Tennessee Things in General

A Man With the improbable name of J. W. M. Breazeale wrote the kind of book most of us would write, if we produced one—one of those reminiscent, semi-autobiographical works that included everything that happened to interest him, everything, as the old saying goes, but the kitchen sink. The title is a candid warning: Life As It Is; or, Matters and Things in General (Knoxville, Tenn., 1842).

That’s only the beginning, to whet your appetite. The title runs on to explain that one may find included historical sketches of the exploration and settlement of Tennessee, manners and customs of the people, Indian troubles, two noted murderers, a burlesque of electioneering, descriptions of natural curiosities, a collection of anecdotes, and various legislative, judicial, and ecclesiastical incidents. What more could one ask?

Thomas W. Streeter had a copy which we did not attempt to buy when his books were auctioned. It sold for $800, plus ten percent. We are pleased to have picked up a copy for $250. It is a great well of source material, and Stanley F. Horn, Tennessee bibliographer, lists it among the eleven most important books on Tennessee before the Civil War.

Forerunner of Vermont Life

In February 1794 Anthony Haswell and Samuel MacKay of Williams College issued a proposal for a literary magazine which they hoped to publish at Bennington, Vermont. The first number appeared in April of that year under the title The Monthly Miscellany, or Vermont Magazine.

In the Preface the editors admitted that several of their friends had cautioned them that many undertakings of a similar nature had failed in other parts of the United States. They further admitted that the remote location of Vermont would make it particularly difficult to secure materials for publication. They hoped, nevertheless, that these disadvantages would be counterbalanced by the obvious need that this part of the country had for such a literary magazine; and that the new publication would “afford delight to many, give offence to none, and prove the happy mean of rendering important benefits to the inquiring mind, especially of the youthful rural genius.”

But the Vermont Magazine, alas, went the way of so many of its predecessors and expired after only six issues, in September 1794. Much of what it printed appears to have been copied from other sources, often without acknowledgment, but it also contained original articles, essays, and poetry (mostly pretty bad). We were recently able to acquire an entire run of this rare early Vermont periodical. According to McCorison’s Vermont Imprints, only two other libraries have the complete series.

More Clements Library Fellows

We are pleased to list additional Fellows since the first group of names was published in The Quarto for December. These persons have made contributions that afford us considerable solid support for acquisitions. The total is now 90!

Barrett, Mrs. John A., Newberry
Brown, Mr. & Mrs. A. Edward, St. Joseph
Brown, Regent Robert J., Kalamazoo
Delano, Earl W., Allegan
Ehrlich, Arthur W., Pekin, Ill.
Ehrlich, Mrs. Virginia S., Pekin, Ill.
Forsyth, Earl R., Bloomfield Hills
Hale, Miss Allison, Ann Arbor
Jackson, Lloyd M., Royal Oak
Kern, Paul J., New York
Kidston, James S., Chicago
Klancknik, James M., Chicago
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Honors to Our Governors

Two Members of our Associates' Board of Governors have appeared in the news lately. Dr. Lee D. van Antwerp, governor general of the Society of Mayflower Descendants (and himself descended from Plymouth Governor William Bradford) has been busy the past year in marking the 350th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims. In November he and his wife were in The Netherlands, where the Pilgrims began their voyage to America in 1620, and presented to Queen Juliana two gold commemorative medals of the Society. One showed the Mayflower and the arms of James I on its two sides; the other depicted a Pilgrim and the seal of the Plymouth colony. Dr. van Antwerp presented a duplicate pair to President Nixon in December.

(Her Majesty visited Ann Arbor in 1952 and received an honorary degree from the University.)

David W. Kendall was appointed by President Nixon as one of the eight incorporators of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Railpax) to create a plan for operating passenger trains nationally. His fellow directors have elected him their chairman.

All the News

In an average year we are lucky to obtain a single volume of newspapers. Yet this December we acquired over 50 volumes, all published before 1825, the largest addition to the newspaper division since the transfer of all pre-1865 newspapers from the Graduate Library three years ago.

In buying newspapers the objective is to find "runs"—a series of papers without missing issues. Incomplete runs complicate cataloging and cause gaps which are difficult to fill. We are fortunate that our recent acquisitions are nearly all complete.

The two longest runs we received are from Salem, Massachusetts for the years between 1800–1824. The SALEM GAZETTE was a staunch Federalist newspaper which opposed Jefferson, Madison, and the War of 1812. In January, we further expanded our holdings of this paper by purchasing several more complete runs and filling in gaps in our existing collection for the years between 1791–1799. The GAZETTE's rival over the years was the Anti-federalist SALEM REGISTER (name changed
This letterbook records the business of both the partnership and White’s independent mercantile activities. The first letter is dated 20 August 1791 and there are 235 copies of letters of White, Whittle, and Co., down to its dissolution in July, 1794. They are followed by 462 letters of Patrick White and Company, covering the period from 27 July 1794 to 14 August 1797.

The letterbook gives a very full account of the prices of commodities in Virginia in the 1790’s, as well as touching on matters concerning shipping costs, interest rates, banking, and the like. This item should help historians to a fuller understanding of economic conditions in the early American republic, and help answer questions concerning the standard of living in the Federalist period as well as several other pertinent but heretofore ignored questions about our past.

**Colonization**

**For Years We Have** been adding steadily to our antislavery material and at the same time acquiring titles by and about Negroes. We were glad to obtain a copy of the 1820 *Journal of Daniel Coker*, a Baltimore black minister who led 90 free Negroes back to Africa for resettlement. This was a project sponsored by the American Colonization Society. Coker’s journal indicates that the venture was successful, the group settling on Sherbro Island, off the coast of Sierra Leone, where Great Britain had established a colony of free Negroes thirty years earlier.

**An Italian Eye**

**Professor Elizabeth Cometti** of the University of West Virginia has worked at the Library, and she recently sent us her publication of the journal and letters of Count Francesco Dal Verme, *Seeing America and Its Great Men*. The young Milanese Count visited the United States in 1783–84, met numerous men of distinction, and wrote intelligently of his travels. He was tremendously impressed by the new country and reported to his father:

“Wasteland, unhealthy climate, poor people, ragged clothing—such is approximately the general idea of this continent in Europe. But oh how far from the truth is this! The land requires too little work to remain uncultivated; the robustness of the men, the fine color of the women attest the salubriousness of the climate; not only the abundance, but also the luxury in which
people live belies their reputed poverty. And the pleasure which everyone who is introduced to their society experiences is incontestable evidence of their gracious manner of living. The peasant, the American farmer, does not know what misery is; he eats meat four times a day and drinks tea twice a day. If money is scarce, everything is cheap."

From Boston the young traveler went up to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he had a letter of introduction to Mr. John Langdon. He was immediately taken in as a guest, and Mrs. Langdon's beauty stunned him. In his diary he wrote:

"Breakfast with the lady of the house; daylight increased rather than diminished my admiration for her. Went with Mr. Langdon to the Congregational meetinghouse, a large church. It is impossible to describe the beauty of the ladies, or their number, or the elegance of their attire, chiefly fashioned according to the latest French taste. From time to time, as if to enable the minister to catch his breath, four boys and some men sang psalms in counterpoint. Dinner and supper with the hosts. After dinner once more to the church; then paid some visits and had tea at one of the homes... On Monday took a walk around the town, which is small, but has a few fine residences. Dined at home, then visited the dancing school. This is held twice a week; the tuition is three dollars a month. At present there are around sixty pupils. The teacher is fairly good but drunk 168 hours a week. The hall in which four public balls are held each month during the winter is fairly attractive."

This is the kind of vignette you don't find in letters or newspapers. It comes only from observant visitors to whom everything is new and worthy of record. Miss Cometti's book is delightful reading and her notes extensive.

Spirit Rappings

HISTORIANS OF THE STATE of New York, when pushed into a corner, will admit that some mighty strange things went on there in the first half of the nineteenth century. Sophisticated as the inhabitants like to consider themselves today, they were among the nation's most gullible more than a century ago.

For instance, communications with the spirit world gained national attention as a result of the "Rochester Rappings" in the Fox family in 1848. The three daughters mystified their parents and neighbors by cleverly arranging and manipulating sound makers which were believed to be caused by spirits. Soon these spirits were assumed to be dead persons trying to communicate with the living. Some otherwise intelligent people were taken in by this fraud, and the mother found it profitable to take two of her dexterous daughters on tour. "Spiritualist Circles" were formed throughout the country.

After the cult spread to England, the sisters migrated there to perform. Then in 1888, after one of the women had been converted to Roman Catholicism and grew uneasy about her deceit, she exposed the whole fraud and explained how they created the rappings. Needless to add, she caused a sensation, but as sometimes happens in situations like that, some of her followers refused to believe her.

Someone wrote a small book at the outset entitled A Report of the Mysterious Noises Heard in the House of Mr. John D. Fox in Hydesville (Canandaigua, N.Y., 1848). It attracted the attention of the noted Robert Dale Owen, and he visited the Fox family in 1859. Indeed, the copy we have just acquired was presented to Owen by David Fox, the brother of the girls. We are glad to have the documented beginning of the whole affair.

The Sword and the Pen

REVERBERATIONS FROM THE turbulent Cromwell era reached across the Atlantic to the colonies in the mid-seventeenth century. Puritans in Virginia found themselves hotly embroiled with Church of England settlers and took refuge in Catholic Maryland, where they were received more tolerantly. With Cromwell's rule established, however, the transplanted Puritans began to feel their oats. During the ensuing troubles the bloody battle of March 1655 at Providence, Maryland, was chronicled in Leonard Strong's pamphlet Babylon's Fall in Maryland: a Fair Warning to Lord Baltimore—Or, A Relation of an Assault Against the Protestants in Maryland (London, 1655). It was written by a highly prejudiced Puritan, who couldn't spell Baltimore's name.

Immediately it was answered by John Langford in A Just and Cleere Refutation (London, 1655). The Clements Library has long possessed this heated reply, but is gratified to announce acquisition of the "false and scandalous pamphlet." Only three other copies are known.