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# Linwood Library Gazette

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Vol. 3 No. 9



July 1938

## "ROBERT BURNS" THROUGH THE YEARS

Robert Burns was a product of the 18th century in which he was born, lived, and died. The literature linked with his name grew tremendously as the time-testing years of the 19th century proved the permanence of his place among the immortals. How does Burns stand in this second quarter of the 20th century—in these crowded days of literary reevaluation? It is said that the poet prophesied he would be more famous a hundred years after his death. By that time (1896) over 300 editions of his works had been published in Scotland—and even more significant—over 360 in England; 34 in Ireland and at least 60 in America. World tributes had also been paid to him by the translation of his poems into Bohemian, Danish, Dutch, Flemish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Latin, Russian and Swedish. Owing to the lack of an adequate bibliography it is difficult to give precise information about the output of Burns' books in the present century, but we are still swelling the stream of Burns' literature, the latest addition being one of the most beautiful of Burns' books ever published: "Robert Burns' Commonplace Book" 1783-1785 reproduced in facsimile "from the poet's manuscript" and published in a limited edition by Gowans and Gray of Glasgow at two guineas.

A reliable method of assessing the degree in which the reputation of a poet has waxed or waned, is provided by the measure of interest manifested by successive generations of biographers in his life. Burns' own century accorded him two

biographies—Heron 1797 and Currie 1800. The 19th century multiplied them; Walker 1811, Lockhart 1828, Cunningham 1834, Hogg 1836, Chambers-cum-Currie 1838, Waddell 1867, Gilfillan 1879, Shairp 1879, Blackie 1888, Angellier 1892, Higgins 1893 and Hepburn 1896.

Excluding scores of sketches and essays of biographical interest, we thus credit the 19th century with twelve biographies of Burns. The present century is witnessing an intensification rather than a diminution of biographical interest in the "High Chief of Scottish Song." Already in barely 38 years the output of lines of Burns almost equals that of last century. Here they are: Macintosh 1906, McNaught 1921, Hughes 1922, Dakers 1923, Mackenzie 1924, Auld 1929, Carswell 1930, Thomson 1931, Snyder 1932, Hecht 1936 and Lindsay 1938.

The acid test of the advance or decline of a writer's reputation is furnished by the auction room, where the surety or fickleness of literary favour registers itself in the price barometer. The Kilmarnock edition of Burns 1786 is not really a scarce book, but it is always wanted by collectors. On December 12, 1828 a much damaged copy belonging to David Constable, an Edinburgh advocate, was knocked down for 17/-. For many years a copy could be had for £10 or less, and the first big jump was in 1879 when David Laing's copy enhanced by "lines in the autograph of Burns" fetched £90. It was considered marvellous when the Lamb copy, uncut, and in original blue paper covers, fetched £572 in 1898. However that price was only a forerunner of 20th century auction room tributes to Burns. In 1908 the per-

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fect Veitch copy was knocked down at £1000 and is now in the Alloway Cottage collection. The record was achieved on July 4, 1929 when a Kilmarnock Burns was sold by Sotheby and Co., for £2,450.

#### Manuscript Prices

The application of the same acid test to Burns manuscript is even more amazing, when we compare the modest prices of last century with the eloquent values of our own age. In 1861 many of the manuscripts of Burns which had been entrusted to Dr. Currie as editor of the first collected edition of the "Works" were auctioned by Puttick and Simpson. Twenty-five manuscripts (some unpublished) were sold at less than £1 each—one as low as 5/-. Twenty-nine holographs of songs and poems were sold at prices ranging from £1 to £2. James Toovey, a London bookseller, was the most extravagant buyer: he bought the manuscript of "The Jolly Beggars" for £3/12/-. "Scots Wha Hae" for £35, "The First Commonplace Book" for £36 and a thin volume of "Scotch Poems by Robert Burns," 59 pages, for £70. Before the close of the 19th century prices were greatly enhanced, and in the 20th century values went soaring up, owing to the determination and dominance of American buyers, to whom the "sky" seemed to be the limit. An incomplete letter which included a transcript of the famous "red red rose" song was sold in December 1927 for £2,000 and is now in an American collection. Another manuscript of the same song realised £1,700 in 1932. In 1929 a letter containing "The Kirk's Alarm" was sold for £1,800, and one to the poet's brother Gilbert fetched £630.

The present century has also been distinguished by a great increase of interest by scholarly Americans, who, after keen research, have made important contributions to Burns literature. So far as textual value is concerned De Lancy Ferguson's edition of "The Letters of Robert Burns" (2 vols. 1931) made scrap paper of all the old editions. Another American professor—Snyder—has written the first and most thoroughly documented "Life of Burns" yet published.

#### Bibliographies

The amazing ramifications of Burns

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literature are appalling to bibliographers. Unrecorded editions and unsuspected issues and variants make a comprehensive bibliography a matter of supreme importance. For several years the bibliographies in the Cambridge History of English Literature have been in process of revision under the general editorship of Mr F. W. Bateson for the purpose of assembling them in convenient separate volumes for the use of students, it is expected that these bibliographical volumes will be published this year. They include a new bibliography of Burns, but its formula of limitations in dealing with unedited editions will somewhat lessen its usefulness.

Visitors to the Glasgow Exhibition who are interested in Scotland's poet should see the special "Burns Room" in the great Mitchell Library, and also, when in Edinburgh, the great Burns collection of the National Library, which includes Clarinda's copy of the 1793 Edinburgh edition, with corrections in the handwritings of Burns.

#### A BUSY DAY

On Saturday afternoon, July 2 we had a most busy day at our library. Opening the doors at 2.30 we found that an unusual number of our subscribers had chosen that afternoon to get a book for the week end. That would have been quite all right, had it not been for the fact that two of the staff were at the last moment unable to come, and this proved, as the time went on, that we had just a little more than we get through with the accustomed promptitude. The returned books could not be replaced on the shelves and thus gathered in considerable numbers. However about 4.15 we issued the last book and here we had a very pleasant experience. Two ladies, subscribers, seeing the difficulty, very generously offered their assistance to put the books away. Needless to say the offer was promptly accepted. We gladly take this opportunity to very sincerely thank these ladies for their kind assistance and to express our appreciation of their thoughtful action.

We may point out that on checking up we found that we had issued no less than 431 books—an average of 48 books per minute during the usual period, which constitutes a record for Saturday afternoon. Thank you, ladies!

More than 600 volumes of the 19th century fiction representative of the heyday of romanticism have been purchased by the Princetown Union Library from what was once the Imperial Library at Tsar-Skoe-Selo, Russia.

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**LINWOOD LIBRARY GAZETTE**

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**EDITORIAL**

We have to thank the subscriber who wrote to us a kindly letter of appreciation of the committee's efforts. We appreciated the constructive criticism embodied in the suggestion that not sufficient money was being allocated towards the purchase of non-fiction. The committee welcomed the suggestion and resolved to act in the direction indicated.

We would, however, point out that the major portion of money spent on books must of necessity be devoted to fiction, since in our library by far the greater number of subscribers demand novels to read. Then again, good non-fiction books cost considerably more than novels and the sum of five pounds does not go very far in this section.

It has been very pleasing to hear the many appreciative remarks from subscribers concerning the wealth of interesting matter in our non-fiction section. It is the occasional pat on the back that helps the book-buyers and committee to persevere in their efforts on behalf of subscribers. We would again remind readers that the pages of this Gazette are open to all members of the library whose views on library matters are always welcome.

We wish to express our thanks to Mr E. J. Bell, chief librarian of the Canterbury Public Library, for his unfailing interest in Linwood Library. His wide experience in all library affairs has, during many years past, been available to us and we have ever been made to feel that his goodwill and sound advice are ours at all times. Quite recently Mr Bell devoted an

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evening of his valuable time in visiting our library and demonstrating to a special sub-committee the secrets of book repairing and reinforcing, as practised in other libraries. The knowledge thus obtained will doubtless prove invaluable to the committee and if the interest shown during Mr Bell's visit counts for anything, then our shelves should soon present a cleaner and neater appearance. Again—thanks, Mr Bell.

**RECENT NOVELS**

**Carmen of the Rancho.** By Frank H. Spearman. Beginning with an Indian raid on a Californian ranch and ending with a marriage between Texan ranger and Spanish senorita, this, its author's last novel, contains all the elements made familiar by the steady importation of Western film from Hollywood. But whereas the Hollywood product tends to be indeterminate as to place and time, Mr Spearman's tale is set in old California at the period of the Mexican war, and he fills in that background with the assurance of a practised writer who knows his subject well. (Times Literary Supplement).

**The End of Andrew Harrison.** By Freeman Wills Crofts, is another episode from Chief Inspector French's case book and is largely a question of mechanism—an extremely able excursion into the "sealed room" field of which Mr Carter Dickson has recently made such a speciality. This time a millionaire apparently commits suicide on his river boat. But is it suicide, inquires the Chief Constable, and down comes French to Henley. The characters barely ring true or are allowed time to establish themselves fully on the reader's mind. And nothing in the murderer's character or in the material clues made available will yield the solution to his identity. Those who like a detective story in which the method of committing the crime and the conscientious unravelling of the mechanics by the detective is the chief matter of importance will enjoy the story. (Times Literary Supplement).

**Black Dragon.** By J. M. Walsh. A Japanese lugger was wrecked during a hurricane on a South Pacific island, and the evidence which they found aboard her was enough to send Oliver Keene and the half-Chinese Peter Chun rushing off to Macao to frustrate, after many adventures a far-reaching plot which was to make Japan mistress of the Southern Seas. This is a very

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competently written mystery story, with the Sino-Japanese war for its background. (Times Literary Supplement).

**Perilous Discovery.** By Gunnar Johnston. Dallington and Fordingbridge were close friends who lost touch with one another after the War, when Dallington turned to journalism and Fordingbridge to science. He, in fact, made a discovery in physics which might have been developed with incalculable results for good or evil. An unfortunate love affair, however, led to the final frustration of all his work. This book will appeal to those readers who like scientific fiction.

**Historical Nights' Entertainments**, by Rafael Sabatini, is his third volume of what might be called spliced versions of historic dramas; that is, he uses invention only to splice the breaks in recorded fact. And he tells us where the breaks are. The stories of Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, Elizabeth and Essex, and Lady Arabella Stuart are told effectively; so are two incidents in the long fight between Catharine de Medicis and the Guises, and the death of Henrietta of Orleans. The trial of wits between Maria Theresa and Frederick of Prussia is plain history. Unlike all the other stories, that of Napoleon's first meeting with Josephine is probably myth. Mr Sabatini tells us so, but he did not invent it; Barras did. Last comes a new interpretation of the murder of Monaldeschi by Christina of Sweden. The incident may not be historically important, but the character of its heroine, or villainess, makes it perennially interesting. No one need sympathize with Monaldeschi, whose rascality is quite clear, but why Christina set an equal rascal to murder him no one knows. Mr Sabatini's version is as likely as any, and almost anything except normal conduct is credible of Christina. But he is wrong in saying that no other solution has been published. Each of Christina's many biographers has suggested a fresh one. (Times Literary Supplement).

**SOME NEW PURCHASES OF FICTION**

And Then Goodbye ..... Barbara Hedworth  
The Black Arrows ..... Francis Beeding  
Black Spot Mystery ..... Andrew Soutar  
Crime's Masquerader ..... A. McVicar  
Cameron of the Rancho ..... F. H. Spearman  
Crinklenose ..... Oliver Sandys  
Down Donkey Row ..... Len Ootzen  
The Dream Prevails ..... Maud Diver  
The Four False Weapons ..... Jno. D. Carr  
Gay by Name ..... R. S. Macnamara  
Gold Moon of Africa ..... Hermina Black  
Gone with the Wind ..... Mary Mitchell  
Hearts of Gold ..... Countess Bareynska  
Historical Nights' Entertainments ..... Rafael Sabatini  
Hopalong Cassidy Takes Cards Clarence Mulford  
Illgotten Gains ..... E. W. Savi  
Invisible Weapons ..... Jno. Rhode  
The Ivory Goddess ..... Jean Barre  
Jackals of the Secret Service ..... Operator 1384  
Khyber Contraband ..... Victor Bayley  
Land of Tomorrow ..... Shirley Siefert  
The Missing Link ..... Carolyn Wells

Murder in Switzerland ..... Edmund Snell  
One Who Kills ..... Ridgwell Callum  
Perilous Discovery ..... Gunnar Johnston  
Pity of the World ..... Elinor Mordaunt  
The Radcliffe Case ..... Jno. Bentley  
Restless Heart ..... Denise Robins  
Scotland Yard Alibi ..... Don Betheridge  
A Secret Life ..... Hester Shepherd  
A Snip of the Line ..... C. S. Forrester  
Sing a Song of Sydney ..... Rosemary Rees  
The Song and the Shadow ..... Sophie Cole  
Spring Always Comes ..... Eliz. Cambridge  
The Substitute Guest ..... Grace L. Hill  
Tish Marches On ..... Mary R. Rinehart  
There was Another ..... Ruby M. Ayres  
Wandering Cowboy ..... C. W. Sanders  
Weave a Circle ..... Diana Patrick

**RECOMMENDED NON-FICTION**

**And Nothing Long**, by Ronald MacDonell. This is a book for a cold night and a warm fire. From the start one is held by the writer's happy, humorous style and fine abundant variety. In the first chapter he faithfully and humorously depicts "Victorian Youth" with the atmosphere of those days. His banking days, though brief, give us some bright pictures. The early days in Moscow are interesting reading, followed by a transfer to Baku. Here he has a series of adventures that lasted quite some time, for he was now Vice-consul, and the Russian upheaval was in progress. His story of the restless, disturbing activity in the district around the Caspian and Black Seas are full of dramatic interest, while tragedy is rampant, following struggles between conflicting parties, Russians, white and red, Jews, Armenians, Georgians, Persians, and Turks. His activities as Political Agent do not meet with the approval of some, twice arrested, and the second time sentenced to death, gave him an awkward time, though he was safely away in good time.

This book, written with a light touch, with here and there a sterner note, will be found full of interest to all.

**The Chamberlain Tradition**, by Sir Charles Petrie. The author is a well known writer and this work is his latest historical work. Joseph Chamberlain, Austen Chamberlain and Neville Chamberlain are the three persons dealt with here, all eminent in their work for Great Britain and the Empire, and the influence exerted by them is notable.

The story is interspersed with anecdotes and personal reminiscences which throw new light on the character of these three great men.

**Under the Japanese Mask**, by Miles W. Vaughn. Very informative and highly interesting, also very revealing. Under the Mask we get glimpses of personalities and events that help us to better understand the tremendous drama now being played in China. A book that the reader will find to be full of interest from beginning to the end.

**The Birth of the Future**, by Ritchie Calder. Though published a year or two ago this book will not be out of date for years to come. Now

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"Mysteries of Life," "The Atom" (with the author's personal contact with Lord Rutherford), "Science's Eyes and Ears for the Future," will all give pleasure and interest, plus a wide range of information. Passing on to the final chapter "Leisure" science, which provides the leisure must also make provision for its right use. "Pessimists say, Human nature being what it is . . . science, however, believes, and can show, that human nature is not what it is, but what it can be made."

**A NAZI BOOK-PURGE**

On April 23 Austria's Nazi chieftains began a purge of prescribed non-Aryan volumes in the Austrian National Library. Moreover, some of the works of Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Jacob Massermann, Vicki Baum and others have been removed from the public library, and relegated to cellars or destroyed. On April 25 Borough President Raymond V. Ingersoll of Brooklyn unofficially cabled the chief librarian of the Austrian National Library in Vienna, offering to pay the cost of transportation to Brooklyn of books of non-Aryan origin now under threat of Nazi burning. Four Princetown undergraduates sent a similar request to Chancellor Hitler in Berlin. (Thomas Mann, a well known German writer, is in voluntary exile).

Among the unusual questions asked of a librarian was this one: Since cholera victims are thrown into the Ganges, why are there not more cases of cholera farther down the river. Is it the mystic quality of the sacred river?

The reply was that the Ganges has developed bacteria eaters and they destroy the germs in the bodies. As a matter of fact, there are fewer cases farther down the stream and it was found that the cause of the diminution was the bacteria eater.

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