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Edgar Lee Masters in the Chelsea Years

By Gertrude Claytor

When Mrs. Claytor informed the Library of her intention to present to Princeton her Edgar Lee Masters collection, she was requested by the Editors of the Chronicle to write an informal account of the poet as she knew him. This she kindly consented to do. Her article supplies therefore a background to the Gertrude Claytor Collection of Edgar Lee Masters in the Princeton University Library and serves also as an introduction to the Masters exhibition in the Library (December 1, 1952 to February 1, 1953).

The collection is a significant addition to the Library’s resources in modern American literature. It includes first editions of Masters’ books, many inscribed by the author to Gertrude Claytor; an important series of over fifty letters written by him to Mrs. Claytor during the years 1939 to 1949; manuscripts and typescripts of poems presented to the poet by Mrs. Claytor, as well as other manuscript items; sketches and photographs of Masters; and a considerable amount of other material relating to him. It is the hope of both Mrs. Claytor and the Library that this collection will attract to Princeton additional items by and concerning Edgar Lee Masters.

The elevator at the old Hotel Chelsea on West Twenty-third Street creaks and rattles its chains as it climbs past the second floor, where Edgar Lee Masters lived for many years. There was his big, high-ceilinged room—comfortable and shabby, with the worn rug and the curtains heavy with tobacco smoke. On a simple table in the bow window he kept his typewriter, pencils, inks, and, close by his reference books. Masters loved the ailanthus tree that grew in the courtyard and whose boughs touched his windows.
This tree was the inspiration for several of his poems, perhaps the most interesting being “The God of the Ailanthus,” which is to be found in his book *Invisible Landscapes*.

I remember him in the low rocking chair—his pipe clamped in the corner of his broad mouth, his eyes occasionally looking toward the window. Slow to speak, his words were sure, well cast in meditation. As Masters himself says of Altegeid, “There was an air of eternity about him”; and yet Masters had a dramatist’s sense of time in relation to fate—it is the leitmotiv in *Spoon River Anthology* and *Domsday Book*. In the poem “The Hotel Chelsea” he says:

Today will pass as currents of the air
That veer and die. Tell me how souls can be
Such flames of suffering and of ecstasy,
Then fare as the winds fare?

If Masters liked you he allowed you to remain with him when he was in a mood of reverie—this mood was often followed by reminiscences that were frank and historically significant. He never decorated an event or a circumstance to make it appear to his advantage but sometimes, with a perverse candor, magnified his own shortcomings. When I saw the suggestion of a smile in his eyes it generally meant that he was going to tell me of his early life—perhaps of his grandmother Lucinda Masters, whose character he has drawn as Lucinda Matlock in *Spoon River*, and drawn with as sharp a pencil and as loving an eye as Whistler, who created the enduring portrait of his mother.

What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,
Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?
Degenerate sons and daughters,
Life is too strong for you—
It takes life to love Life.

In 1938 I met Edgar Lee Masters for the first time at a small party at the Hotel Chelsea. I had been invited before to meet him, but had felt reluctant to do so, having heard of his critical attitude toward the world in general and scribblers in particular, but I went that afternoon because the friend who was giving the party had urged me to come. I first saw Mr. Masters in the hotel elevator and guessed that it was the poet because he held in his hand a book, *Elbeus of the Wind*, by the President of the Poetry Society of America, A. M. Sullivan. When we reached the floor where the party was being held, we both got out, but, fearing that I was too early, I waited awhile in the corridor.

I noticed at once that Edgar Lee Masters had a way of looking at a stranger that seemed to strip away every pretense—it was a critical gaze, not unkind, but searching; he also had a guarded look, almost as if he expected to find something that might do him harm. His dark eyes could appear keen or blank with boredom—without a ripple of interest. I thought “he does not want to be here,” but when the conversation moved more to his liking, he smiled—his whole countenance beamed. His face was round and rosy—the skin a delicate texture. The sudden change from a withdrawn and almost furtive silence to interest was gratifying, and the party progressed. He gave me his attention when our hostess told him that I came from Virginia. His father’s people were of Virginia origin and he wanted to hear about the country, the life there in the Shenandoah Valley, political opinions of today, colleges, and cultural interests. He loved the South as he pictured it, but he created it and peopled it to suit his own fancy, which was a flattering one. Although Masters was devoted to the South, he had a deep interest in and understanding of the Negro, and the line of distinction which circumstance and inheritance have placed between the races he felt was not only unjust but mistaken.

Masters looked older than his sixty-seven years, except for his vivid coloring and his unlined complexion. He walked with hesitation, his hair was thin and white, but these things were forgotten when he began to speak. He sometimes permitted his hair to grow long and it became him, but he would say, “I don’t want to be a long-haired poet,” and he liked it best trimmed quite short—it was sometimes cut so close that the pink of its scalp showed through. His hands were exceptionally beautiful—the long fingers curved outward at the tips and were well cared for, the hands of a neat, even a fastidious person. He always wore a fine jade ring on the little finger of his left hand. He did not gesticulate, but there was authority in the way his hands moved or were still, curved around a glass or held a book.

When the party was over I asked Mr. Masters if he would care to dine with us. He hesitated, then, smiling, he accepted.

We were living then, as we are now, on Washington Square, in an apartment facing the park. The night he dined with us Masters had little to say at first. I think a new place affected him very much as it does a cat and his approval was won slowly. The evening was
cool, and he liked the open fire. After dinner, over the coffee, he seemed at ease. He said Washington Square held happy memories for him; it was the best part of New York. My husband's politics pleased him, for they were both opposed to the Roosevelt administration.

Masters felt, and with the deepest regret, that we were heading toward another war. He grieved about it and coupled it in some way with the negative attitude of such a large part of the press toward literature, and especially toward poetry. He spoke of the magazines that had dried up, the great magazines that had failed or been drawn aside into utterly commercialism. He often quoted Thomas Jefferson, and, like Jefferson, Masters was a shrewd appraiser of the minds of men and made searching tests of the accepted leaders. He was not easily swayed by the verdicts of history. Jefferson was his choice among America's political thinkers and Emerson was his favorite exponent of our ethical and cultural enterprise. When we knew Masters better he told us that he had written a letter to the President of the United States calling attention to the fact that while there were in Washington suitable memorials to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson had not been so honored. When he learned years later of the proposed memorial which now stands on the Potomac, it pleased him, but he said it was not enough; Jefferson's ideas should be lived and taught in the colleges, for his thoughts and his breadth of vision were being forgotten. Masters was a liberal on a much broader historical base than the New Dealers. To him they exemplified a liberalism of expediency rather than principle.

As spring moved into summer Masters would often go with us to Washington Square, but the noise and dust disturbed him and after a short while we usually returned to our apartment. He liked to look out our windows toward the tower of the Judson Memorial Church as the sky darkened and the lights of lower Manhattan came on. He loved New York and he spoke of the deep contentment that he had found at this time in his way of life and the companionship of a few friends, and in his writing which never stopped. He composed poems almost every day; the numerous verses that he mailed to me and to others were fresh from his typewriter and unrevised—it was not his habit at this time to rewrite his poems.

His roots went deep into the soil of America—New England, Virginia, and particularly the Middle West, where he knew the life of a country boy on his grandparents' farm. We were with him on the night of the presidential election in 1940, sharing the hope that Wendell Willkie might be elected. When the radio report made it certain that Willkie had lost, Masters said to my husband, "Well, my boy, my man has lost again—he always loses—it started with Bryan."

With a singular lack of reticence, Mr. Masters has given the circumstances of his life in his autobiography, Across Spoon River, and yet some restraint, some personal shyness, prevented him from allowing the world to know the tenderness that fed his strength. One story that he repeated many times was about his small daughter. Masters had gone on a business trip. When he returned home he found the child very ill, burning with fever. She was a beautiful little girl and the illness had thrown her into a state of strange excitement. She said to him, "Look! You are the father of me, now make me well." The illness proved to be scarlet fever. Masters at once engaged two nurses but he was there also telling her stories, bringing her back to health with the strength of love and the grasp of his powerful will.

Opinions were convictions with Masters. An example of this was his attitude toward England. He thought that politically England, because of her greed for empire, was a menace to the world, and especially to the United States. He said she had drawn us into one World War, and was on the verge of doing it again, but he never grew angry with me because I emphatically disagreed with him, although I felt about the matter or anyone else's never changed his opinion.

Masters often grew expansive in the early afternoon when he had had a drink of bourbon and started his simple lunch, and the place that he liked best to take his friends was the little restaurant that he called the "Doggery" (Oasis) on West Twenty-third Street near the Hotel Chelsea. One day at lunch we discussed his biography of Vachel Lindsay. I liked it and said so, and told him I wished that he had done as well for himself when he wrote his autobiography. He was silent for a while and then said, "I have put down the facts, I have not embroidered them, nor is my autobiography complete—the second portion is in progress. Writing the life of another is a more complicated matter." Most biographies, he said, were fakes because no one can really penetrate the web of motive in himself and to unravel the life of another is almost impossible, so the biographer must resort to fiction—intentional or otherwise. He said that in writing of Lindsay he had a slight advan-
tage because he knew and liked him. They came from the same part of the country and he, Masters, recognized the fire of genius in Lindsay, but America did not recognize or appreciate his genius; that she could not do so was the worst indictment of our mass thinking since Edgar Allan Poe died in Washington Hospital, Baltimore, in 1849.

Masters had a genuine admiration for Mrs. Lindsay. He was grateful for the help she had given him on the biography of her husband. When he was working on the book she was in New York and allowed him access to certain important papers, and he felt that his talks with her were of great value to him. He closed our conversation by saying, "What is written is written both with life and with words"; and I had a glimpse of his awareness of fate, but that his spirit resisted the decree of a blind fate there is ample proof. He says in "Prometheus":

A mind within me, an immaculate fire lights the way
Of my will, as an eagle is lighted at night by a planet,
And keeps me defiant and steadfast to soar above fate.

In the summer of 1939 we invited Masters to be our guest at Gibson Island, Maryland. After an exchange of numerous letters, he accepted. That year we had a cottage on a cliff overlooking Chesapeake Bay, and Masters loved the quiet and seclusion. Because our house was small, Masters stayed at the Club and he liked this also. Although Gibson Island is primarily a golf and yachting center, the individual can be as secluded as he wishes and during his visit Masters found it an ideal place for writing. We seldom called for him before lunchtime, and in the afternoon he liked to sit on the veranda alone, or on the pier of the swimming club. One day, after we had talked about Lee's campaigns and the siege of Richmond, Masters said he felt like writing something; and the poem "The Summer of 1864" was composed that afternoon.

In this poem he tells of Lee's sorrows, physical and mental, during that summer, and especially at the Battle of the Wilderness, and of Lee's power to endure adversity through spiritual strength.

When Mr. Masters was collecting data for his play Lee, he called upon the General's eldest daughter, Miss Mary Lee, in Richmond, Virginia. He wrote on the back of the card which he sent to her apartment, "I am a namesake of your father's and would like to meet you and talk over the play I am writing about the General." Miss Lee replied, "Ten thousand people are named for my father.

I could not see them all, so I am sorry I cannot give you the interview." Instead of being disturbed or angry, Mr. Masters was amused and wanted more than ever to know the spirited daughter of his hero. So Dr. Douglas Freeman arranged the meeting and it was a happy one for them both.

Masters did more revising on "The Summer of 1864" than was usual with him, but he said he doubted if it would see the light of day in print, as poems about the South or on the history of America appeared to be of small interest to this generation. Later I asked him if he would care to have the poem published in Harold Vinal's Voices and he replied, "All right, if you want to give it to Harold Vinal, but I am by no means satisfied with it. However, it may be like the unfeathered lawyer—nothing for nothing." Masters felt keenly the closing of so many magazine markets to poetry. He feared the bardi urge would be strangled because few magazines or newspapers paid for poetry, and all they wanted, as a rule, was a short poem, preferably nothing longer than a sonnet. "The Summer of 1864" appeared in Voices in the summer issue of 1940. In the final line of the poem I think that Masters is unconsciously speaking of himself, when he says of Lee:

With only sixty thousand men he had defeated Grant Over and over. But Fate is stronger than Genius, Only the soul is stronger than Fate.

Masters possessed a quality of mind that responded to friendship, a calm, judicial acceptance, so that once his confidence was given you felt secure against change. He was not subject to temperamental storms or wounded feelings. I always remember his ready sympathy, his outstretched hand, his glad greeting. His book Mitch Miller, the life of two country boys, has a depth and poignancy that move the heart, reminding one of the story of Jonathan and David.

Masters thought that the love between man and woman gave meaning to the smallest, as well as impetus to the greatest, accomplishments of the artist. Shelley, who was, he said, an angel, although a rebellious one, understood this, as did Shakespeare, always close to Masters' heart and hand—he knew many of the sonnets and could quote them at will.

In a number of his later poems Masters has chosen subjects from Greek mythology. He thought the Olympian gods were the most beautiful symbols that the world has ever known—the purity of
perfection in art reflected in the life of the Athenians. He rejected denial and martyrdom and heaven won on that basis. His own ideal, however, of the love between man and woman was, I think, Western in its romanticism. He has Herbert Marshall (Spoon River) state:

This is life’s sorrow:
That one can be happy only where two are... He thought that loss could neither invalidate this meaning nor destroy it. George Gray (Spoon River) says:

For love was offered me and I shrank from its disillusionment...
To put meaning in one’s life may end in madness,
But life without meaning is the torture
Of restlessness and vague desire—
It is a boat longing for the sea and yet afraid.

Masters was not afraid, or if he was, he did not draw back because he saw danger for himself or for others.

There was a strong vein of mysticism in his nature. The lawyer and logician were strengthened by the idealist and prophet; not, as in the fashionable terminology, a split personality, but a personality rounded and completely welded by deep perception and steady will.

Like Vachel Lindsay, Masters was profoundly aware of spiritual values. He was agonized by the flesh—devastated at times by circumstances, disheartened, but not overcome. Never once did the thought of self-destruction seem to enter his mind. He deplored the meerserism of sorrow that had fallen upon Lindsay, such blank sorrow, such despair, he could comprehend, but the culmination in suicide was beyond his understanding. Masters said that all the punishing years, the disappointments, the unfulfilled hopes, and disillusionments helped him to understand Shakespeare’s retirement to Stratford. It was thinking of these things that enabled him to write the poem “To-morrow Is My Birthday,” which he selected as his favorite composition for Whit Burnett’s anthology of “America’s 93 greatest living authors,” This Is My Best.

Masters chose from his biography of Lindsay (Scribner, 1933) the following passage and gave it to me as a significant statement regarding Lindsay’s spiritual search and the needs of the writer. In his analysis of Lindsay I feel that he is also revealing himself.
“[Vachel Lindsay possessed] a mystical faculty, which saw into the heart of things more clearly than the intellectual eye. ... What he knew perfectly well was that there is such a thing as the mystic quest, and that he was predetermined by his nature to follow it, as Merlin followed the gleam; and to endure everything of poverty, pain, and misunderstanding while doing so. He took the journey of the soul by the inner ascent, to quote Dean Inge’s words on Plotinus, the ascent that leads to the presence of God, and to immediate union with him. This desire and this faith cannot be touched, or controverted by skeptical logic. For what a man sees he sees; and what he desires with his whole heart to possess cannot be made untrue by satire or analysis. ‘Mysticism is an extension of the mind to God by means of the longing of love,’ wrote Inge, and the matter was never better defined. Nothing more ever more accurately describes the spirit of Lindsay. It will be found written all over his daily jottings, and in many of his poems, in all of them directly or indirectly. Whitman when calling his country to cultivate religion, morality, and beauty, when contending that the religious impulse was necessary to great literature, would have been satisfied with Lindsay as his son in respect to these things. For by religion Whitman did not mean a credal confession, or a church adoption, a baptism or an orthodoxy. He meant a moral conviction and passion by which man is linked to cosmic forces, to something beyond the daily life of materialistic effort, and by which life is dignified and uplifted.”

Masters often expressed regret that his college career was so brief. He worked hard and received high grades for one year he was at Knox College. His admiration for the ancient Greeks led him to continue the study of the language so that he could read Homer in the original. At the same time that he was reading law he was dreaming of the perfection which had made Athens the queen of the world. Ancient Greece was always a source of retreat for Masters and a shelter when troubles pressed upon him. When he spoke of the subjects and the poets that he loved best, he did it with fervor, and his face was illumined by an inner happiness that might quickly pass into another mood.

When Masters was asked why he did not accept a chair of literature in one of the colleges, he replied that he feared the constant interruption of clerical work and the conventionality of a college environment. Masters spent several months in Princeton and returned there to visit his friend Dean Christian Gauss whenever
he could manage to do so. He said that if the majority of college presidents and professors could have the brains, liberality, and understanding that Providence had bestowed upon Dean Gaus, teaching in a university would have been his chosen vocation. He often referred to a visit that he made to Princeton in the autumn of 1906 when he was a guest of Dean Gaus and attended a football game.

Masters said that timidity seemed to take possession of him when he had to speak to a large audience. He refers to this dislike of public speaking in his memories of a political speech that he made in his early youth for Bryan. He did not feel this timidity with a small circle of friends because he often read to us his own freshly composed poems. He seldom read or quoted from contemporary writers unless it was done in a vein of light mockery, in what he called his “Lute Puckett” personality—Lute Puckett was the alter ego who seldom went out of the big room at the Hotel Chelsea, a mischievous spirit that he allowed only a few intimate friends to meet. When Masters read aloud his voice was low and pleasant and the words well rounded and distinct. He did not read with marked emphasis, but there was no monotony—the meaning being clear to him, he conveyed it to his listeners. When he had finished reading, he often sat quietly before the fire, absorbed in his own thoughts. In this mood there was a calm and joy in being with him that I have never known in the presence of anyone else. He was an easy person to be silent with.

Masters did not appear at his best in an interview; deliberate questioning annoyed him and he was apt to blurt out opinions and criticisms of other writers that made new enemies. Later, reading the interview, he would frequently remark, “That was not what I intended to say and not the way I said it—they have the whole thing wrong.” Consequently his resistance to granting interviews grew stronger with the years.

He would not, as a rule, accept invitations to speak on the radio or to read his poetry, but he appeared on the Poetry Hour, conducted by A. M. Sullivan for Station WOR, and he went with Kimball Flaccus to the College of the City of New York to make recordings from Spoon River Anthology and other books of his for the Phonographic Library of Contemporary Poets, which was originated by Mr. Flaccus. This entire collection, consisting of the readings of about forty poets, has been duplicated by the Library of Congress.

Never consciously dramatic, Masters’ face reflected instantly his changing moods. He often spoke bitterly of the folly of the press, of injustice, and of uninspired reviews. Sometimes this bitterness flowed from personal rancor but there was a strong current of optimism that moved below his surface agitation. As we knew Masters better, we became more and more aware of the strength of his conviction that regret and grief for the past were futile, unnecessary, and damaging to the spirit.

In the two-room apartment at the Chelsea Masters had created a home that held the mementos of a lifetime. Around his rooms and on the walls were photographs of those who were dearest to him—his daughters, his younger son (in an unconventional pose), and his little granddaughter, of whom he said, “I feel that this child has all the liabilities of a potential genius.” Other pictures were of Whitman, Jefferson, Goethe, Theodore Dreiser, and H. L. Mencken. The large bookcases on the south wall were crammed with the classics and the gift books autographed for him by the great and near-great. On the mantel was a small statuette of a woman’s figure given to him by his sister. Before the mantel was a low cabinet for glasses and beverages. Masters did not hoard for his own use the liquor that was given to him by friends at Christmas but liked to serve it at small parties in his apartment. If he wanted a drink when he was alone he went down the street and got it at the Oasis. In this simple place the food was well cooked and clean. Masters preferred the Oasis to other and more elaborate restaurants, except Lucchow’s on Fourteenth Street, which was his favorite, although he felt that it was too expensive for anything except a Christmas or birthday celebration. He went there frequently with out-of-town friends, especially H. L. Mencken and later Theodore Dreiser; he also dined often at the Algonquin, where Frank Case, the famous host, who was sympathetic to the arts, always made him welcome.

One evening Dudley Nichols (playwright and screen writer) gave a small dinner at the Algonquin for Masters. The affair was impromptu. Gertrude Atherton, a guest in the hotel, was persuaded to join the group. Masters was at his best and Mr. Nichols knew exactly how to bring the poet’s natural wit to the surface. Mrs. Atherton, then about eighty, wore an elaborate low-cut gown, which Masters admired. To Mr. Nichols’ pleasure, they did most of the talking. Masters often spoke of that evening, for Dudley Nichols’ friendship was one that he valued. He had visited Mr. and Mrs. Nichols in their home and told us of their hospitality and
kindness. When Masters was taken ill so suddenly in 1943, Dudley Nichols was one of the first to remember him and to prove his friendship for the poet.

At a birthday party given in a private dining room at the Algonquin in 1942, Masters showed his ability to improvise quickly by composing a limerick for each of the guests. Here is his limerick to Mrs. Frances Whitney:

Mrs. Whitney: I have no description
For a limerick’s graphic inscription;
But at least I can tell
She looks very well,
Approaching the famous Egyptian.

Although Masters enjoyed dining with friends in restaurants and even more, having dinner in a friend’s home, he was at his best in his own apartment, in the quiet room with the tree-patterns moving against the windows. As he was nearing seventy, the past was very real to him; the present, not retreating into dreams but made more vivid by the span of years and of experience. Facts were colored, but not distorted, strength was drawn from his long association with the poets and philosophers who were his daily companions—Shakespeare, Shelley, Chaucer, Goethe, Homer, Confucius, Socrates (whom he said he resembled physically, at least), Thomas Jefferson, Emerson, Jesus. Masters was always rebellious and refused the orthodox interpretation of the life and mission of Jesus. But he searched, he dug for truth that the mind could accept and the heart take comfort from. He talked of this constantly and the fact is confirmed over and over in his poems. Unlike Richard Bone of Spoon River, who

... chiseled whatever they paid me to chisel!
And made myself party to the false chronicles...

Masters wrote and recorded life as he saw it. His protest was against hypocrisy and greed, the corrupt politician, the dishonest judge. American to the core, he feared and distrusted the influences that were drawing the United States away from the ideals of the founders of the Republic and into greed for empire. He would say, “I tell you this world is hell and nothing else,” but he often said it with a chuckle.

One night after dinner, when he had read to us from Spoon River and recited a scene from Macbeth, which he thought was the greatest of Shakespeare’s plays, his mood changed suddenly and he quoted some of his own light verse. Then, still in mockery, he drew with pencil a row of tombstones and inscribed on the stones the names of prominent friends still living; he drew one more and wrote upon it E. L. Masters and, below his name, “In Glory.”

Masters grieved over the decline and death of his friend William Marion Reedy. He said of him, “There was a man of flesh with a quickening spirit.” His interest in and admiration for Falstaff stems, I think, from his association with Reedy, who resembled in some respects the Shakespearean character who was one of Masters’ favorites. He wrote several poems to Reedy, comparing him to Rabelais. Masters wanted to write Reedy’s biography, but he told us that Mrs. Reedy sat on the author’s papers like a hen on a nest and prevented anyone from obtaining the necessary material for the book. Masters was always aroused when dullness or pomposity thwarted achievement in art or in life.

I think it was his deep natural resistance to the forces which pushed to destroy and interfere with the freedom of the spirit that caused his critics to say that Masters was embittered; but when book after book of prose and poetry came from his pen and not one on publication received the acclaim that had been given to Spoon River Anthology, this must have worked in his mind like acid. That he was not embittered or alienated from a life dedicated to composition remains a tribute to his character and to the strength of his will. He frequently said that Domesday Book was his most important work, he liked Godfrey, and he was pleased.
with many of the poems in Songs and Satires, which contains the poem "Silence" that H. L. Mencken thought was one of Masters' great poems.

"Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the King Cobra," a profound poem written in Masters' later years and published by Mencken in The American Mercury in 1931, brings to mind the force of the words of Ami Green of Spoon River, "that the much-sought prize of eternal youth is just arrested growth." It is interesting to know how Masters came to write the poem. Raymond Dittmars, Curator of the Central Park Zoo, was a friend of Masters and he invited him to see the cobra and to watch its performance under the influence of music. Masters told us that as the symphony came to its conclusion the creature lifted its body and uncoiled until its length was stretched upward toward the top of its cage.

The waves of Beethoven's music advance through the cobra's nerves,
Making rhythmic motions of the particles in the nerves of the cobra,
And that is like a man in pain before the mystery of his fate.

Masters was a student and admirer of Robert Browning. When I asked him for a list of the poems by Browning that he particularly liked, he wrote the following: "James Lee's Wife," Sordello, "Abt Vogler," The Ring and the Book, and "Saul." He told me, when we were talking about Browning, that John Cowper Powys had warned him not to get himself too involved in the metaphysical difficulties that beset Browning; his friend Powys preferred Masters' forlorn and confused character studies; he involved meanderings of the English poet. The shorter and more popular poems of Browning Masters did not especially care for and he clung to his favorites, selecting, however, occasionally a lyric or a section to read aloud. "The Last Ride Together" was a favorite also and he knew it by heart.

Masters appreciated and often quoted Emily Dickinson. He said she was easily the best of the women poets—one of the greatest poets that America had produced—and he never tired of her because each reading brought a fresh reward. As with Browning, his selections, as a rule, were not those found in the popular anthologies. Poe he admired as poet and critic. His affiliation with the school of New England poets was never close, with the exception of Emerson. Whitman he praised and analyzed in his biography of the poet. Masters made pilgrimages to the poet's house in Camden, New Jersey, and to his birthplace on Long Island.

I once told Mr. Masters that he was heir to Chaucer, for the people of Spoon River were flesh and blood and had the vitality that is to be found in The Canterbury Tales. Masters acknowledged this affinity, for on the flyleaf of the Chaucer that he gave me as a memento of the twentieth-anniversary of the publication of Spoon River he has written, "This Chaucer with whom I feel as much kinship as any poet."

Letters came frequently to him from John Cowper Powys, a friend whom Masters spoke of with great affection and admiration. About once a week he received a letter from Mencken. As a rule these letters gave him something to chuckle over, but occasionally, when Mr. Mencken wrote about being ill, they depressed Masters, and he began to brood over the fact that he was himself in poorer health than the year before and getting old. He would sometimes say, "I tell you, it's a terrible thing to live long enough to see one's friends fall one way or another and pass from the scene." In the last few years before he left New York this sense of change kept him away from The Players. Masters was concerned with time, its tyranny, its taunting of empty hours with the elusive idea. He kept quoting "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" from Macbeth. With his sense of the inevitable, he faced facts with a Greek stoicism and candor. At the end of an unproductive session with a poem or article he would say, "Today I died."

Theodore Dreiser wrote to him continually through the later years, and Masters often spoke of the strange fate that kept the early Dreiser novels in comparative obscurity and the fame that came from An American Tragedy, which he thought did not in any way equal Sister Carrie or Jennie Gerhardt. The friendship with Dreiser continued to the end of Dreiser's life; the association with Mencken was never interrupted until Masters' death; and the letters from Powys continued until Powys became too ill to write.

Masters liked to review the difficulties which had confronted Dreiser in his efforts to publish his novel Sister Carrie. The book was printed by Doubleday, Page and Company in 1900, but, on the insistence of the wife of the publisher, who objected to it on the grounds of its immorality, it was virtually suppressed and did not receive real publication in this country until several years later. Masters was disturbed when any con-
cept of conventional morality prevented the presentation of a work of art. He also spoke frequently of other incidents similar to Dreiser's which had dogged the footsteps of literary men in America. He did not often complain of the bitter criticism that had come to him, and for the same reason, when Spoon River was published, he said, after speaking of Dreiser's experience, that it was a significant fact that the English reviewers had been quicker to appreciate Spoon River Anthology than anyone in America, with the exception of H. L. Mencken, Theodore Dreiser, and a few others. He told me that his law practice had dwindled after the book appeared as he had prophesied it would.

Masters retained his old friends, kept in touch with them, and maintained his correspondence, although he usually spent the morning in composing poems or in working on prose articles. Marion and Percy MacKay, through the years, were two friends always closely associated with his life. Arthur Davison Ficke and his wife saw him frequently, as did Mollie and Padraic Colum. He often dined with Olivia and Ridgely Torrence, Leonora Speyer, and Mr. and Mrs. James McGurrin. John Hall Wheelock of Scribner's was a lifelong friend of Masters and the editor to whom Masters felt closest. In 1940 Masters met in our home Dr. and Mrs. Thomas O. Mabbott. Since Dr. Mabbott is an authority on Edgar Allan Poe, the two men had a subject ready-made. Mrs. Masters enjoyed analyzing Faust with Dr. Mabbott and discussing the Greek poets with him. Dr. Mabbott felt then, as he does now, that in the range of his mind and in his poetry Masters ranked with Poe and Whitman.

Masters liked the company of young writers and there were several gifted young men, mostly poets, whom he saw frequently—among them A. M. Sullivan, Kimball Flaccus, who as early as 1940 began collecting material for a biography of Masters, with the poet's knowledge and co-operation, and, when they were in New York City, August Derleth and Jesse Stuart. Masters was interested in the work of these men and said that they were on the right track in creating regional poetry. On one occasion I heard Masters say that the article which A. M. Sullivan wrote in 1940 for Dun's Review (of which Mr. Sullivan is an associate editor) was the most satisfying to him of anything that had been said about the history and origin of Spoon River since William Marion Reedy revealed in Reedy's Mirror in 1914 that Webster Ford was the pen name of Edgar Lee Masters.

It was well to be careful about the people that one introduced to Masters, for on occasion a perversity in his character came into play like the division in a stream split by protruding rocks. Masters liked small parties where the talk was leisurely and centered around one person who held the floor only by invitation or permission. He listened well if the discussion was lively and original, but he never disguised his boredom when a show-off was performing. One evening, following a small dinner at our home, a bumptious young poet and novelist from the South asked to read his own poems to Masters and the other guests. When he had completed the recitation, which was given with dramatic gestures, he asked Masters if he did not think that he, the young poet, was like Vachel Lindsay. For a moment there was utter silence; then Masters, who to that time had not seemed to notice the poet, looked the young man over and replied, "No, there is not the slightest resemblance to Lindsay." To divert attention, someone showed Masters the drawings that the young man had made for his novel. Masters said, "Yes, he can draw very well; he had better do so."

In 1939 there was a gay New Year's party at the Chelsea in Mr. Masters' apartment, and this was the first time that I saw him in an Olympian mood. He had had one or possibly two drinks of bourbon—he seldom took more—and he announced that "Lute Puckett," who had been transformed into a minister, would now sing "The Old Time Religion"—"It was good enough for Peter. . . ." To our delight, Ridgely Torrence joined him. Then they turned their collars around and drew their eyeglasses toward the center of their noses and said they were having a New Year's revivial in the style of a Billy Sunday meeting. They sang the old hymns which Masters liked. Torrence, tall, thin, intensely dignified; Masters, stout, half a head shorter, flushed and with flashing eyes—they made a dramatic picture as they acted out in satire a revivial meeting, a phase of American life that Masters was interested in and knew well, and which he describes in Mitch Miller and in his poem "The Mourners Bench."

If Masters had a Socratic mind, he also had a strain of Moody and Sankey in his nature, for he sang the old hymns with delight and reverence. Once in a while hymn singing would lead to the reading of poems. When Masters heard a good line or a striking image or an interesting rhythm or rhyme scheme, there would be an audible and pleasant grunt. However, if he did not like the
idea, or revolted against a cliché, there was an unmistakable inference to his "Humph."

During the holiday season he enjoyed company and sometimes used a new poem as a means of asking a friend to visit him. He would often call A. M. Sullivan at his office just around five o'clock.

"Stop by on your way to the train. Got a ballad I want to show you." The poem was honest bait, but it was also a device against a lonely evening. The ballad would lead to a debate on the art of ballad making from the Scots border ballads to Percy's Reliques and the work of Francis Child in gathering the folk ballads of our language. Masters, who had made his reputation on the free verse of Spoon River, shuddered at the verbal gymnastics of the innovators and drifted back to his youthful attachment for rhyme.

His early poems showed the candid influence of Shelley and Keats.

For many years Masters went regularly to The Players on Gramercy Park, where Charlie Connolly, philosopher and appraiser of human nature, presided. Masters referred frequently to Connolly with affection and admiration. He told us that Vachel Lindsay's informality when he took Lindsay as a guest to The Players puzzled and disturbed many of the members, but in the end they came to enjoy and value Lindsay for his originality. Masters admired the actor Francis Wilson and often remarked that he would be glad to go to the theater if there were anyone who was his equal today. He knew Wilson personally and spoke with enthusiasm of his scholarship. In the last few years that Masters attended The Players Percy MacKay was his closest associate. Howard Lindsay was also an old friend and Masters was pleased by the success that had come to him. He appreciated Lindsay's thoughtfulness in offering him tickets for Life with Father when there were none to be had at the box office. The actors who created Shakespearean roles were heroes to Masters and he talked frequently of Mansfield and Sothern, Julia Marlowe, John Drew and Ethel Barrymore, and his old friend Charles Coburn. Joseph Jefferson he liked better as Bob Acres than as Rip Van Winkle. He felt that Jefferson's great talent had been cramped by playing one role too long. Masters went with us to see the Maurice Evans' productions of Henry V and Merry Wives of Windsor. He was delighted by them, but said that no actor now living had the strength or the vitality to create Falstaff.

If Masters wanted exercise he went for a swim in the Y.M.C.A. pool on Twenty-third Street and he made it a habit to go there almost every day. He said that it was not refreshing like a plunge into the stream near his grandfather's farm where he was a boy, but it was the best he could do now. When his thought went back to his boyhood he often mentioned Mitch Miller, his book about the little chap who died, but whose boyhood was much like Masters' own. Masters liked this book and he frequently spoke of it and its sequel, Skeeters Kirby.

Prize fights delighted him and the only time that he listened to the radio was when a fight was broadcast. During the first years of our friendship he attended the major events in Madison Square Garden and enjoyed talking over the technical aspects of a fight with his husband. He thought that Joe Louis was an absolute wonder.

Masters was well acquainted with John L. Sullivan and liked his company. On one occasion, when Masters was host to the world champion and William Marion Reedy, he had ordered some fine steaks, but just as John L. put the fork into his, he remembered that it was Good Friday. "Lord have mercy on us," the fighter said and tossed the steak to the ceiling. Masters enjoyed telling this story and said it upon more than one occasion when a sirloin was on the table.

After the end of a prize fight, if it had been a good one, Masters beamed and continued talking about it, but if he felt the opponents had been poorly matched, or that there had been some sort of trickery, he brooded for a while and fell into a depressed mood from which he might arouse himself by recalling some of his own humorous or ribald verses. Percy MacKay assured me that Masters wrote a great many more verses in this vein than he had ever shown to me, and that it was a constant source of amusement for the poet, a release from the serious business of staying alive.

When Masters expressed a desire to see the New York World's Fair, which was held on the Flushing Meadows in 1933 and 1940, we arranged to take him with us. His eldest son, Hardin Masters, was in town and went also. When we arrived at the gates Masters was already a little fatigued from the trip, so we took one of the chairs with an attendant and started our slow progress sight-seeing. The first thing that upset Masters was the roar of the Futurama train and the cries of the vendors; but we went almost immediately to the Belgian Pavilion and he rather enjoyed his luncheon there; but afterwards, as we made our way slowly through the grounds, attempting to see the sights, Masters said every few moments,
"Well, this is no fair at all. The one in Chicago was a real fair. This is nothing." And by three o'clock I could see that the time to start for home had arrived. We took the subway as the quickest method. I got off at Forty-second Street, while Masters and his son remained on the train. The next day Masters telephoned me that the train was an express, which did not stop at Twenty-third Street, and, to his horror, they had been carried to Brooklyn.

In 1941 Masters placed in my hands a sonnet sequence called "The Return," which dealt with a difficult and complex marital situation. The sonnets had been published in Poetry in 1943. After reading these poems, I had felt a genuine distress and a reluctance to discuss them with Masters. So I mailed them to him without comment. In a week's time he called me on the telephone and asked if I was disturbed about anything; my moment of hesitation convinced him that I was. He then said, "I don't think you like those sonnets"; and that was true, as I told him, and I added that it might have been just as well if they had not been published. I received the impression from his silence that he agreed, in part, at least. Later, when I became well acquainted with Eunice Tietjens (Mrs. Floyd Head), who had been one of the editors of Poetry when the sonnets were published, I talked to her about the matter. She agreed with me that from one point of view publication might have been a mistake, because the public unfortunately had placed a personal interpretation upon the sonnets; then she added that she had accepted them as literature and as composite portraits, similar to those in Spoon River Anthology. At the time they were published editors all over America were clamoring for Masters' work and if these sonnets had not been published in Poetry, she said, they certainly would have appeared elsewhere. Like many who knew Masters well, her affection and admiration for the poet and the man were firm and their friendship continued through the years.

One evening after Masters had read the Ann Rutledge poem from Spoon River, he said, "I would not have written that poem if I had realized how slight the thread of fact was that connected Lincoln with the early romance. But when Herndon gave it in his biography of Lincoln, it seemed authentic, I accepted it and wrote the poem, believing it to be fact. Now I think it was most likely fiction." It is significant that this poem, which seems to contain so much of the spirit of the popular conception of Lincoln, is written by the same man who later did the unpopular Lincoln biography.

In the New York Herald Tribune of May 21, 1952, there is an editorial which shows how very much alive the Lincoln-Ann Rutledge tradition is. The editorial deals with a newly discovered letter from Mrs. Lincoln which was published in May, 1952. The editorial reads in part: "A flat stone found many years ago in New Salem, Ill., bears the chipped inscription: 'A. Lincoln and Ann Rutledge were betrothed here July 4, 1833.' Some historians dispute the authenticity of this engraving. . . . Others insist that Lincoln's love for Ann was the great love of his life. . . . Ann Rutledge is a myth," wrote Mrs. Lincoln angrily. Perhaps so. But she was a myth such as men live by." It was in the spirit of this myth that Masters' poem was conceived.

ANNE RUTLEDGE
Out of me unworthy and unknown
The vibrations of deathless music.
With malice toward none, with charity for all.
Out of me the forgiveness of millions toward millions,
And the beneficent face of a nation
Shining with justice and truth.
I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds,
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,
Wedded to him, not through union,
But through separation.
Bloom forever, O Republic,
From the dust of my bosom!

Masters was well aware of the fact that his biography of Lincoln was perhaps his least popular book. When anything displeased him he had a way of putting his head on one side and making a strange clucking sound, as much as to say "that's the way of the world." He made that sound whenever he was criticized for his interpretation of Lincoln. Masters said that Lincoln the poet, not the politician, was speaking in the Gettysburg Address, that the address was poetry—that the poet in Lincoln was one source of his strength and his appeal to the imagination. Masters had written three poems about Lincoln in Spoon River—"Hannah Armstrong," "William H. Herndon," a tribute to Lincoln, not to Herndon the lawyer, who was Lincoln's partner and later the partner of Masters' father, and the well-known poem "Anne Rutledge," which is inscribed on the grave of the girl whom Lincoln
is said to have loved. In Masters' biography of Lincoln he treats the Civil War president from the standpoint of a lawyer and an ardent believer in States' rights. In the poems Masters sees Lincoln with a poet's vision.

Although opposed to slavery, Masters' father believed firmly in States' rights and was distressed by the War between the States. During the war he knew the bitterness that flowed against the sympathizers of the South in Illinois. Like most minority groups, these sympathizers developed an over-aggressive attitude, holding with great tenacity to their own opinions and prejudices. In his biography of Lincoln Masters refers to Stephen A. Douglas with great admiration, contrasting Lincoln unfavorably with him, and I heard him repeat this opinion on numerous occasions. His way of stating his convictions was so forceful that it worked in the mind for days—possibly for a lifetime.

When the Poetry Society of America wished to honor Masters they found to their surprise that he had a strong resistance to receiving attention from that organization, or indeed from any group. A. M. Sullivan, then President of the Society, marshaled many reasons that might induce him to accept the honor and the medal of the Society. For several weeks Masters steadily refused to consider the matter and then he said, "I will do it, my boy, if I can select all the people to sit at the table with me." The Society did not feel willing to allow him this privilege, so again the matter came to an impasse. Later he consented if two people of his choice might sit by him. The dinner was held on Sunday evening, January 25, 1942, in the old Hotel Brevoort at Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street. From the account of the dinner published in the Bulletin of the Society for February, 1942, I quote the following:

"The Poetry Society may well be surprised [Mr. Masters said] when I accept this medal, for I am not very friendly to medals and degrees. But in this case I have been surrounded by such tender and insidious persuasions that I could not resist them. In very many ways I am different from Aeschylus, and in the matter of prizes I am different, if some of the accounts of him may be accepted. He loved prizes, and I don't care for them. He is said to have retired from Athens to Sicily because he was defeated at the hands of Sophocles for the tragic prize. He is said to have resented bitterly the fact that Simonides and Sophocles were preferred to himself. But if he had won the prize, if he had been preferred to Simonides and Sophocles, it might have been overlooked by the hand that wrote his epitaph. There is no Simonides, no Sophocles in this day, and if there were I would hail any prizes that they won. That would be worth while, I would shout louder than people shout over the poets that we have."

"Mr. Masters recalled that once during his lifetime he had been offered an honorary degree. He did not exactly refuse it, but agreed to accept it if one were also given to a character who had been known by the familiar nick-name of 'Old Sock.' Old Sock was not much of a college man, but was a student of ancient and modern poetry. He lived an aesthetic if somewhat vagrant existence, but in his brief sojourn in college had gotten more out of it than many of the boys who conformed to the traditions of intermanual life.

"The man representing the college offering the degree inquired as to the present state of 'Old Sock's' existence. Mr. Masters told him that Old Sock was doing very well and was still reading the Greek poets and serving as a night watchman in a warehouse. That information put an end to the offer of a twin degree for the author of Spoon River and 'Old Sock.'"

"Finally, in accepting the medal, Mr. Masters said, 'I haven't formally accepted the medal yet, have I? Well, I do accept it not for the silver that is in it, but for the spirit which is back of it. For this society, though subject to all human frailties and errors, stands forth as the champion of the art of poetry, and the best thing to do is to accept at face value its devotion to the art that speaks for civilization and progress and has made England the cherished realm that poets do not wish to see destroyed. It is the realm of Shakespeare and Milton, Wordsworth and Shelley which after all is beyond the reach of guns and bombs. These are the men, not Marlborough, Nelson and Wellington and D'Israël—but the apothecary's apprentice, the troubled singer who was lost in a storm in the Bay of Spezia, caught up and transported from view as Aeschylus portrayed the vanishment of Prometheus. These and the cottager at Rydal Mount, and the Pilgrim of Eternity make England; and here in America it is Jefferson and Emerson and Whitman. That is the America that keeps the land from sliding into the sea, that lives in spite of hypocrites and grabbers, who only reproduce hypocrites and grabbers, while these spirits keep en-gendering voices that speak the single knowledge that beauty is everywhere, and is really the substance and essence of all that we know. Whatever happens the slayer does not slay, the slain are
not slain, and in spite of factual inconsistencies, the rational mind chants the all pervading spirit and the beauty of the universe. This is the truth that Plato and his children repeat, that all pain and satirists attest in their most sorrowful moods. One time Socrates and his friend Phaedrus repaired to the plane tree by the brook Ilius. They were loafers and had nothing else to do but to think and to talk. And there Socrates offered a prayer to Pan and the other deities who haunted this place; and Socrates prayed for beauty in the inward soul, and that the inward man and the outward man might be one. Phaedus said, "Ask that for me." And you will find this prayer referred to all along the centuries, floating up from that secluded spot under the plane tree. Emerson refers to it more than once. Let this prayer be said for all of us.

Masters was not satisfied with the way the Bulletin reported his story of "Old Sock," for some deletions were made in it. As a result, he composed a letter of violent protest about this description.

In the later days before Masters left New York because of his sudden illness, he talked to me about disposing of some of his typescripts and manuscripts. Although not in the impoverished state reported by the newspapers when his illness was first announced, he began to feel, I think, a certain uneasiness about his financial security. He realized that sooner or later the manuscripts and working copies of his poems and novels would be of interest to collectors and he wanted to determine their monetary value in the current market. He gave me a slip of paper on which he had written the titles of the three manuscripts he was willing to sell:

- Old Man and the Sea
- New Time
- New World

I queried various dealers handling rare books and manuscripts but in no case was an offer made for the papers. Shortly after this Masters was taken ill, and the matter came to an abrupt end. It is interesting to note that recently I asked these same dealers if they had any of Masters' manuscripts and they replied that there were none available, for since the poet's death they had sold all that were in hand.

Frequently when returning from a serious or troubled contemplation of financial affairs Masters would fall into his "Lute Puckett" mood, or say that he was "Dr. Lucius Atherton"—that character from Spoon River who could be, he explained, a very disagreeable as well as a very foolish person. Masters had the letterhead "Dr. Lucius Atherton" printed; and he composed verses which he attributed to Lute or Lucus. He told us that the author of Spoon River and Domesday Book turned thumbs down on the work of those two.

In the spring and summer of 1945 we began to notice that Masters had difficulty getting in and out of an automobile. One night when we had gone with him to a piano recital which his nephew, Lee Grum, gave in a home near Gramercy Park, my husband practically had to lift him from the taxi, but in the late autumn he seemed stronger.

On the seventh of December, in the afternoon, I was told that Masters had called me by telephone when I was out. I tried to call him at the hotel, but a busy line delayed me. Before I could reach him I received news of the death of a close friend and was asked to notify members of a club about the funeral arrangements.

The next morning when I called Masters, I found that he had been taken suddenly ill and had been carried to a hospital. I could not discover which one until the assistant manager of the Hotel Chelsea was able to tell me that he was at Bellevue. We went at once to Bellevue but were told that we could not see Masters until visiting hours in the afternoon. We managed, however, to find out where he was and persuaded the attendant in the ward to allow us to see him.

Bellevue is a city with many divisions and we passed through several buildings before we located the right one. The ward, when we reached it, looked stark and forbidding in the winter sunlight. Standing in the doorway, we could see no individuality in the old men who sprawled in chairs or lay on the seemingly endless rows of beds that lined both sides of the cavernous room. Their all looked alike in the gray hospital shirts. Some were convalescent, some lay very still, and around a few of the beds curtains had been drawn. There were sounds—not loud, but penetrating—and
the murmur of voices, Masters describes a scene like this in his poem "Worlds":

And they moved me to the charity ward of the dying—
And that is one of the worlds.
They had screens around us,
So that we could not see each other die.
But they had no way to shut out from each of us
The cries and prayers of the others.

At the very end of the ward, between the glare of two windows, we found Masters. When we saw him, he stretched out his hands, and his eyes filled with tears. Masters was sitting propped with pillows in a chair, he was flushed, but by no means near death as we had feared. He asked me immediately if I thought he was going to die, and I managed to smile when I told him that I was sure he was not. It was difficult to say anything, for fear of saying too much. As he himself says in his poem "Silence," "We are voiceless in the presence of realities."

There had been no previous intimation of serious illness, although I knew he had a cold, as he had broken a dinner engagement with us on that account. Masters said that darkness had come upon him suddenly—he felt as if umbrellas had been raised all around him, closing out light and air.

When we returned to Bellevue the next day, we found that he had been taken to Park East Hospital. The same afternoon we saw him at the uptown hospital and met his second wife, Mrs. Ellen Colpache Masters, who had made the arrangements for him to be there. We also met for the first time Masters’ young son Hilary.

Immediately after Edgar Lee Masters had been taken to Bellevue the press from coast to coast carried headlines saying that the poet had been found alone, impoverished, and suffering from malnutrition. That Masters was not in affluent circumstances is true. That he was in want or lacked the money necessary to meet his simple needs is not true. Masters said repeatedly that the world loves a lie better than the truth and will cling to it in spite of all evidence to the contrary.

At the Park East Hospital Masters slowly improved. He was able to see his friends and he began to take an interest in his mail. He could read only a few of the letters and cards that came to him by the dozens, but he was pleased to be remembered by so many friends, personal and literary. The Christmas of 1943 he spent in the hospital, his room filled with flowers. On Christmas Eve a small green tree decorated with tiny ornaments gave him a childlike pleasure.

Masters was a bit of a cynic in his attitude toward formal religion, but he respected the beliefs of his friends. He was never a materialist, he shied away from the term agnostic, and detested the easy label of the atheist. Once a year at least he shed the turtle crust of the questioner and joined in the festive spirit of Christmas. On Christmas Eve it had been his custom to ask his friends to his apartment at the Chelsea to trim the little table tree and exchange presents. He was like a child again, a sentimentalist remembering his boyhood, a big smile creasing his cheeks, and tears in the corners of his eyes. "Guess who's coming," he would say. "I called Percy"—or Ridgely, or Padraic, or any of his cronies from The Players. We often sang carols and Christmas hymns, and the stubborn mind of the man of Athens would melt to the admiration, if not the adoration, of the Magi at Bethlehem.

From Park East Hospital he was taken to a nursing home in the East Bronx, Hillcrest Mansion. We visited him there frequently. I do not remember ever hearing him complain, nor did he assume the attitude of an invalid, but, quoting the title of his own poem, "They'd Never Know Me Now," he said to me half in jest, "You would never know me now." He told us that he had not minded being in the ward at Bellevue, and had rather enjoyed watching some of the old men. While the place seemed grim to us, he had found it interesting and they had been good to him there.

A few of his friends went regularly to Hillcrest Mansion to see him—Mrs. Leonora Speyer, Amy Bonner, Mr. and Mrs. John Hall Wheelock, Padraic Colum, and Percy MacKay—but the friend who visited him most often was A. M. Sullivan. He made the tedious journey every Saturday for ten or twelve weeks. At this time Mrs. Masters was teaching in New York City and was able to supervise the care of her husband. I met her on several occasions at the nursing home.

At Hillcrest Mansion Masters had a large and pleasant room with three or four windows. He was soon able to walk a little, but he did not visit with the other patients in the home. He sometimes listened, from a safe distance, to two old women who murdered time rowing with each other and talking incessantly with sounds like a buzz saw. He spoke with gratitude of his improve-
ment and the care he had received at the convalescent home. As Burroughs says of Whitman after Whitman was stricken with partial paralysis, "He was always the picture of sweetness, sanity and health."

In the late winter of 1944 Masters received the Shelley Memorial Award of five hundred dollars. Announcement of the award was made by John Hall Wheelock, chairman of the committee representing the Poetry Society of America. Other members of the committee were Alfred Noyes and Professor Theodore Spencer of Harvard University. "I can think of no prize," Mr. Masters said, "that I could esteem more than one which carries the name of Shelley. When I was seventeen at high school, I saw a copy of Shelley's Complete Poetical Works in a drugstore window in Mason City, Illinois, and bought the book with money I had earned picking blackberries for my grandmother. I cherished this book, reading it over and over, and from that time I regarded Shelley as one of the purest and best of men."

In the summer of 1944 Masters went with his wife to a camp in the Pocono Mountains. The following winter he accompanied her to Charlotte, North Carolina, where they lived at the Selwyn Hotel. In the summer of 1945 they had an apartment near Gramercy Park and we saw them several times. They dined in our home, and though Masters seemed to us much changed and feeble, his mind was perfectly clear, and he insisted that he was getting better. The last time we saw him was in the spring of 1946, in New York. But he continued to write to us and when he was unable to write Mrs. Masters sent us brief bulletins about his condition.

Masters' last poem, so far as we know, was the one he composed to be read at Percy MacKaye's seventieth birthday dinner, which was held at the National Arts Club, on the evening of March 16, 1945. The poem includes these lines:

Mystical singer, singer of wolves and men,
Do not discharge you from the task, careers
Are measured by the genius which goes on
Until the heart stops and declines the sun;
The thing is faith, is the spiritual glow
Which burned in Goethe, Michael-Angelo.

In 1946 Edgar Lee Masters received the five thousand dollar award of the Academy of American Poetry. At a meeting held in the home of Charles Hanson Towne, Mrs. Hugh Bullock, President of the Academy, read a letter of acceptance and appreciation from the poet. Ridgely Torrence, Chancellor of the Academy, paid a tribute to his friend the author of Spoon River, who had sacrificed a successful legal career to devote his life to poetry.

On March 5, 1950 Masters died in his sleep at a convalescent home in Melrose Park, Pennsylvania, near the Ogontz Junior College, where his wife was head of the English Department. He was buried, as he wished to be, beside his grandmother in Petersburg, Illinois, and not far from the grave of Ann Rutledge. His grave will bear, on a bronze tablet, this inscription from his poem "To-morrow Is My Birthday":

EDGAR LEE MASTERS
1868 - 1950

"Good friends, let's to the fields...
After a little walk, and by your pardon,
I think I'll sleep. There is no sweeter thing.
Nor fate more blessed than to sleep.
I am a dream out of a blessed sleep—
Let's walk and hear the lark."
Illustration to the Legend of Prince Ahmed

An Unpublished Sketch by Washington Irving

EDITED BY HOWARD C. HORSFORD

Among the gifts presented to the Princeton University Library by the late Philip Ashton Rollins '89, is a short unpublished holograph manuscript of Washington Irving's. Mr. Rollins acquired the manuscript about 1897 from one of Irving's relatives and gave it to the Library in 1908. Tradition holds that Irving, upon his return to New York in 1822 after his long sojourn in Europe, gave away this and other manuscripts like it as mementos and souvenirs to his friends and relatives. However, it may be that this sketch was among the "mass of unpublished manuscripts" that came into the hands of his nephew and literary executor, Pierre Irving, at the death of the author.1

The Princeton manuscript consists of eight small sheets, written on one side only and sewn together by white silk thread; it is evidently a first draft—Irving made a number of minor revisions as he wrote it, but the spelling, grammar, and syntax are somewhat erratic. From its title, "Illustration to the Legend of Prince Ahmed," and from its contents, Solomon's knowledge of the language of birds, his magic green silk carpet, as well as the specific reference to the Moorish sage Eben Bonabben, the sketch was clearly intended at one time or another for juxtaposition with the "Legend of Prince Ahmed al Kamei" in Irving's Alhambra. In fact, however, it appeared neither in the first edition (1832) nor in any subsequent edition, though Irving later rather extensively revised the work.

Irving may have written the sketch as late as the 1820's, tentatively planning to include it in his "Author's Revised Edition," but it more probably belongs to the period of his residence in Spain and England, 1826 to 1832. During his years in Spain he collected not only material for his life of Columbus and for The Conquest of Granada, but also much of the material that later found its way into The Alhambra, and, still later, into his life of Mohammed. Stanley Williams, in his biography of Irving, wrote of the period in 1899, after Irving had finished the first two works: "He was bewildered by his collection of notes, a trunk full of miscellaneous data discarded from his two Spanish books. In the libraries... he had swept together a thousand fragments of history, legend, anecdote... the trunk contained his literary problems; in it were notes on the life of Mahomet, translations... documents... [etc.]"2 And Irving himself wrote, in his "Preface to the Revised Edition" of The Alhambra, "The papers thus roughly sketched out lay for three or four years in my portfolio, until I found myself in London, in 1832, on the eve of returning to the United States. I then endeavored to arrange them for the press, but the preparations for departure did not allow sufficient leisure. Several were thrown aside as incomplete..."3

Irving, in a scrawled note at the end of the sketch, indicates the source of the tale, George Sale's English translation of the Koran.4 Now Irving would have been concerned with the Koran perhaps as early as 1826 or 1827, for, according to Pierre Irving, his uncle had sketched a rough version of a life of Mohammed while still working in Madrid.5 But in his letters and journals of these years there seems to be no mention of his reading Sale, nor ordering it from London, and the probability may be questioned whether he would have found a copy of such an English translation in the libraries of Spanish and Moorish literature to which he had access at this time.6

However, during the years at the American Legation in London, 1829-1832, he could easily have obtained Sale's translation, and it was precisely during those years that he was preparing for publication both The Alhambra and a version of his life of Mohammed. At the same time that he was negotiating for the publication of the former, he had sent twenty-one chapters of a "Legendary History of Mahomet" to his agent, Aspinwall, but no one would accept it, and it did not finally appear until 1850.7 Thus the preponderance of evidence seems to favor the years from about 1827 to the end

1 The Life of Washington Irving, New York, 1885, I, 397.
3 The Koran; commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed; translated from the original Arabic. With explanatory notes, taken from the most approved commentators. London, 1754. A voll. Several other editions, however, were available to Irving, the most nearly contemporary being the "New Edition" of 1811.
4 The Life and Letters of Washington Irving, New York, 1866-69, II, 177.
5 Irving had made an ineffectual attempt to learn Arabic. See Williams, op. cit., II, 224.
6 Ibid., II, 21-23.

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of 1891 as the time for the writing of this sketch, with, perhaps, the last two years as the most probable.

In the following transcription I have faithfully followed Irving’s revisions, omitting the cancellations, but preserving his errors in spelling and grammar. I have, however, occasionally supplied in the usual square brackets [ ], letters missing due to his haste in writing, and I have indicated a few questionable readings by enclosing them in pointed brackets, < >. For the purpose of comparison, pertinent extracts from his source in Sale are appended. By so doing, we may once more see Irving, the chronic borrower, recreating his old material in more elegant forms.

ILLUSTRATION TO THE LEGEND OF PRINCE AHMED.

It would appear that Eben Bonabben was mistaken in affirming that Solomon had been taught the language of birds by the Queen of Sheba; he knew it before he became acquainted with her; it having been miraculously bestowed upon him with all other kinds of knowledge. Indeed, according to Arabian tradition it was through his knowledge of the language of birds that he first became informed of the existence of such a person as the Queen of Sheba and a lap wing which served as a diplomatic agent between the parties, and thus the thing came to pass. Solomon, having finished the temple of Jerusalem went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, whence he proceeded to Yemen or Arabia the happy. On his journeys he used to be attended by his court, and by legions of genii and armies of birds. For the facility of travelling he had an immense carpet of green silk, of magic properties. On this was placed his throne, whereon he seated himself; his courtiers on his right hand and the genii on his left. On giving the word this carpet would be elevated in the air, with all that were thereon, and transported whithersoever he desired; the birds flying in a cloud over head, to keep off the ardent rays of the sun. To the birds were assigned these several functions: that of the Lap wing was to discover hidden springs in the deserts; at which she was wonderfully sagacious, as standing and striking with her bill where water was to be discovered; upon which the genii digged and laid open the fountain head, and drew water for Solomon and his host.

One day when Solomon had encamped in the desert, the Lap wing failed to appear when summoned to perform her accustomed task: whereupon Solomon vowed to punish her severely unless she could give a sufficient excuse for her absence.
After a time the delinquent bird appeared before him but advanced with an intrepid air. Be not angry with thy servant, oh son of David, said the Lapwing. For I have been gathering tidings for thee of a far country of which thou knowest nothing. As I was taking a wide circuit in the air I encountered a bird of my acquaintance who told me such wonders of Saba that I prevailed upon her to conduct me thither. There I beheld a country filled with riches and delights, and a magnificent city and a queen named Balkis, who sat on a throne of gold and silver, and precious stones and was surrounded by all the splendor befitting a mighty sovereign: but she and her subjects had turned aside from the path of truth and worshiped the sun, instead of the true God.

Solomon regarded the Lapwing with a doubtful eye: we shall see said he whether thou hast spoken the truth or art a liar. He then wrote a letter to the following effect. From <the> Servant of God, Solomon the son of David unto Balkis, queen of Saba. In the name of the most merciful God. I offer you peace and truth. resist not, but come and yield yourselves up to me, and receive from me the knowledge of the true religion." This letter he perfumed with musk and sealed it with his signet, and gave it to the Lapwing. "If thou be a faithful and honest little bird, said he, and hast spoken the truth, prove it by taking this letter to the Queen of Saba and bringing me a reply. The Lap wing took the letter and sped away for the Kingdom of Saba. She beheld Queen Balkis surrounded by her nobles and her army; and circling in the air, dropped the letter in her bosom, after which she alighted on a neighboring tree to note what should follow.

When Balkis read the letter she was troubled in mind; for she had heard of the great power of Solomon [and] feared that he would enter her city by force and lay it waste. After consulting with her nobles, therefore, she determined to send an Embassy to Solomon, bearing rich presents. Having heard this resolution the Lap wing again took flight and brought back the intelligence to Solomon. The latter prepared to receive the ambassadors in state befitting his riches and grandeur. He had a large square enclosed with gold and silver moulded in the form of bricks; and here he awaited the introduction of the ambassadors seated on his throne and surrounded by his court and army. The ambassadors arrived and displayed their presents, then came five hundred slaves of either sex, chosen for their beauty, all dressed in the same manner; bearing presents of gold and precious stones and rich stuffs, and
musk, and amber and other things of value. But Solomon regarded these presents with contempt. Will ye put me off with riches? said he: God has given me enough things to satisfy the heart of man. return to the people of Saba—tell them I call upon them to surrender themselves to me; and to acknowledge the religion of the true God otherwise I will drive them out of their city and make them contemptible on the face of the earth.

This threat being reported to Balkis by her ambassadors determined her to repair to Solomon and pay him homage. Arabian traditions add several miracles which took place during their visit: some of which are recorded by Mahomet Himself in the twenty seventh chapter of the Koran; which miracles were effected by Solomon, or rather by the genii which he had at his command. (The above is from Sales Koran. <26>)

THE SOURCE IN THE KORAN

[The following passages are quoted from Irving's source, and, with some probability, from the same edition he used: The Koran; commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed; translated from the original Arabic. With Explanatory Notes... by George Sale, Gent. A New Edition. London, 1812. 2 vols. Chapter xxvii in Volume II is "Entitled, The Ant; revealed at Mecca," and the particular passage cited, together with Sale's notes, will be found on pp. 213-216.]

And Solomon was David's heir; and he said, O men, we have been taught the speech of birds, and have had all things bestowed on us; this is manifest excellence. And his armies were gathered together unto Solomon, consisting of genii, and men, and birds; and they were led in distinct bands, until they came into the valley of ants. And he viewed the birds, and said, What is the reason that I see not the lapwing? Is she absent?

8 An indecipherable word here is followed by what may be a scrawled abbreviation for Sæctæ or a letter, or a letter and a number, perhaps 77.

The Arab historians tell us, that Solomon, having finished the temple of Jerusalem, went in pilgrimage to Mecca, where having stayed as long as he pleased, he proceeded towards Yarmuth; and leaving Mecca in the morning, he arrived by noon at Damsa, and being extremely delighted with the country, rested there; but wanting water to make the ablution, he looked among the birds for the lapwing, called, by the Arabs, al Madhud, whose business it was to find in for it is pretended she was sagacious eyes or sharp-sighted enough to discover water underground, which the devils used to draw, after she had marked the place by digging with her bill. They add, that this bird was then taking a tour in the air; whence, seeing one of her com-

Verily I will chastise her with a severe chastisement; or I will put her to death; unless she bring me a just excuse. And she tarried not long before she presented herself unto Solomon, and said, I have indeed erred in the sight of my lord, which thou hast not viewed; and I come unto thee from Saba, with a certain piece of news. I found a woman to reign over them, who is provided with everything requisite for a prince, and hath a magnificent throne. I found her and her people to worship the sun, besides God: and Satan hath prepared their works for them, and hath turned them aside from the way of truth, (wherefore they are not rightly directed), lest they should worship God, who bringeth to light that which is hidden in heaven and earth. . . . Solomon said, We shall see whether thou hast spoken the truth, or whether thou art a liar. Go with this my letter, and cast it down unto them; then turn aside from them, and wait to know what answer they will return. And when the queen of Saba had received the letter, she said, O nobles, verily an honourable letter hath been delivered unto me; it is from Solomon, and this is the tenor thereof: In the name of the most merciful God. Rise not up against me: but come, and surrender yourselves unto me. She said, O nobles, advise me in my business; I will not resolve on any thing, until ye be witnesses, and approve thereof. The nobles answered, We are endowed with strength, and are endowed with great prowess in war; but the command apper-

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panism slighting, she descended also, and having had a description given her by the other of the city of Saba, whence she was just arrived, they both went together to take a view of the place, and returned soon after Solomon had made the inquiry, which occasioned what follows. [Al Beldawi, Jallaloddin.]

It may be proper to mention here what the eastern writers fable of the manner of Solomon's travelling. They say that he had a carpet of green silk, on which his throne was placed, being of a prodigious length and breadth, and sufficient for all his forces to stand on, the men placing themselves on his right hand, and the spirits on his left; and that when all were in order, the wind, at his command, took up the carpet, and transported it, with all that were upon it, wherever he pleased; the army of birds at the same time flying over their heads, and forming a kind of canopy, to shade them from the sun.

This is the Arab name Balkis. . . .

What the commentators say was made of gold and silver, and crowned with precious stones. But they differ as to the size of it . . .

Jallaloddin says, that the queen was surrounded by her army when the lapwing threw the letter into her bosom; but al Beldawi supposes she was in an apartment of her palace. . . . The former commentator gives a copy of the epistle somewhat more full than that in the text: viz. From the servant of God, Solomon the son of David, unto Balkis, queen of Saba. In the name of the most merciful God. Peace be on him who followed the true direction. Rise not up against me, but come and surrender yourselves unto me. He adds, that Solomon perfumed this letter with musk, and sealed it with his signet.
taineth unto thee: see therefore what thou wilt command. She said, Verily kings, when they enter a city by force, waste the same, and abase the most powerful of the inhabitants thereof; and so will these do with us. But I will send gifts unto them; and will wait for what farther information those who shall be sent shall bring back. And when the queen’s ambassador came unto Solomon,9 that prince said, Will ye present me with riches? Verily that which God hath given me, is better than what he hath given you: but ye do glory in your gifts. Return unto the people of Saba. We will surely come unto them with forces, which they shall not be able to withstand; and we will drive them out from their city, humbled; and they shall become contemptible. . . .

9 Bearing the presents, which they say were five hundred young slaves of each sex, all habited in the same manner, five hundred bricks of gold, a crown enriched with precious stones, besides a large quantity of musk, amber, and other things of value. . . . They also tell us, that Solomon, having notice of this embassy, by means of the lapwing, even before they set out, ordered a large square to be enclosed with a wall built of gold and silver bricks, wherein he ranged his forces and attendants to receive them.

In the issue for November, 1940, the Editors of the Chronicle welcomed Julian P. Boyd not only to the Princeton University Library but also to the Editorial Board of the Chronicle. Now, twelve years later, the present Editors have to record their regret at Mr. Boyd’s resignation as Librarian of Princeton University to accept a professorship in the University’s Department of History and at his decision to withdraw from the Editorial Board of the Chronicle.

Twelve years are a short time in the existence of an institution such as the Princeton Library, but there would be no one who would deny that the twelve years of Mr. Boyd’s librarianship were among the most fruitful years which the Library has yet enjoyed. To appreciate Mr. Boyd’s accomplishments as Librarian, which become all the more remarkable when one recalls the state of the country during his tenure—war and inflation would have justified far less ambitious action to most people—one has only to look back on the Library as it was in 1930, packed and jammed to overflowing into a pitifully antiquated and outgrown building, with its cellars and sub-cellars, its tunnels and towers, its general air of shabby discomfort. One could not enter such a structure with any pronounced enthusiasm; it was certainly not a place to which one could with any pride bring visitors.

The inadequacies of the old building were such that a full use could not be made of the Library’s books and other material, and the overcrowding and poor accommodations discouraged many prospective donors from even considering Princeton as a proper place for their gifts. The list of gifts lost because the Library had no means properly to house them would make dismal reading indeed. The erection of the Firestone Library, as had been anticipated, greatly increased interest in the Library itself and resulted
in a steadily growing stream of gifts which would not otherwise have come to Princeton.

But a library is far more than a building. The ultimate importance of any research library is based not on its building—no matter how commodious and well arranged it may be—but on the wealth and extent of its resources. During Mr. Boyd’s librarianship the Library experienced a growth in its special collections which was without precedence in its history. As Librarian he received for the University—among many others—the Rolls, Kane, Parish, Garrett, McCormick, and Hamilton Collections. Under his direction the Library embarked upon such a successful program of collecting manuscript materials that the Library is now one of the major repositories of manuscripts in this country. And just as those special features of the Library which make it of importance to scholars have been immensely increased, so have been those other resources which are more commonly used by the University’s students and faculty.

The finest library building housing the richest collections can be sterile and unproductive if the former is not planned with the special needs of its users in mind and if the latter are not made readily available to those qualified to use them. Mr. Boyd, as a scholar vitally concerned with the unobstructed interchange of ideas, was from the first in complete accord with the library philosophy expressed by Professor Charles Rufus Morey and James Thayer Gerge, Librarian from 1930 to 1938, who had formulated plans for a new building, and it was he who brought their plans to fruition.

If the Editors view with regret his leaving the Librarian’s office and the Editorial Board of the Chronicle, they have the satisfaction of knowing that Mr. Boyd is not leaving Princeton and that his wide knowledge and great range of interests, his infectious enthusiasm and tremendous energy, will continue to be felt in the University, to which he has already contributed so much.

A SHORT MEMOIR OF GEORGE MANN PECK*

George Mann Peck, antiquarian, genealogist, raconteur, and friend; composer, epicure, gardener, and Princeton's Emeritus Curator of Special Collections, died peacefully on April 9, 1954 at 56 Patton Avenue, Princeton, New Jersey, where he had lived for thirty-six years.

The ancestors he went to join no doubt received him proudly. The son of Ezra Jones Peck and Annie Lingan Bartlett, George could trace his line back to that William Peck of London who settled in New Haven in 1637, and also to that Darius Peck who helped the Minute Men against the British at Lexington. On his mother’s side, George was kin to the Warrens who came on the “Mayflower”; to Samuel Chase, who signed the Declaration; and to a favorite Revolutionary ancestor, General James Macquaihin Lingan of the Society of the Cincinnati. George had soldier ancestors to spare: his genealogy shows twenty-nine names to back up his membership in the Society of Colonial Wars and the Order of the Founders and Patriots. Even George’s schoolmaster father wielded the saber. A year or so before George’s birth at Owego, New York, February 27, 1815, First Lieutenant Ezra Peck had been mustered out of the Union Cavalry.

George kept the old swords as mementos, but himself preferred to wield the pen. The three academies (Canandaigua, Homer, and Owego) where his father served as principal made George a skilled classicist, and he entered Williams College with the Class of 1840, having taught Latin for some years to earn his way. His brothers in Beta Psi Fraternity called him Grandpa Peck, and all the younger brethren still sing his rousing song, “Hurrah for Zeta Pi,” composed in 1890. After college, George studied at Albany Library School, tutored deficient young Latinists in New York, served as librarian and teacher of Latin and Greek at Lawrenceville and Tome Schools, worked for the publishing firm of Ginn and Company, and in 1904 went home to Tanglewood, the family home in Phelps, New York, to see about getting married and possibly entering business.

He used to say that he gave his heart once and his hand twice in those years. The heart and hand were given to Martha Van Hoesen of Preble, New York, sister of Dr. Henry Irving Van Hoesen, Princeton ’79, classmate of Woodrow Wilson. The wedding appropriately occurred on Valentine’s Day, 1906. Two years later George unwillingly gave his hand again. Then a partner in the Phelps crate factory, he had the misfortune to lose his right thumb and forefinger to a buzz saw. Thereafter until 1916, he taught classics at Phelps High School and did a two-year stint with a bank in Truxton, New York.

* The author of this memoir gratefully acknowledges the generous assistance of Mr. G. Vinton Duffield of the Princeton University Library.
His classical training, his library experience, and his antiquarian interests now drew him to Princeton. Joining the staff of the Library on December 15, 1916, he was shortly thereafter appointed Curator of Special Collections, a post which he held (except for a year as Reference Librarian in 1918) until his retirement in 1937. Mrs. Peck died in 1922, the year in which Mr. Peck was partially crippled in a bicycling accident. Father and son Ezra (born in 1907) kept bachelor quarters until 1934, when the son married Sally Morris.

The years of curatorship were marked by a zeal for arranging and cataloguing the Library’s special collections, and for the acquisition of further items. As Lord High Factotum of the Treasure Room Mr. Peck was kindly uncle and gregarious grandpa to many generations of undergraduates.

Following his retirement, Mr. Peck found much to occupy his mind. His remaining thumb was green (he could make anything grow) and his vegetables and flowers were the pride of Patton Avenue. But he cultivated friends with equal assiduity, and it was a mark of favor to share after-dinner coffee with him in the back garden. One saw his gaunt figure, arrayed in splendid tweeds and surrounded by a cloud of cube-cut pipesmoke, moving leisurely across the campus, peering into old haunts, eating a steak at Washington Crossing, bending forward to appraise an antique or to sniff appreciatively a vintage bouquet. Or one glimpsed him sprawled in a chair with the fine old nose in a favorite book: the Bible, Thackeray, a treatise on cathedrals, a work of Henry Van Dyke’s, or (probably) one of the many volumes personally inscribed to him by friends and former students. He told at length his favorite yarns (“What was that man’s name, Ezra? Well, no matter.”), and revealed in friendship like an old horse in clover. On Sundays and holy days he occupied his pew at Trinity Church, where his three grandchildren were christened. The crowning glory of the annual meetings of the Princeton Music Club was for many years his reedy and raucous rendering, self-accompanied, of “The Antrim County Ball.”

In November, 1949, he took to his bed with painful arthritis. From that time onward, though the pain soon departed, he seldom moved again. He was tired, he was well cared for, and he was content. On his eighty-seventh birthday he had something like a stroke, but threw it off. On the eighth of April he sickened for some hours, and then seemed to rally. At six the next evening he told his son that he felt better. Half an hour later his daughter-in-law took him a little supper. But in one of the minutes between six and six-thirty the old heart had stopped.—Carlos Baker

**DID HE STEAL IT?**

The Princeton University Library has just issued, under the sponsorship of the Friends of the Princeton Library, the first published edition of Anthony Trollope’s *Did He Steal It?* Trollope wrote this comedy as an adaptation of The Last Chronicle of Barset, and he had a few copies privately printed in 1869 by the London firm of Virtue and Company. It was never published, however; it has never since been reprinted, and only two copies of the original printing are known to be extant. One of these is in the possession of Michael Sadleir, the other in the Morris L. Parrish Collection in the Princeton University Library. From the latter copy the text of this new edition was reproduced, in facsimile, by the Meriden Gravure Company. Robert H. Taylor ’30 has contributed a discerning introduction. P. J. Conkright designed the book with his usual skill, and the volume has been attractively gotten up by the Princeton University Press.

*Did He Steal It?* was selected by the Committee on Publications of the Friends of the Princeton Library as the first of a projected series of occasional publications to be issued by the Library under the sponsorship of the Friends. This series is designed to make more readily accessible scarce or unique material of unusual interest in the collections of the Princeton University Library.

The edition consists of one thousand copies, five hundred of which are reserved for the Friends, each of whom has been invited to accept a complimentary copy of this interesting book.—James Thorpe

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

To the Editor:

In your issue for the summer of 1922, Professor Donald D. Egbert, in his interesting article “General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton as Painted by James Peale, Charles Willson Peale, and William Mercer,” suggests that the farm buildings shown in the James Peale and Mercer paintings of the battle are those of Thomas Clark. In this I think Professor Egbert is mistaken. I am confident that the buildings belonged to the William Clark farm.

The paintings, as Professor Egbert intimates, are in effect valuable historical documents, which should contribute to our understanding of what took place on that cold January morning in 1777. But if we make
mistakes in identifying the houses, barns, and fences shown in the paintings, they can only lead to confusion.

Perhaps you will permit me to give my reasons for thinking the buildings shown are those of the William Clark farm.

One of the chief contemporary authorities on the physical aspects of the battlefield is General James Wilkinson. Wilkinson was present at the battle, and later returned to the scene to locate houses and other important landmarks. Wilkinson places the William Clark residence at the southeast corner of the William Clark orchard, and all contemporary accounts indicate that Washington's men advanced in a wide, but shallow, arc against the British troops. The Americans faced the Thomas Clark house. Nor do I know of any historian of the battle who thinks that at any juncture the British troops were lined up with the Thomas Clark house at their left. Therefore, unless the artists were hopelessly puzzled, the houses they depict back of the British lines must be those of the William Clark farm.

Wilkinson states that Mercer was wounded near the William Clark barn. Since the paintings show Mercer lying wounded near a barn, we must assume that it is the William Clark barn. In fact, Benson J. Lossing, in his drawing of the battlefield which is reproduced in Professor Egbert's article, indicates the spot by a dot to the left of the William Clark barn. Alfred Hoyt Bill, in his excellent book, The Campaigns of Princeton, 1776-1777, places Mercer's last stand at "about fifty yards from William Clark's barn." The fact that Mercer was taken to the Thomas Clark house, where he was tenderly cared for until his death nine days later, could hardly contribute to the battle scene.

The location of houses and fences of the William Clark farm shown in the Lossing drawing correspond closely with those of the paintings. The numerous trees between the residence and the barn in the James Peale painting are obviously intended to represent the William Clark orchard, for they are in the exact position fixed by Wilkinson. Peale even shows the bodies of the men who fell in the orchard during the opening skirmish between Mercer's division and Hawhode's men, some in the British red and some in the blue of the Americans.

The paintings show some of the British light horse fleeing in a direction away from the buildings and to the left. If these buildings were those of the Thomas Clark farm, these men would be heading directly into the face of Hand and Hitchcock's divisions of Washington's army. This, of course, would have been suicidal. But the fact is that Captain Truvin, with his light horse, fled to the left of the William Clark house down to the Stony Brook bridge, at the foot of what is now Stockton Street, which they held until some of the British infantry had passed south on their way to join Cornwallis.

It would seem evident that the distant building shown in the paintings was intended to represent Nassau Hall. I know of no other building in or near Princeton which had a cupola. But Nassau Hall cannot be seen from any point on the battlefield, and was probably inserted in the proper direction, merely to give color to the scene. Certainly the building in the paintings has not the faintest resemblance to the Quaker meetinghouse, which Professor Egbert thinks it might be intended to represent.

Fortunately the house and barn of the Thomas Clark farm are still standing, so we can compare them with the buildings shown in the paintings. They do not correspond. As viewed from the battlefield, the main section of the Thomas Clark house is on the right, the main section of the house in the paintings is on the left; the main section of the Thomas Clark house has only two second story front windows, the house in the paintings has three; the Thomas Clark main section has only one room on the front which faces the battlefield, the centrally located door of the house in the paintings indicates a hall with rooms on each side; the Thomas Clark barn is to the right of the residence, the barn in the paintings is on the left; the Thomas Clark barn is but a few feet from the residence, the barn in the paintings is at a considerable distance from the house. In other words, the barn buildings in the paintings are obviously not those of the Thomas Clark farm, while they correspond exactly with what we know of the buildings of the William Clark farm.

THOMAS J. WERTENBAKER

To the Editor:

As Professor Wertenbaker is one of the chief authorities on the Battle of Princeton, his expert opinion concerning the iconography of James Peale's painting must, of course, be given very great weight. Although, for reasons cited in the article, the weight of evidence still seems to me to indicate that the house shown in the picture is that of Thomas Clark (rather than that of William Clark, as Mr. Wertenbaker maintains), it is certainly possible that Mr. Wertenbaker's interpretation is the correct one. Perhaps the question can never be decided with complete assurance, but now of the fact that eighteenth-century history painters ordinarily did not hesitate to take liberties with sheer historical fact in order to achieve a better composition. Perhaps, indeed, for the sake of greater clarity, the artist collapsed the action and represented a single house as a kind of symbol for both of the two Clark houses.

DONALD D. EGERT

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

GERTRUDE CLAYTOR (Mrs. Graham Claytor) is the author of Sunday in Virginia, and Other Poems, published by Dutton in 1951. She is a member of Robert B. Claytor, a member of the Princeton Class of 1944.

HOWARD C. HORSFORD is an Instructor in English at Princeton University.

CARLOS BAKER is Chairman of the Department of English at Princeton University.
Cyrus H. Gordon in an earlier issue of the Chronicle (XII, No. 2 [Winter, 1951], 49-54) described the Library's collection of nearly two hundred stone seals from Mesopotamia and adjacent areas. Mr. Gordon is Professor of Assyriology and Egyptology at Dropsie College.

Robert B. Martin is an Instructor in English at Princeton University.

New & Notable

Near Eastern Seals and Cuneiform Tablets

The Princeton collection of Near Eastern seals has been enlarged by fifty-four items donated by Robert Garrett '97. Forty of the new seals are cylindrical for rolling; fourteen are stamp seals. Forty-seven are from Western Asia; seven, from Egypt. Most of the seals are of stone; fifteen are hematite, six steatite; and three each of chalcedony, lapis lazuli, and agate. In addition to the less commonly used stones represented, some of the seals are made of either frit or shell. The earliest items are four gable-shaped stamp seals from the fourth millennium B.C. By the third millennium the cylinder had ousted the stamp from use.

The earliest cylinder in the set depicts a pair of heroes rescuing a deer from two rampant lions. Looking on is a creature, man from the waist up, bull from the waist down. He is the creature called Enkidu in the most celebrated literary composition of Mesopotamia, the Gilgamesh Epic. Even details such as Enkidu's long womanish hair are depicted by the seal engraver as described in the Epic. The interesting thing is that this seal was carved not much after 2500 B.C., many centuries before our earliest tablets of the Gilgamesh Epic. Accordingly, the seals reflect specific myths and legends long before they were recorded verbally by our earliest texts.

Several of the scenes are religious: of devotees introduced, or giving gifts, to a deity. When the aim of such items is indicated, it is usually fertility. The fertility may refer specifically to crops, to judge from an ear of grain worked into the scene. Success in hunting is the purpose of a few of the seals, as is indicated by game animals such as deer and rabbits.

The value of the seals is perhaps best reflected in the fact that they are the most characteristic and common form of art in and around Mesopotamia during all the millennia when that country was a dynamic center of civilization in antiquity. Moreover,
Quadrupeds are colored lithographs executed by J. T. Bowen of Philadelphia. They are distinguished examples of this technique, and, indeed, those who have known the Quadrupeds only through the inferior lithographs of the later octavo editions must see these large plates of the original edition in order to appreciate the full beauty of Audubon's animals. Roughly half the drawings on which the plates were based are the work of John James Audubon himself; the others are by his almost equally talented son, John Woodhouse Audubon. The text to accompany the plates (issued to subscribers in three octavo volumes, in 1845, 1851, and 1855) was edited by the Reverend John Bachman, who used descriptive matter of his own as well as that supplied by John James Audubon and John Woodhouse Audubon. Another son, Victor G. Ford, Audubon, supervised the publishing and the subscriptions, and also drew backgrounds for some of the pictures. Although the Quadrupeds is thus a work of collaboration, it still owes much to the vision and inspiration of John James Audubon, who began plans for it shortly after the publication of his Birds was completed in 1838 and who continued to work on it for the next ten years. The plates were finished in 1838, but Audubon, who died in 1851, did not live to see the end of the Quadrupeds, which was finally completed with the publication of the last volume of text in 1853.

Audubon's Birds have to a certain extent overshadowed his Quadrupeds, yet these are essential to any just view of the man's total achievement. The recently published work edited by Alice Ford, Audubon's Animals (New York, 1951), has served to call attention to this somewhat neglected side of Audubon's genius, but even the reproductions in Miss Ford's book, excellent as they are, should be considered but an invitation to consult the large folio plates of The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America.

COVENTRY PATMORE

Recent additions to the Victorian correspondence in the Princeton Library are the more than two hundred letters and items associated with Coventry Patmore (1843–1898) which were purchased on the J. Frank Rualston and Robert K. Root Funds. Most of the lot, which was acquired from one of the poet's descendants, consists of letters to Patmore from his friends. Of those he wrote himself, the largest single group contains forty-eight letters to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sutton of Nottinghamshire; Sutton was himself a poet of minor distinction. These are particularly valuable because
Patmore wrote them while he was still a young man; although he scarcely knew Sutton, he wrote him with a frankness rare in the correspondence of his later years. The two poets exchanged views at length on religious matters, and here one can see clearly the leanings which made Patmore a Roman Catholic convert nearly twenty years later. The period during which the two corresponded was short, although there are scattered (and more formal) letters written during the rest of Patmore's life. Nearly half of the Sutton letters are unpublished.

Some of the correspondence with Patmore's more famous contemporaries has already been printed, chiefly in the biographies by Basil Champneys and by Derek Patmore. There are five letters from Carlyle, twenty-one from Aubrey de Vere, and nine from Robert Bridges, with whom Patmore corresponded on poetic theory. Neither Patmore nor his poetry was distinguished by humor, so it is pleasant to come across the twenty-nine letters from Thomas Woolner, who seems to have been the most amusing of his correspondents. Woolner, whose gossipy epistolary style has worn better than his Pre-Raphaelite sculpture, is at his best when being pleasantly malicious, whether sniffing at the poet they both disliked most ("Whitman . . . that coarse chaotic rowdy"), or at Frederic Harrison:

I never thought Frederic Harrison had any caste, and I knew him as a most conceited creature, whose opinions, of no value, were delivered in most admirable English . . .

In December, 1889, Woolner wrote of the death of Browning to Patmore, whose thin skin must have pricked at the absence of his own name:

What a silly fuss the papers are making about Browning, the critics saying that after Tennyson's death there will be only two great poets left, Swinburne, and Wm. Morris, now that Matt: Arnold is no more! Fancy such statements in the face of such a living fact as Lewis Morris!

Another addition to the Patmore material contains over thirty letters he wrote to St. Clair Baddeley. The most interesting parts of this correspondence are Patmore's comments on his fellow poets, Alice Meynell ("that incomparable woman . . . a Miranda with more than Miranda's innocence, for she has full knowledge of the world.") and Tennyson. Of the latter, from whom he had been estranged for many years, he wrote to Baddeley in 1893:
I have not nearly so warm an appreciation of Tennyson's poetry generally as you and most critics have, though I think a very small portion of his work is very high and perfect. About five per cent of it seems to me to be first-rate—really passion-inspired poetry. Twenty per cent more is unsurpassable in external finish, but wants the internal finish of passion and affection. The other seventy-five—including nearly all the work of the past thirty years—strikes me as simply bad. But there is great excuse for a Poet who loved money and could make ten guineas a line.

The letters to Baddeley were purchased on the Robert K. Root Fund.—ROBERT B. MARTIN

LETTERS OF STUART MERRILL

A group of sixteen letters written by the American-born French poet Stuart Merrill (1865-1915) to Thomas Rudmose-Brown, acquired by the Library several years ago, was the subject of an article by Professor Gilbert Chinard in the *Chronicle* for June, 1947 (VIII, No. 4, 168-171). This group represented a somewhat arbitrary selection of letters from what had evidently been a more extensive correspondence. The Library has recently had an opportunity to acquire forty-eight more letters from Merrill to Rudmose-Brown, which apparently complete the correspondence. The letters cover the years 1900 through 1911 and touch upon many matters, both personal and literary. Like the Arthur Symons papers, described below, and like the letters addressed to Francis Viele-Griffin, described in the *Chronicle* last year (XII, No. 3, 150-153), these Stuart Merrill letters provide many perspectives on French, English, and American literature of the nineties. They were purchased on the Charles Scribner Fund.

ARTHUR SYMONS

The most important single addition to the Library’s growing collection of material relating to the literary figures of the nineties is the extensive group of papers of Arthur Symons (1865-1915), English critic, poet, playwright, editor, and translator, purchased on the Robert K. Root, Theodore F. Samay, and Friends Book Funds.

This group represents more than merely a “collection” of Symons material; it is, in fact, a significant section of his personal
papers, or literary estate. Contained in some thirty standard archival filing boxes, the group includes, as its largest part, Symons' own carbon copies of the typewritten manuscripts of his works, original typescripts with autograph emendations, and a smaller proportion of holograph manuscripts. In addition there are to be found some thirty of the writer's notebooks, a small number of personal documents, a sizable collection of photographs (including approximately thirty of Symons), water colors and paintings by Symons, a quantity of Symons' work in page proof, tear sheets and clippings from newspapers and periodicals, and miscellaneous material. Lacking is the important category of correspondence; only a small number of letters received by Symons are present.

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Volume XXIV, Number 1
Autumn 1957

THE COUNCIL

The following were elected members of the Council for the 1954/55 term: John E. Burchard, John C. Cooper '09, Robert Garrett '97, Sinclair Hamilton '06, Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., Donald F. Hyde, Thomas W. Streeter, Lawrance Thompson, and Willard Thorp.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The summary of financial transactions on the Operating Account for the year 1951-52 follows:

RECEIPTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Balance 1 July 1951</td>
<td>$2,002.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserved for printing of Chronicle, Vol. XII, Nos. 3 and 4</td>
<td>1,500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional dues for 1950-51</td>
<td>155.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dues collected for 1951-52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subscriptions to Chronicle, Vol. XIII</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous sales of Chronicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fitzgerald number of Chronicle, Vol. XII, No. 4</td>
<td>144.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moby-Dick number of Chronicle, Vol. XIII, No. 2</td>
<td>50.00</td>
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Advance subscriptions to Chronicle, Vol. XIV
21.20
Dinner in honor of Elmer Adler
912.25
Catalogue of the Gallatin Beardsley Collection
17.20
Advance dues for 1952-53
2,700.00

$11,890.02

EXPENDITURES
Printing of Chronicle, Vol. XII, Nos. 3 and 4
$ 1,584.50
Printing of Chronicle, Vol. XIII, Nos. 1, 2, and 3
2,331.75
Postage, stenciling, and printing
854.70
Transfer to Friends Book Fund
1,643.00
Dinner in honor of Elmer Adler
912.25
Reserved for printing and mailing of Chronicle, Vol. XIII, No. 4
718.24
Reserved for Publications Committee
850.00
Advance dues for 1952-53 to be expensed that year
2,700.00

$11,594.53

Balance 30 June 1953
$ 235.49

The Operating Account does not receive contributions made specifically for the purchase of books or manuscripts. Contributions for such purposes are credited to the Friends Book Fund and are reported regularly in the Chronicle; when the contributions are for special items or for special purposes, that fact is stated.

House maintenance expenses and rent for 36 University Place (totaling $2,500.00) were covered by contributions of $8,450.00, $1,205.00 of which was carried over from 1951. The surplus of $550.00 was allocated for the purchase of additions to the Graphic Arts Collection selected by Elmer Adler. The Graphic Arts Collection, which was moved from 36 University Place to the Firestone Library during May and June, is now under the care of Gillett G. Griffin as a division of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Bernard Peyton ’17 is supporting the cost of restoring the Rittenhouse orrery which was secured for Princeton during the administration of President Witherspoon. Further contributions were received from members of the Class of 1906, including another donation from Sandford G. Etherington, a Friend, to cover the acquisition by the Library of Rex Brasher’s Birds and Trees of North America.

Expenses in connection with the dinner given in honor of Elmer Adler were met by contributions from a group of Friends and the Princeton University Press.

GIFTS

Since the last issue of the Chronicle several interesting and valuable gifts can be recorded. Sinclair Hamilton ’06 made further additions to the Sinclair Hamilton Collection of American Illustrated Books. Forty-eight books dealing with witchcraft and psychical research were received from Malcolm P. Hunt ’36. Eighty-five bronze medallions and six plaster copies were presented by Richard W. Lloyd ’38. From Willard Thorp came several gifts, including eighteenth-century editions of English literature and a group of Vincent O’Sullivan items. Material of Princeton interest was received from James S. Armstrong ’16, Edwin N. Benson, Jr. ’99, and the Reverend Charles R. Erdman ’86.

FRIENDS OF THE PRINCETON LIBRARY

Founded in 1899, the Friends of the Princeton Library is an association of bibliophiles and scholars interested in book collecting and the graphic arts and in increasing and making better known the resources of the Princeton University Library. It has secured gifts and bequests and has pooled funds for the purchase of rare books, manuscripts, and other material which could not otherwise be acquired by the Library.

Membership is open to anyone subscribing annually five dollars or more. Gifts payable to Princeton University should be addressed to the Treasurer.

Members receive the Princeton University Library Chronicle and publications issued by the Friends, and are invited to participate in meetings and to attend special lectures and exhibitions.

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Robert H. Lincoln

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Robert H. Lincoln

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