

Two of them were early Cambridge, Massachusetts, imprints concerned with a controversy in the church. It involved infant baptism and church membership for children. A compromise had been reached on the issue in 1662, but this official decision did not still the argument. Two powerful voices were raised in defense of the synod that authorized the baptism of children of baptized parents, whether the parents had continued as church members or not. Thomas Shepard was the author of The Church-Membership of Children (1663), and Richard Mather wrote A Defence of the Answer and Arguments of the Synod (1664).

The next acquisition was Archibald Loudon's anthology, or Selection of Narratives in two volumes (Carlisle, Pa., 1808 and 1811). By its date it should not be so rare, yet it is. These books contain stories of Indian massacres and captures along the Appalachian frontier. Some of the stories are reprinted from newspapers or pamphlets, and others are original in this work. The whole turbulence of expansion is illuminated by these exciting happenings.

Various West India islands changed hands temporarily during the American Revolution, as French fought British. The French captured Granada on July 4, 1779, and immediately took over the local newspaper and published it in French. The first nine issues of the Gazette Royale de la Grenade (Fort Royal, 1779) were a real find, as the great newspaper collection in the American Antiquarian Society has no copies of this paper. The issues contain accounts of the war, ordinances by the commandant, and the usual notices of taxes, sales, slaves.

Independence of the Press

So much has been written about John Peter Zenger and his championing of the right of a free press to criticize the government, that his acquittal in 1735 is often taken to mark the end of the struggle in this country. But there remained other battles to establish the independence of the press. One of these was led by William Goddard, a printer in Baltimore.

In his newspaper, the Maryland Journal, Goddard published two unsigned letters that commented favorably on General Howe's proposals for peace in 1776. This was too much for the local Whig Club, a group of 110% patriots. They hauled Goddard to a club meeting and tried to force him the names of the letter writers. Goddard refused to tell them, and so the club ordered him to leave town. He removed to Annapolis and appealed to the Council of Safety over this vigilante action. The Council defended Goddard and censured the Whig Club. Stung, the club issued a statement in an attempt to justify its action. Goddard then published the whole story in pamphlet form, The Prowess of the Whig Club (Baltimore, 1777), satirizing and ridiculing the pretensions of the club. This is the rare pamphlet we have just acquired.

The story doesn't end there. The club made the same mistake again, angrily banishing Goddard from Baltimore a second time. Goddard then appealed to the legislature, and the Whig Club was forced to issue a public apology. In other words, a printer was not to be coerced by his own public.
A Compendious Account Of the Late War
(Boston, 1817)

Paul Bunyan’s stature was scaled to the magnitude of his deeds; mighty Sam Stubbs was abbreviated only in name and frame. Present Army regulations would have kept out our hero: height, five feet; age 65; children, six. But recruiters in the War of 1812 overlooked short-comers when the volunteer was eager to shoulder a rifle and “bagman.” According to the little corporal’s picturesque tale, he was indefatigable and indestructible. Read this sample of Yankee aplomb and prose:

“Our Commander ordered a retreat, but nature never formed any of our family you know for runners, so I waddled along as well as I could behind, but the red-coat villains overhauled me, and took me prisoner! but not until I had a fare shot at their head commander General Brock, who . . . bellowed out ‘run like a wounded buffalo to surrender, but I levelled my old faithful hess . . . and I heard no more of his croaking afterwards . . .’

After aiding next in the capture of Toronto, and the defense of Fort Erie, Stubbs was returning to the ploughshare in Kentucky when he was recalled to defend New Orleans.

Of this encounter he writes:

“About the break of day, they as bold as hungry wolves advanced to our entrenchments. . . . I could have dropped them as easy as a flock of benthumb’d wild turkeys, in a frosty morning, but I picked for those who had frog paws upon their shoulders, and the most lace upon their frocks —aye, the Corporal did his duty that day, I’ll warrant ye.”

The Corporal’s refreshing narrative is appended to a more prosaic history of the war, abridged from an account by John Lathrop in which there is no doughy little hero.

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San Domingo’s Revolution

Most of our purchases are of single books. They go on to the shelves next to books published at the same time; in the catalog their cards join other cards on the same topic. Little by little, then, collections on particular subjects or areas are built up. But the acquisitions of any one year are not likely to show any unity, and to the superficial observer it may appear that we have no policy of growth and buy miscellaneous books at random.

Once in awhile we are able to show a clear and steady hand by picking up several titles relating to the same event. We would like to do this frequently, but seldom does the opportunity present itself. However, in the last three months we have been able to buy twenty books and pamphlets relating to the revolution in San Domingo, which republic with the non-republic of Haiti compose the island of Hispaniola. This is the island on which Columbus landed in December 1492. The capital city of San Domingo, founded 1494, is the oldest white settlement in the New World. French and English buccaneers won a foothold on the island in the seventeenth century and as a result it was divided in the treaty of 1697, France getting the eastern two-thirds, or San Domingo. When the French Revolution succeeded, the free colored people were extended complete civil rights in 1791. The local whites adopted violent counter-measures, the slaves revolted, and the free mulattoes joined them. Many of the white French people fled to Philadelphia to save their lives.

France sent over a commission to restore peace, but all they did was free the slaves. Then a British force invaded the island and hung on until driven out in 1798 by Toussaint l’Ouverture. He restored order but aroused the jealousy of Napoleon, who sent out an army in 1802 to conquer Toussaint. Violating the
surrender terms, the French seized Toussaint and sent him to prison in France. This treachery reopened the warfare and provoked a general massacre of all whites. The French troops were glad to leave in 1809, and the whole messy affair prompted Napoleon to sell us Louisiana. San Domingo continued to be the victim of its own despots and foreign intervention until 1844, when it finally achieved independence and intermittent order.

All of the books we acquired deal with the period from 1791 to a history written in 1814. Added to the books we have on the exploration and early conflicts in the West Indies, they pick up the threads of a revolutionary spirit that brought the cloud of Napoleonic conquest into the western hemisphere and influenced our western expansion.

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The Fortress

Among the more than 800 manuscript maps in the Map Division of the Library is a small, brightly colored plan showing the substantial looking fort which in 1775 served as one of the defenses of New Providence Island in the Bahamas. In view of the War which was to begin during this climactic year on the mainland of North America and the importance of these and the other West Indian possessions of Great Britain in her struggle with the colonists and with France, the following excerpt of a report of this fort makes interesting reading indeed. The report is one made by Montfort Browne to the Earl of Dartmouth (to be found in the Library's Scarce Plan and is dated "New Providence, May 6, 1775:"

My Lord:

... Fort Nassau, which defends the western Entrance into this Harbour, is a square stone Fort, with 4 Bastions, mounting 46 Pieces of 12 and 18 Pounders; They are so crowded that they cannot be worked, and the insufficiency of the Walls (which are by no means able to resist the weight of the Guns) makes it very dangerous to fire them: On this Account I thought it advisable to order a six-

pounder at ye Entrance of the Fort to be used as a Morning and Evening Gun: This Fort is pallsadis, but has neither Ditch, Glacis, or covert way; it is commanded by high Hills on the South, from which an Enemy's musketry may easily prevent our standing to our Guns, and it is by no means tenable against a regular attack, nor is it proof against a nine Inch Shell . . . .

That the Island was captured during the next year by an American naval vessel was not therefore too surprising. Nor again, its return to British hands soon after.

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Our Oldest Book

Until the wonderful Hubert S. Smith Collection reached us late last fall, the oldest book in the Library was a manuscript copy of Solinus' Collectaneae rerum memorabilium, which is thought to have been written out about 1450. Now, however, we have a manuscript which is at least three centuries earlier. It is a manuscript copy of Vegetius' Epitoma rei militaris apparently made in England some time during the twelfth century. The late Seymour De Ricci's census of western manuscripts owned in the United States lists only three Vegetius manuscripts, not including the Smith-Clements example. None of the other three is as early as ours.

Flavius Vegetius Renatus, about whom almost nothing is known, apparently wrote his treatise on the art of war toward the end of the fourth century A.D., during the reign of Theodosius the Great. He tried to summarize Roman knowledge of warfare, but the results can hardly be described as clear or succinct. The work is divided into five parts, the first of which is a demand for reform of the army. The second book describes the duties of various ranks of soldiers and officers; the third consists of a series of military maxims, many of which were judged applicable to ground warfare well into the nineteenth century; the fourth book deals with fortifications and siegecraft (considered the most valuable portion of the work during the Middle Ages); and the fifth book covers naval matters. Mr. Smith secured the manuscript principally for the fifth book, since it is one of the earliest known treatises on naval tactics.

Epitoma rei militaris was translated into English verse as early as 1458, for presentation to the King of England, and Gaxton translated the parts of it used by Christine de Pisan for his edition of her The Book of Fayettes of Armes and of Chyuary (1490). One of the strangest editions we have located is the mimeographed version issued by the Army War College, Washington, D.C., in 1947-48, in the eighteenth century translation by Lieutenant John Clarke.

Twenty-four tenth-to-fourteenth century manuscripts were used by Carl Lang for his standard recension of Vegetius published in 1869, but the Smith-Clements manuscript was not among those used. There are numerous textual variations from Lang's reconstructed text, and the present example is, therefore, excellent material for study. A later dissertation, Andreas Andersson's Studia Vegetiana (Upsala, 1938), contains a further list of variant readings, none of which match our version exactly.

In addition to the textual interest, there is also the calligraphic importance of the manuscript. It is one of the best secular English manuscripts of the twelfth century we have seen.