

*Some Rambling Recollections of a
Rambling Bookseller*

*Some Rambling Recollections of a
Rambling Bookseller*



*A talk delivered by JAKE ZEITLIN to
The Library Patrons of Occidental College
Los Angeles, California • 1970*

250 copies
have been specially printed
for Jake Zeitlin
for presentation at the
Zamorano-Roxburghe Joint Meeting
of 1970
and for members of
the Rounce & Coffin Club

Printed by Anderson, Ritchie & Simon

W

HEN MY OLD FRIEND and fellow conspirator in many worthy undertakings, Ward Ritchie, invited me to speak before the Friends of the Library at Occidental College, I broke my 1970 New Year's resolution to accept no more speaking engagements. I promptly and eagerly agreed to appear. I did so because it gave me an opportunity to fulfill a long cherished wish. That wish was to express publicly my respects and utter my thanks to a man for whom I have long held feelings of deep affection and obligation. He is a man to whom Occidental College and the cultural community of Los Angeles are still greatly in debt although he has not lived among us for many years. Fortunately he still lives and is a patriarchal symbol in his community and he will, I hope, read these words in which I dedicate this lecture to him. I am speaking of Remsen DuBois Bird, retired president of Occidental College. Remsen Bird was one of the leaders in all good causes that concerned literature, art, music and education in our community. His heart was very big and his impulses sometimes ran ahead of his caution. His worst errors were on the side of the angels and the results of his innocent faith in the goodness of men. Remsen Bird brought to Occidental College many men of distinction. He encouraged his students to meet and mingle with these men. He had many channels of association with the community and exerted himself to involve the community in the activities of Occidental College as well as the faculty and students of Occidental College in the community. He recognized the merits of such old graduates of Occidental as Robinson Jeffers and initiated the forming of the

outstanding collection of his works which is in your library. He brought such people as Thomas Mann, Frieda Lawrence, Gerald Heard and Aldous Huxley into the life of his campus.

There are many others here who I am certain join me in this salute to Remsen Bird.

In my bookshop there is a framed autograph statement by A. Edward Newton. It reads: "I am by no means sure that a great library is as humanizing an influence as a small one." In these days of two million, three million, six million volume libraries, I think it is well to consider this thought and to do honor to the college and the college libraries that are not involved in the race for bigness. Knowledge is not quantitative and wisdom is not measured in bits. The fallacy of computerization and the vain promise that greater access to greater masses of information will make a man more humane and more wise needs to be reassessed. Educators, scholars and librarians should re-examine the value systems associated with such concepts. If they do, they will, I believe, assert themselves against the apostles of so-called information systems and the advocates of accreditation by numbers. A bookseller has unusual opportunities to learn what is going on in the world of educational institutions and libraries, and I must say that some of the doctrines I encounter horrify me. But I have let my indignation lead me astray.

What I am here to do is entertain you. Naturally I have the subtle intention of indoctrinating you as well, and I hope I may infect you with the desire to partake further in the pleasures which the pursuit of the book and the company of bookmen have given me.

Occidental College has furnished me with the material for some of my stories for I have been influenced by the zeal of such men as Carlyle McIntyre who was among the first to visit my bookshop on Hope Street opposite the Bible Institute when I opened in 1928. Occidental has many distinguished graduates but none that shed more lustre on their Alma Mater than Ward Ritchie and Lawrence Clark Powell. Theirs has been a special dedication to the book and to the proposition that free minds are best nurtured by the free circulation of ideas through the medium of the spoken, written and printed word. They are both articulate men who speak and write well and they both have the call to teach and to expound. They have the faculty for leadership and they have the sense of respon-

sibility to accept the duties of leadership. It is a great pleasure for me to see men fulfill their possibilities, and in the case of Ritchie and Powell I have enjoyed seeing them develop and grow into their roles as leaders in their own professions and in the community. If the educators at Occidental are responsible for having molded and directed them, then Occidental is indeed a great humanizing influence.

It was not long after I opened the doors at my first shop in 1928 that Ward Ritchie came into my shop. He has already told in his account of the Primavera Press how we began our association by a nefarious act of piracy. As soon as we discovered our error we suppressed the poem of Carl Sandburg's that we had misappropriated and printed another poem of his with his permission and blessing. The first poem, *Soo Line Sonata*, appeared only in five copies, and no copy has ever appeared in the open market. The second, *M'Liss and Louie*, is now a first-rank rarity and I have heard of it selling for as much as \$100.00. Of course that is nothing compared to the rise in value of Ritchie's printing of Robinson Jeffers' *Apology for Bad Dreams* which he printed in Paris in an edition of 30 copies. Ritchie was prodigal with this masterpiece, he gave most of them away to friends like Powell and me. When the depression deepened I had a chance to sell mine. The rent was overdue, Powell's salary had not been paid and the creditors were at the ragged end of their patience. I called Ritchie and asked if he would forgive me this transgression of friendship and he said "Yes." Also he said, "Ask your customer if he wants another one, my rent is overdue too."

A few weeks ago one of these, a copy numbered III (in Roman numbers I pause to say) surfaced again. It was in immaculate condition and had been signed both by Robinson Jeffers and Ward Ritchie for the lucky owner. I bought it from the heir and within a few days sold it to a delighted buyer for \$750.00. In 1935 \$750.00 would I think have bought out the total stock and equipment of both Ritchie and me.

If I let myself go on the subject of Powell and Ritchie and the other Occidental people with whom I have been involved over the years, there would be no time for the announced subject of my talk this evening. My subject, "The Rambling Recollections of a Ram-

bling Bookseller," gives me great latitude. Someone asked me what I would like to do if I retired. I said, "Live in Southern California and go into the rare book business." I cannot imagine a more pleasant and satisfying way to spend the rest of my life. The combination of pursuing the treasures of the written, drawn and printed record of man's most inspired moments and of dealing with the kind of people who traffic in and treasure them, has provided me with many exciting experiences and delightful friendships. The best things which have come to me, including my treasured wife Josephine, have come through the open doors of my bookshop. Once a year I threaten to close the doors of my shop and retire to a quiet country place where I could have one hundred choice books and maybe see one customer a fortnight. It won't happen. I live off the excitement of people and the unpredictable accident which brings someone in with a Robert Burns manuscript in his hands or the quest for a Darwin letter which I just happen to have bought last week in London.

I hope I may reward your patience by a few stories about my ramblings about the world and about the world of books.

Ghiberti's doors on the Baptistery in Florence need not be guarded by St. Peter's flaming sword for me to recognize them as the veritable substance of what Michelangelo called the doors of heaven. Walking through the streets of Florence is for me more nearly levitation. What is more, I am always lucky there and this time in 1959 was even better than the last. Among others, I visited a scholar dealer whose favorite price for his treasures is \$10,000.00. He likes that figure and he is not too far wrong in some cases. My trouble is that I would not be able to buy any more books on my whole trip if I paid his prices. Fortunately he relented on two items and I walked away with them in my pocket. The first was Alessandro Volta's *Vis Attractiva* Como 1777; not only an uncut copy of one of the great landmarks in electricity, but also the very one passed by the Censor. It took only the time for a cable to go to Los Angeles and return to Florence for it to pass into the possession of one of my favorite collectors.

Of my other purchase, from this scholar in Florence, there is a tale to tell. It was a manuscript of 16 pages entitled, *Difensa de Galileo Galilei*. As well as my poor Italian could make out it gave

an account of a trial of Galileo in Venice by the Inquisition. I knew that Galileo was tried in Rome, but never in Venice. Three days later I was on an airliner bound from Rome via Milan and Nice to Barcelona, where I was to attend a History of Science Congress. At Milan there came aboard a tanned gentleman who seated himself across the aisle. He looked familiar and I finally hazarded speaking to him. "Are you Giorgio Di Santillana of M.I.T.?" I asked. And he answered, "Yes, and I think you are Jake Zeitlin of Los Angeles." Dr. Santillana shares the honor with Stillman Drake of being the foremost authority on Galileo in the United States. You need not guess at what came next. Dr. Santillana was delighted to examine the manuscript and inform me that it was an unpublished burlesque of a fictional trial of Galileo written after his death and secretly circulated among his adherents. It too has now become part of a great collection.

Aside from tasting the Gombas of Barcelona and washing them down with Sherry, my excuse for going there was the paper I was scheduled to deliver. It is entitled, "Thomas Salusbury Discovered," and I shall tell you of this because it may illustrate what rare booksellers do other than book selling. As a preliminary I should say that Thomas Salusbury, who first translated Galileo's *Dialogo* into English and published two very important 17th century volumes entitled, *Mathematical Collections*, has been a complete mystery to scholars. In spite of intensive research in England and the United States not one single fact outside of the meager data connected with these published volumes had been found, and one authority had advanced the theory that Thomas Salusbury was a pseudonym.

One night as the result of insomnia I was reading *The Book Collector*, an English quarterly devoted to our mutually shared subject. As the most likely to put me to sleep I chose an article on Lord Clarendon as a Book Collector. Having once dipped into his *History of the Rebellion* I can testify that Lord Clarendon does not interest me — not even as a book collector. My progress towards the arms of Lethe was interrupted suddenly when I read the following:

"Clarendon's friend, the Marquis of Dorchester, was also a collector. In 1654 Clarendon paid him a visit and found Thomas Salusbury sorting and cataloging the Library. "The

Lord Chancellor . . . well approveth it,' wrote Salusbury, 'and gave me not a few compliments, and upon my lord of Dorchester's commendations doth say he may use me in preparing a library for him, but professeth he wants money.' "

There was a cryptic footnote consisting of the following: "H.A. 106606." Only the pack-rat memory of a bookseller could provide the solution to this. It meant Hastings Abbey Papers Number 106606, and I also remembered that the Hastings Abbey papers are in the Huntington Library at San Marino, which is only half an hour's drive from Los Angeles. You may be sure that I did not sleep the rest of that night and early the next morning telephoned Tyrus Harmsen, as he was then on their staff, to inquire how many Salusbury letters they have in their collection. The answer was thirteen. It took less than half an hour for me to drive there and view them. Out of these letters I have been able to extract a considerable number of facts including where Salusbury lived, who his patrons were, the names of his wife and daughter, his intimate association with Charles II, as well as to approximate the date of his death. Because of an overloaded program at Barcelona I did not give the paper, but it appeared *Isis* December 1959, and if you are curious about it you may read it there.

Every bookseller dreams of being able to sit in Sotheby's auction room in London and being able to stand off the rest of the book world by buying in every important book in that day's sale against all competition. My great moment came one day in July of 1964 when the famous Library of Scientific Classics of E. N. da C. Andrade was being sold. It was a two-day sale. On the first day I came with what seemed to be adequate bids, only to sit there and suffer while every important item including Boyle's *Sceptical Chymist* was taken away from us by bids twice as high as my limit. That night I called my colleague Warren Howell who was in touch with my Santa Barbara customer and told him the sad news. When he called back he said, "Our friend said triple all your limits and don't let the next day's best books get away from you." What a thrill I had when I could sit there with my pencil raised until all the plums fell into our basket. When the auctioneer's hammer fell time after time with his nod in my direction, the English dealers perked up

and one by one each of them tried to draw our blood. But they soon found it too costly to outbid us and resigned themselves to an occasional sally. Finally, the book we most of all desired came up. This was Thomas Salusbury's *Mathematical Collections*, Volume Two dated 1665. It is one of the most rare and important of English scientific books, in all there are only seven copies known to exist, one at Cal Tech; the Ernest Watson Copy. This was the only known copy in private hands and probably the last that would ever come up for sale. Among other things this book is notable for containing some of Galileo's most important works. Beside me in the room sat Prof. Stillman Drake, the foremost authority on Galileo in the English speaking world. He had hoped to buy it himself and informed me that he had placed a bid of £1500 with Bert Marley from Dawsons of Pall Mall. I agreed not to enter the bidding unless his limit was passed. Bidding goes fast in London and in no more than one minute the bidding passed £1500. I raised to £1800 and Marley still bidding went to £2000. Traylen and Quaritch then entered the contest but Marley persisted and was leading at £2800. I raised to £3000. There was a pause. Marley shook his head and the hammer fell. Then he looked across the green table and stuck his tongue out at me. In the austere quarters of Sotheby's I dare say nobody had made such a gesture for 200 years; it was like throwing a bun at the Last Supper. I then had the pleasure of turning to Drake and telling him that my principal had instructed me to say that the book would be placed in his custody for study as long as he needed it. The outcome of that event is the beautiful two-volume edition of Thomas Salusbury's *Mathematical Collections* which has been edited with an introduction by Professor Drake and published jointly by Mr. Marley's firm, Dawsons of Pall Mall, and Zeitlin & Ver Brugge of Los Angeles.

Experiences of this sort are what make my business so exciting intellectually, in terms of human relations and sometimes in terms of profit. One can spend months and even years on the research that goes with landing a great prize and then have it slip out of his hand. The stories of these are like the fisherman's yarns of the big one that got away. My latest has to do with a manuscript laboratory notebook of Marie Curie. Several years ago I was lecturing at a prominent midwestern university. After the lecture I received

a call from the wife of a French physicist who asked me to call at her house. She brought out this notebook of 170 pages, dated 1917 to 1933, containing Madame Curie's detailed notes of her researches, mostly with radio-active elements. Except for a few pages in the hand of Joliot-Curie, her distinguished collaborator and son-in-law, all of the notes are Mme. Curie's own autograph. It is unpublished and therefore a valuable, unexplored record of her important researches as well. The lady wanted a very large sum of money for it, far beyond what I could hope to get, so I left it with her. With further correspondence I persuaded her to reduce the price somewhat and place it in my hands for sale. She was not able to give me a clear history of it, nor would she undertake to guarantee it against claims by any French institution or the heirs of Madame Curie. That was to be my job, because, of course, no reputable dealer can afford to deal in items of questionable title. I began a series of correspondence with all possible claimants including the most likely French institutions. First I wrote to the Academie Francais and in due course, meaning about three months, I received a magnificent letter signed by both perpetual secretaries advising me that none of the libraries at the Institut de France or the Academie Francais had ever had the manuscript recorded as in their possession. Next I wrote the Institut Curie and after the usual interval received a courteous reply from the director advising me that they had no record of its previous ownership and informing me that the remaining known manuscripts of Marie Curie had been presented to the Bibliotheque Nationale by the heirs, including Eve Curie now living in New York, coincidentally a block or so away from the residence of my prospective buyer. Eve Curie, now Mrs. Labouisse, was my next object of inquiry, and she in turn advised me that she was out of the country but would give me a more full response on her return. In the meantime I went abroad last October and after a week in Vienna, meeting many of the world's great bibliophiles and curators at an International Congress, I traveled to Paris and presented myself at the Bibliotheque Nationale and sought an interview with the director of the Manuscript Collection. French officials are not contacted directly, and I had to be interviewed by a series of lesser officials. This took a large part of one afternoon, but when my name was finally passed to Monsieur Thomas,

he came out to greet me immediately for we had attended many functions together in Vienna the week before. I told him of my problem, left photostats with him, and he promised to give me a written answer as soon as possible. Two months passed before I received his letter informing me that this manuscript had never been included in the list of Curie manuscripts presented by the heirs, and thus the Bibliotheque Nationale had no legal claim to the manuscript. And finally in December, Eve Curie advised my client that she had no claim on it. By then more than a year had passed and the owner demanded the immediate return of the manuscript despite the fact that I was now prepared to buy it. No persuasion I could muster was effective, and a few weeks ago I had to return it to her. All my investigation, correspondence and travel were in vain. I had established its honest pedigree. I had also discovered that it is the hottest manuscript in the business and I'll tell you why. In the course of showing it to a physicist friend last year he asked me if I knew that Madame Curie and her associates had been very careless in their laboratory and had exposed not only their own persons but also everything they used, to the radio-active materials with which they worked. I took it out to the Institute for Radiation Medicine at UCLA where they kindly placed it in their counting chambers. The resulting graph showed very definite radiation traces of every one of the materials she had been investigating; not toxic but still present. I hope the owner is keeping it in a lead blanket in her home, and of course I am praying that she will have a change of heart and decide to return to me the hottest manuscript in the business.

Some fifteen years ago I went up to Berkeley to visit Dr. Herbert Eugene Bolton at the Bancroft Library. I brought him a group of very important California documents signed by General Vallejo, the last Mexican Governor of California, which had been brought to me by the descendant of an old Southern California family. Dr. Bolton was more than casually interested. He called in two of his assistants to look them over. They brightened up as they looked and then went out. A half hour passed and then Dr. Bolton was also called from the room. He returned and said, "My boys have brought a policeman. They want me to arrest you. Those Vallejo documents bear the marks of our library and were stolen from us." I

cannot say that I was cool as a cucumber, but I did manage to tell him how they came into my possession, and he quickly recognized the historic name as that of a gentleman who had been doing "research" in the Bancroft library. I then said, "You have given me a wonderful opportunity. May I present these to your library." He was delighted to transform me from a malefactor into a benefactor. Our visit ended with a tale from him of another scholar who had "borrowed," shall we say, from the Bancroft library and whose saving last remark was "Scholarship is Hell on Manners."

I had a return engagement with Dr. Bolton a few years later when I sold him seventy-five original documents pertaining to Father Kino and the Jesuits in Lower California. This included the original manuscript of Kino's *Afanes Apostolicos* and the manuscript map drawn by Father Consag which for the first time described the gulf of Lower California and the mouth of the Colorado River, and proved that California is not an island. For that collection, the University of California paid me \$10,000.00. I also negotiated for Maggs Bros. the sale to him of the original manuscript of Burriel's *Historia de California*, which is better known under the pseudonym of Venegas.

People are always asking me if I ever found any priceless books or manuscripts in an attic. I have not. But I did once find a great and valuable lot of things in a basement. In 1935 I wrote an article called, "Trifles Today Treasures Tomorrow" for Readers Digest. I received over 5000 letters as a result and a number of callers most of whom had worthless facsimiles of the Ulster County Gazette. One afternoon there came into my shop, which was then on West 6th Street, a lady with a handkerchief box. She opened it and brought out several manuscripts. The first read something like this, "The American Flag now flies over every commanding position in California and it is now governed by the laws of the United States of America, August ? 1846.

George E. Stockton
Commander"

The second document was a letter from some officer asking the Commander to do what he could to prevent a duel between Col. Mason and Col. Fremont.

I needed to read no further. I asked her if she had any more such documents. She said, "Yes, a whole trunkful in my basement." Her home was in Sacramento. Within a week I brought Ernest Cowan, the California bibliographer, with me to her doorstep. As we walked into the hall she said, "Hello Robert." This 70-year-old man and this beautiful greyhaired woman had gone to High School together five and a half decades ago and had not seen each other since. Her mother had had a roomer many years ago, a certain Major Gillespie. He had died intestate and his only property was an old trunk full of papers. Major James Gillespie was one of the mystery men of California history. He had turned up in California right after the Bear Flag Revolt. He followed Fremont to Oregon and turned him back to California. He had been Adjutant to Commodore Stockton during the American Conquest and had been present at every important engagement. The papers in that trunk were the official records and correspondence of every significant moment from his departure as a secret agent of President Buchanan until the final signing of the Mexican Surrender. In all there were over 600 documents. I need not tell you that I didn't leave that house until that trunk was brought up from the basement, the documents counted, a price agreed upon and I became their owner. These manuscripts are all now in the Department of Special Collections at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Not all of my visits to old houses have yielded me treasures, but one of them left me with a creepy feeling for a long time. There is a part of Los Angeles which once was very well-to-do. The area is now blighted with cheap rooming houses, but a few old residences still stand like faded dowagers and behind their curtained windows dwell their first inhabitants. It was to such a house I came one night to look at a library. I passed through an oaken door, set with leaded glass, into a hall hung with beaded portieres and from there into a parlor furnished with spool chairs, upholstered in cut velvet with fringes of red tassel. Antimacassars were still the vogue here. Dim light filtered down from a crystal chandelier, twice converted from candles to gas to electric light. Stiff and prim as a wax figure sat a little elderly lady beside the inevitable marble top side table. She was dressed in watered silk, and a small cameo hung from the choker band around her neck. The retired doctor who was her

husband was a thin, goateed gentleman. He too was dressed most formally. I think I was their first evening visitor in many years. The air was heavy with dust and lavender.

I looked at their books, heavy stamped leather editions of *Thanatopsis*, Shakespeare, Victor Hugo and Gustave Dore's *Ancient Mariner* — they were good period pieces but almost worthless. Only one book caught my eye enough for me to take it from the shelf. It was on snakes. When the old man saw my interest he said, "Do you like snakes?" I'll never know why I said "Yes." His eyes lit up. "Mother" he said, "let's show him the babies." They conferred for a moment and he darted from the room leaving me with the old lady who for the first time was smiling. It took the old gentleman ten minutes to return. I could hear him coming heavily down the stairs and when the curtains parted there he stood with a nine-foot anaconda nestled in his arms. He handed the creature to his wife and went back upstairs. This time it was only an eight-foot boa constrictor he brought. For the next half hour I watched them fondle and caress those serpents and heard them talk baby talk as they held their ophidian heads close to their cheeks. They asked me if I would like to hold one of the babies. My courtesy has never been so tested. I held baby in my lap as his coils untwisted and watched his tail creep towards the foot of my chair. They assured me he could not crush me unless he got a firm grip. The host brought out the sherry decanter and there in the dim light, we three with giant snakes coiled in our laps and around our shoulders, sat and toasted Bulwer-Lytton, the Bronte Sisters, Edgar Allen Poe and Raymond Ditmars.

I bought none of their books except the one on snakes and that one only so that I could go back home with some proof of my evening's baby-sitting. When I got back home I asked my wife to smell my breath and certify in writing that I was sober before I told her my story.

I have traveled to Europe more than ten times, but one of the most exciting finds I ever made was in Paris in 1959. Spain is rich in books but they are hard to come by. There are few rare booksellers, and these are reluctant to exchange their treasures for the Spanish peseta. The difficulties which stand in the way of paying dollars are al-

most insurmountable. Spain today is a beautiful cultural fossil, rich in the treasures of a great past, but totally lacking in the conditions which permit a free flourishing of art and literature. One can search out, as I did, a set of Goya's *Proverbios*, or one or two *Goticas*, as they call their 16th century black letter books, but these are too dear and infrequent to warrant a journey. What does justify the trip to Madrid, for instance, is the Prado with its unrivaled art treasures, and Toledo, its towers glowing in the Spanish sunset; once seen it remains in the mind everlastingly carved in golden light.

From Madrid to Paris is a short flight in distance, but the transition in history is very great. Paris needs not my praises — they have been sung better by those who know her well. Frankly, I had tried to avoid Paris. I had thought of Paris as a place for youth, and I could not bear to be reminded of the youthful years I might have spent there. But something more is there. As Florence was the fountain of civilization in the Renaissance so Paris is in our time. It is not merely the city of youth and youthful love. It is also like a mature woman in full bloom. All that a mature mind wants is there, and I found myself sitting contentedly on the banks of the Seine, walking peacefully along the streets as if I had eternity behind me and eternity ahead of me. Thus it was that I came one afternoon to the shop of a young bookseller on the Rue des Peletiers. He had heard I was coming and had sent his beautiful young wife home to fetch a book that he had bought only the day before. She brought it in and he passed it to me without a word. I looked at the worn 18th century calf binding and turned to the title-page to read, "*Experience sur Electricité* par M. Jallabert. Paris, 1749." This happens to be the second edition of a not too rare work. The first edition was, for some reason, published in Geneva the previous year. Next I looked on the inside front cover, and there I saw to my great delight the bookplate of Antoine Laurent Lavoisier. As you know Lavoisier was the founder of modern chemistry. His experiments delivered the final blow to metaphysics in chemistry by destroying the notion of phlogiston; the little man who wasn't there. He erected a natural system of the elements and laid down, together with his associates, the ground lines of our present system of chem-

ical nomenclature. His guillotining during a period of excesses in the French Revolution was one of the great losses of France and the whole world of science.

His library was seized and I knew that an inventory was made at that time. I also knew that this catalogue still survived. Just a few days before in Barcelona I had listened to a lecture by Dr. Henry Guerlac of Cornell on the sources of Lavoisier's experiments with oxygen. I wanted that book. Very casually, as casually as I could, I asked the price. Back it came; "\$1000.00." I handed the book back sadly. "But" said the bookseller, "you have not really seen it, look at the front fly leaf." Then he opened the pages, which had stuck together on my first inspection, and there I read an inscription in French. Roughly translated it said, "I borrowed this book from Lavoisier and from it I learned about Medical Electricity. February 1780. Marat.". This book linked the sinister name of Lavoisier's nemesis, the man who had raised the cry against him and let him go to the Guillotine without a protest, together with Lavoisier's at a time long before 1794, when they had been friends.

That evening in a little side-street restaurant over good food and good wine we completed our transaction for the precious book, and I walked away with it in my pocket. It was 11:30 PM when I got back to my hotel and reached for the telephone. I called the Hotel Montalembert and asked for Dr. Henry Guerlac, who I knew planned to arrive in Paris that evening from Madrid. "Henry" I said, "I know it is late but if I were not to show you something I have just bought, you would never forgive me." "Come on over and pour yourself a drink," he answered. So I took a taxi and in ten minutes I was sitting beside his bed where he reclined with a drink in his hand. I asked him what he knew about Lavoisier and Marat, and he gave me a detailed account of Marat's effort to get the approval of the Academie Royale de Sciences for his works on heat and light. Lavoisier had been a member of the Committee which had refused to approve them as being unscientific and unworthy. Marat's resentment was a strong factor in bringing about the trying of Lavoisier and his condemnation. Some time later, the same year 1794, Marat took one bath too many and Charlotte Corday spoiled it for him. "This is well known" I said, "but what about their earlier relationship?" "Of that nothing is known" said Guerlac.

Then, I slowly unfolded the tale of my book, and finally when I held before him the page with Marat's inscription and signature, he spilled his drink and nearly fell out of bed. "You are a devious villain" he cried, "You know I must have that book." "Of course" I said, "That's why I came here in the dead of night." I named a price of \$1500.00, and he agreed to arrange with Cornell's knowledgeable guardian of the book funds, Dr. Felix Reichmann, for its purchase. I carried it in my pocket to New York, where I arrived two weeks later, and telephoned Guerlac at Cornell. He informed me that Cornell was ready to buy the book, but his conscience had forced him to tell another Lavoisier authority, the greatest Lavoisier collector, Denis Duveen, about it, and Duveen had convinced him that it must go into his collection. Duveen has dedicated his life to Lavoisier and to the reassembling of Lavoisier's library. He has gone beyond all bounds of caution and sometimes, I fear, risked his solvency to gather his magnificent collection. Within a few hours I sat in Duveen's office and passed to his eager hands this crown jewel of his collection together with an uncut copy of Marat's treatise on light. That evening in his library he showed me the original catalogue made when the library was seized and pointed out where this copy of Jallabert was listed. Then he showed me the catalogue made after the books were returned to Madame Lavoisier and it was not there. It had wandered unrecognized through a century and a half to be picked up in a rubbish heap for a few francs by my friend Francois Chamonal the day before I arrived in Paris. He had been smart enough to steam apart the fly leaves, and I had the good sense to pay him \$1000.00 for it without an argument. I must confess that the good French wine and food helped to soften my caution.

Duveen had arranged the books on his shelves in the order in which Lavoisier had shelved them in his own library. There was a gap on the shelves where this little book had been. I had the pleasure of putting it back between the two books where it had stood in 1794 and where it now rejoined its companions of 165 years ago.

Lucky discoveries such as these I have told you about are not the daily portion of even a rare bookseller. We get our pie-a-la-mode this way, but our bread and butter and meat come by the searching out and supplying of a multitude of all the lesser items

that help make a good library. We make a profit ranging from 50 per cent for bargain table and ordinary second-hand items down to 10 per cent for items bought on commission for our customers. The major part of our business is done with institutions and individual collectors with whom we have had a relationship of mutual confidence for many years. It used to be that some customers, especially librarians, kept their desiderata a secret from us. They feared that we might take advantage of them and raise prices. This is no longer so. A smart librarian knows that if he places his confidence in a reputable bookseller he will benefit. A smart bookseller plans to make a profit on the long pull and not out of any one sale, and he takes pride in seeking out the least significant trifle as well as the major items which go to make a great collection.

Some thirty-two years ago Dr. Elmer Belt in Los Angeles decided to go about building a great collection on Leonardo Da Vinci and his times. He ordered two copies of Verga's *Bibliographia Vinciana* — one for himself and one for me. In the intervening thirty-two years, with the help of his brilliant librarian, Kate Steinitz, we have assembled the greatest collection to be found anywhere on the subject. It has become the center of studies in the field. Over 50 per cent of this collection has come through my shop, and when I show the library I take pride in showing the bargains it holds as if they were still mine.

Dr. Belt's library is one of a number I could mention which I have regarded as my trust and pride. The same sort of story could be told of Robert Honeyman's great History of Science Library, and of the great Herbert M. Evans collection which Lessing Rosenwald commissioned me to purchase for the Institute of Advanced Study some years ago. People often ask me, "How can you bear to part with some of your treasures so laden with sentiment and interesting experiences?" My answer is, "I never part with them. I pass them on to the custodianship of those most fit to take care of them. They are still mine in the sense that no one can ever truly own such treasures; all we can have is the privilege of appreciating them." The great collectors, the Martin Bodmers of Geneva, and the Wilmarth Lewises of Farmington, have a strong sense that they are the conservators of the vessels of culture. More and more the great treasures are moving into the universities and other insti-

tutions. As this trend continues the need for greater librarians grows. It is not enough that librarians be good administrators of the great machines for efficient storage and retrieval of information we now call libraries. They must also partake of the great humanist tradition. They must make themselves capable of appreciating and augmenting the treasures under their care. They must regard themselves as not only the inheritors of the objects, but also the audacity, of the men who had the spirit to acquire them. They have been bequeathed a continuing trust which includes the responsibility to look ahead and the courage to add to their collections in the manner of the original begetters. In this endeavour we rare booksellers stand ready and eager to participate. We love this game of staking our knowledge, our energy, our money and our good name against whatever treasure may come our way, and we are happy if we have done our bit towards winning the constant war that goes on between the forces of light and the forces of darkness and oblivion.

I should like to read you a quotation from Wilmarth Lewis in a recent issue of the *New Yorker*: "The loyalty of collectors draws them to each other; they are a fraternity joined by bonds stronger than vows, the bonds of shared vanity and the ridicule of non-collectors. Collectors appear to non-collectors as selfish, rapacious, and half-mad, which is what collectors frequently are, but they may also be enlightened, generous, and benefactors of society, which is the way they like to see themselves. Mad or sane, they salvage civilization."

In conclusion let me say a few words about the practical uses to a college such as yours of a collection of rare books and manuscripts. From a dollar and cents standpoint I can tell you that Harvard considers it saves about \$3,000.00 a year for every professor on its faculty because its library and collection of original top quality source material draws men there and keeps them in the face of many temptations from competing institutions. I am often asked, "Why do we need the original first and early editions? Won't reprints and microfilms do just as well?" Aside from the fact that facsimile or microfilm is as uninspiring as a picture of a cover girl compared to the real living breathing woman, my answer is, "The new scholarship depends on direct access to the original book or manuscript itself." Descriptive bibliography and textual

analysis are essential tools of the scholar who wants to shed new light upon the classics. A re-examination of the foundations of the ideas upon which our culture rests is the greatest contribution that can be made to its strengthening and preserving. The most practical use of our men of knowledge is not to set them to finding new ways to increase our technology or to destroy the world. The humanists, the historians and the philosophers, out of their examination and re-examination of the ideas that give us our reasons for existence, are the ones we need most desperately. In providing them with a storehouse of the books and documents from which they may discern the true landfalls of a safe harbour for the fogbound ship of mankind you will spend your money more wisely than upon bigger and bigger cyclotrons or thermonuclear bombs. Probing the far heavens and landing on the moon may bring us more knowledge of the cosmos, but it is in the exploration of man's cultural heritage that we can make the discoveries which will preserve this little but very precious planet we call the earth.

Well, it has been a long ramble I have taken you on, and I hope you have not tired of listening before I have tired of speaking. I am reminded of the story of King James I who had to spend a dreary weekend in the northern parts of his kingdom. Most dreary of all was the sermon he was constrained to hear on Sunday morning. The preacher droned on and on as his Majesty's gout and all of his other latent pains rose up to afflict him. Finally he tapped his stick and said, "Make sense sir or step down." Whereupon the preacher answered, "Your Majesty, I shall do neither."

This evening I shall at last, if not having made sense, at least have the grace to step down.