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FRIENDS
OF THE LIBRARY
THE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

MESSENGER

Published Annually

Madison

No. 8, March, 1967

Gifts of 1966

Doctor Marvin Sukov of Minneapolis, whose relationship to our fine collection of little magazines is well known, gave the library an impressive gift of approximately 800 issues of little magazines to help fill the gaps in our holdings. These scarce, hard to find issues are indeed welcome to our shelves; and some of them represent magazines which were previously lacking in our library altogether.

From the estate of Mrs. Jennie V. Goessling Hammitt (Madison), we were given about 400 volumes in literature, art and history.

On behalf of the estate of Carl Marty, Sr., Mr. Robert E. Marty of Monroe made available 156 volumes. Besides directories and descriptions of the Monroe and New Glarus area, the collection includes volumes on the German and Swiss in America, German Swiss literature, early science, nineteenth century hymnals of the German Swiss *Evangelisch-Reformirte* church, and books by Conrad F. Meyer, "Gotthelf" (A. Bitzium), and Peter Rosegger.

Again it is a pleasure to report a considerable number of gifts from Mr. Lloyd E. Smith of Racine. One very interesting shipment consisted of 229 murder mysteries, Westerns, science fiction and other popular novels of a kind that scholars are happy to have available. In still another shipment a number of quite rare Russian books were included. The University is indeed grateful to Mr. Smith.

Mrs. A. R. (Lucy Rogers) Hawkins of Evanston, Illinois, presented the University with 45 volumes of a general nature, most of which are to be shelved in the departmental reading room of the School of Journalism.

A most welcome letter came during the summer from Mrs. Robert D. Graff of Far Hills, New Jersey, offering the correspondence and personal papers of her great-grandfather, Philitus Sawyer, once Senator from Wisconsin. Included are letters from leading political persons of the period. This material is now shelved in our State Historical Society.

Mr. Walter E. Scott, recent president of our Friends group, gave a number of interesting and valuable books on birds, dogs, fishing, and travel.

Mrs. Aldric Revell of Madison, as did her husband on several occasions before his death, gave several volumes of literature and history.

From the estate of the late Professor Robert L. Reynolds, a number of volumes were received of special interest to graduate students in medieval studies.

Mr. Gadjin M. Nagao, Visiting Brittingham Professor from Kyoto University, gave us an impressive two volume edition of Chu-Yung-Kuan. The work concerns itself with the inscriptions, art and architecture of the Great Wall near Peking.

Mr. Nels Reppen, Emeritus Professor from Stevens Point, gave 20 volumes of a general nature.

Emeritus Professor Helen I. Clarke gave her large collection of books, periodicals, and other literary materials to the School of Social Work.

Emeritus Professor V. M. Meloche gave a set of *Analytical Chemistry* to the Department of Chemistry.

The General Telephone Company of Wisconsin gave \$50 for the purchase of books for the School of Business.

As in years past, the Wisconsin Center for Theatre Research was given valuable literary materials, such as television scripts, plays in manuscript, and correspondence relating to the theatre. These will be shelved in the Mass Communications Center of the State Historical Society.

Louis Kaplan
Director of Libraries

The Prince Romanovskii Private Library

In May of last year, twenty-eight wooden crates arrived at the Memorial Library from Geneva. Inside were about a thousand volumes in dark green, ornately embossed calf and morocco bindings bearing the double-headed eagle of Imperial Russia stamped within lavish hand-tooled golden borders, dentelles and edging. The outward appearance of these tomes communicates the impression of great wealth and ostentation on the part of the original owner — Prince Nikolai Maksimilianovich Romanovskii, 4th Duke of Leuchtenberg, maternal grandson of Tsar Nicholas I of Russia, and paternal grandson of Prince Eugene de Beauharnais and Josephine (née de Tascher de la Pagerie, afterwards wife of Emperor Napoleon I).

Appropriately, the books in the working library of Prince Nikolai Maksimilianovich reflect his various professional and public interests, as well as his scholarly and private pursuits. As a member of the Suite of Tsar Alexander II, close to the seat of power in Imperial Russia, Prince Romanovskii possessed many of the books that one would expect—tables of ranks and nobility, descriptions of ceremonies, coronations, funerals and visits of previous monarchs of Europe and Russia, a collection of laws, books on local government, some history and economics.

Paraphrasing the close relations between Church and State in Imperial Russia, an abundance of titles dealing with religious matters is found: abstracts of annual reports of the Russian Orthodox Church from 1855 to 1874, books

on liturgy and ritual, lives of saints, and dictionaries of Old Church Slavonic. As a member of the aristocracy, moving among the most cultured people of Russia and Europe, the Prince possessed what would seem to be a minimum number of books in literature, art and foreign languages.

From childhood Nikolai was surrounded by the best scholars in Russia, for his father was President of the Academy of Arts and an Honorary Member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, having conducted experiments in galvanization in a laboratory built in the Winter Palace itself. The father's interest in the sciences, especially mineralogy, rubbed off onto the son, and one must assume on the basis of the imprint dates that many of Nikolai's books were once part of his father's library.

Nikolai Maksimilianovich Romanovskii became President of the Russian Mineralogical Society in 1865 and held this title until his death in 1890. He was also appointed a member of the Mining Council and Scientific Committee of the Ministry of State Properties, an extremely important body in the running of the Imperial Russian economy. As President of the Mineralogical Society he organized a detailed geological study of Russia and established a special commission that reviewed the laws regulating the exploitation of petroleum resources in the Caucasus and promulgated a new series of laws that governed the operations of the Russian petroleum industry for many years. Thanks to his participation in these activities, the Memorial Library now possesses an excellent selection of books and journals relating to eco-

nomics, finance, railroads, canals, mineralogy and mining, the history of the Academy of Sciences and other scientific and technical societies.

In 1866 and 1867 he embarked on two extensive excursions into the central gubernias of Russia and the Ural Mountains, inspecting all state and private mines, including the Orenburg gold mines. In preparation for his trip, he collected much factual information about government officials, the geography, geology, ethnography, and fauna of the places he was to visit. We now possess this information in two thumb-indexed volumes in beautiful script.

Most of the Prince's scholarly writing deals with geology and mineralogy. However, he also dabbled in astronomy, specifically shooting stars. Thus, we have acquired an excellent description of the world-famous Pulkovo Observatory by F. G. W. Struve, its director, including a catalog of the Observatory Library.

In 1865 Nikolai Maksimilianovich received the rank of General-Major in the Hussars. When the Russo-Turkish War broke out in 1877, he returned to Russia from Europe and commanded an advanced cavalry detachment in the Balkans under General Gurko as General-Lieutenant. Subsequently, he became General of the Cavalry and General-Adjutant. Understandably, a number of books deal with building of fortifications, ballistics, military science, dress, and history. Most impressive is the collection of military and topographical maps for the various administrative areas of Russia. The Memorial Library now possesses probably the best collection of Russian maps of the

nineteenth century in the West.

Prince Nikolai Maksimiliano-
vich Romanovskii was sickly from
youth and often travelled abroad
to consult the best orthopedists
and undergo operations. In 1871,
out of family considerations, he
left Russia and lived abroad for
the rest of his life, returning only
to take part in the Russo-Turkish
War in 1877-78. He died in Paris
in 1890.

Dr. Louis Kaplan first saw the
Prince Romanovskii Library in
Geneva during his book-buying
trip in 1964 and immediately ob-
tained an option from the dealer.
During my book-buying trip the
next year I examined the books
for content and obtained a listing
of titles so that a careful search
could be made of our public cata-
log. An unusually low percentage
of duplication was recorded; and
after consultation with various
Slavic specialists on campus, the
final decision to buy was made.
Perhaps the best indication of the
uniqueness of the titles in this
collection is the fact that Robert
Gakovich, Slavic Cataloger, re-
ported that over fifty percent of
them received original cataloging.
Most heartening is the fact that
several major fields of knowledge,
as well as Russian studies, have
been enhanced by this unique ac-
quisition.

Alexander Rolich
Bibliographer for
Slavic Studies

The Acquisition of the Thordarson Collection

Twenty-one years ago last Janu-
ary The University of Wisconsin
and the heirs of the then recently
deceased Chester Thordarson en-
tered into an agreement that was
to result a year later in the pur-
chase of the famous Thordarson
collection. That decision, made by
the Board of Regents in Decem-
ber of 1946, had important impli-
cations for the Library. It not only
brought to the University what
was estimated to be a million-dol-
lar collection of books, but it also
set a precedent for the acquisition
of source materials in the humani-
ties and the sciences, a precedent
that has since had a major effect
on book selection policies, and
one that lead directly to the es-
tablishment of the Rare Book De-
partment. Through the persuasive
efforts of Gilbert H. Doane, A. W.
Peterson, J. Christian Bay, E. B.
Fred, and many members of the
faculty and the Regents, objec-
tions to the purchase of the 11,000
books were overcome, and the Li-
brary received a collection of
major source materials in the his-
tory of science that has lead in
subsequent years to the acquisi-
tion of several important supple-
mental collections, so that today
the University Library ranks as
one of the major centers in the
country for research in the history
of science.

Thordarson's biography has
many elements of the American
legend. An immigrant from Ice-
land at the age of five, he settled
with his family first near Madison,
then moved on to the richer lands
of the Dakotas. At eighteen, still
uneducated, he went to Chicago
to seek not only an education but

an outlet for the mechanical genius that he early became aware of. He put himself through the seventh grade of the Chicago public schools, then went to work in an electrical firm. "I was twenty-seven years old," he recalled in an interview, "and I had saved seventy-five dollars when I decided to go into business for myself. I gave up my job, got married, and started the business all at the same time — and all on the seventy-five dollars! The seventy-five dollars I started out with was all the outside money that ever went into the business. I incorporated later; but I never sold a dollar's worth of stock. Today our sales run into millions of dollars." He manufactured not only his own electrical inventions but also the machines he used to make the inventions. It was not all immediate success, of course, but in the end he became a very rich man. "There was," he said, "hard work and what I call good deportment. Good deportment includes a number of things, but briefly it means doing right by all the people with whom you deal. We pay the best wages the business can afford, and we try to treat one another in such manner that in this building we may meet with pleasure."

Very early he became a book collector. He recalled his early days in Chicago when he was living on four dollars a week: "I paid two dollars a week for my room and breakfasts. I walked to work. That left me one dollar each week for other meals, which consisted of stuff bought mostly at bakeries. One dollar remained. With that I bought books."

At first he collected books on his native Iceland, but it was not long before his collecting interests

centered on the history of English science and technology. As his fortune grew, he began to collect in earnest, with the help and guidance of Walter Hill, then one of the most prominent of rare book dealers, and J. Christian Bay, Librarian of the John Crerar Library. The collection became vast, and included many of the most fundamental and rarest books in physics, chemistry, alchemy, zoology, botany, scientific travels, scientific illustration, technology, agriculture, surveying, building arts, cooking, medicine, and cultural history. This last section left room for the acquisition of many works of great literary significance.

The collection was for a long time kept in Thordarson's factory in Chicago. Gilbert Doane, former Director of Libraries, gives a vivid account of his first look at the books which he was later to be so influential in acquiring for the University.

"Back in the 1930's the Bibliographical Society of America held some of its meetings in conjunction with those of the American Library Association. At one of these meetings — 1933, I think — the members of the Society were invited to meet Mr. Thordarson and see his library at his electrical manufacturing plant on East Ohio Street in the heart of one of Chicago's warehouse and industrial districts. The group went through a dimly lighted passageway alongside machinery and up a staircase to a room where we were greeted by a gray-haired man well on in his sixties, rather slight of build, who nervously began to show us his treasures. And what treasures they were! The elephant folio of Audubon

(he told me later that it cost him two hundred dollars a volume to have it bound in England, and the binder told him never to send another volume as big as those were, for he had had great difficulty in getting skins big enough to cover them); the Coverdale Bible ("Great Bible") of 1535; a complete set of Gould's magnificent monographs on the birds of the world, a set quite as valuable as the Audubon; and many, many others of less magnitude, even though of greater rarity. The eyes of even the more distinguished members of the Society almost popped out of their heads, and Mr. Thordarson's nervousness began to abate as he realized their admiration for his achievements in bringing such a collection together. He began to open an occasional book to his favorite passage, which he had lightly ticked with a pencil mark, and read it aloud, almost always with the comment: "It's wonderful, isn't it?" It was easy to see he loved his books and knew them intimately."

Later, because it reminded him of his native Iceland, Thordarson bought Rock Island in Lake Michigan, off the tip of the Door County peninsula, and built a vast estate there. It took twenty masons three years to put up the great stone buildings. Other workmen spent two years dredging the required harbor. He hired Sigurd Arneson, an Icelandic carver, to make the furniture for the estate, each piece carved to depict a different Icelandic legend. When it was finished, he moved his books there and used it as a vacation re-

treat not only for himself but also his employees and many of the friends he had made at The University of Wisconsin.

A letter of his to J. Christian Bay reveals how much the island meant to him.

"We are building the log house for sugar camp, three men and myself, and it will be finished in two days more. There are no two houses more unlike to build than a brick house and log house, brick house is all automatic, one stone laid like the other, but a log has to be laid where it fits best especially where the logs are so variable in size as these taken from trees growing in the cliffs and so viciously crooked as an Australian boomerang.

Everything here is so beautiful and clean, have had all kinds of weather, snow, rain, violent winds, and dense fogs. The last ten days and last night northern lights all night. Heavy ice is breaking up and maple trees are beginning to flow."

The University of Wisconsin gave him an honorary degree in 1929. President Glenn Frank made the presentation as follows:

"Mr. Thordarson: Because you have brought to your profession the genius of invention; because you have displayed a richness of mind and spirit that has refused to be imprisoned by the technical concerns of your craft; because you are a living exemplar of that self-education which universities must increasingly strive to teach their students; because you have brought a disciplined intelligence and unique insight to the

collection and care of rare lore; and because, on your private holdings in Wisconsin, you have given the State a dramatization of what a far sighted philosophy of conservation may mean, I am happy to confer upon you the honorary degree of Master of Arts."

Thordarson died in 1945, stating in his will that the University was to be given first option to purchase his collection. It was then that negotiations began toward the eventual acquisition of the collection. Library Director Gilbert Doane was on leave of absence at the time, finishing his army service. In May of 1945, President Fred contacted him to ask his opinion of the Thordarson books. Doane naturally was interested. Released from the army shortly afterwards, he returned to his position in the Library with the Thordarson collection, of course, only one of the accumulated decisions he had to face. The late A. W. Peterson, at the time Director of Business and Finance for the University, was involved early in the negotiations. Doane himself was convinced the University should purchase the collection. His chief task was to convince others. He arranged a meeting in Chicago between J. Christian Bay, Peterson and himself, and remembers that meeting as being crucial in convincing Peterson to support the purchase. Bay, a man of expansive paunch, met with them in his office. A devoted bibliophile, an eloquent and practically unstoppable speaker, he spoke for almost an hour with great enthusiasm of the collection he knew so well. Peterson was convinced. They saw also that day George Haight, an influential alumnus,

who also argued for purchase of the collection.

With support for purchase coming also from the faculty, the Regents voted in January of 1946 to take a one-year option to buy the library at a sum not to exceed \$270,000, with a broker's fee of \$30,000 additional. The year would enable the books to be brought from Rock Island to the Library for evaluation and for determination of the amount of duplication.

Gilbert Doane describes the monumental task of getting the 11,000 books off the island.

"Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Peterson, Mrs. Doane and myself, Ralph Hagedorn (then Acquisitions librarian), and some half dozen husky boys went to Rock Island taking a cook from the University dormitories, food for a week, and the necessary cartons, binding tape, etc., to check the inventory and prepare the treasure for shipping. It took us just a week — the Petersons and the Doanes taking inventory and Mr. Hagedorn superintending the wrapping and packing of the books. We had to gamble on a fair day and calm "seas" to get them off the Island, for the only practical way to transport them to the mainland was to charter the ferry from Gill's Rock and have it come to the Thordarsons' private dock. Weather was with us, a winch was set up on the terrace of the Hall, and the packages lowered one by one into the ferry docked below. Once on land again, they were brought in convoy by Henry Reynolds and his moving vans to Madison, covered the while by heavy in-

surance. We were all greatly relieved when they were safely in their bronze cases once more on the third floor of the Historical Society Building."

In December of the same year the Regents voted to purchase the collection. There was only one dissenter: he felt that this was not the type of material of immediate use to the University. Money was obtained from an anonymous trust fund (\$75,000), the Babcock Book Fund (\$15,000), the Knapp Fund (\$150,000), the Torger Thompson Fund (\$2,000) and WARF (\$58,000).

The books remained in the incredibly overcrowded building of the Historical Society until 1953 when the new Memorial Library was opened. As a result of the Thordarson purchase, a decision had been made to create a Rare Book Department, and here the many rare works and books that needed special care were placed. The Icelandic collection, the collected editions of standard authors, the reference works and secondary materials went into the general stacks. What Americana there were the Historical Society took in exchange for books in British and South American history and literature.

The contents of the Thordarson collection have been written of in the *Papers* of the Bibliographical Society of America and need not be described again here. It remains the most important collection the University Library has ever purchased. Three hundred thousand dollars was in 1946 a great deal of money, as indeed it is today, but today that sum would not be enough to purchase a quarter of the collection. A copy

of the Coverdale Bible recently sold for \$45,000; the Audubon folios brought \$60,000 the last time they were offered for sale; and Jacquin's *Selectarum Stirpium Americanarum Historia* has been offered this year for \$18,500. These are only three of many examples that could be cited. However, the increase in monetary value is of little concern to the Library. The books were not bought as an investment. They were bought for the faculty and the students. They were bought to teach with, to learn from, and to inspire. Chester Thordarson's books will continue to do that for many years to come.

John Neu
History-of-Science
Bibliographer

The 20th Century Literature Collection

There is a popular belief that a rare book has to be old — the older the rarer. This is one of the layman's superstitions. Actually, some modern (20th century) first editions — as, for instance, Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward Angel* — bring fancy prices, not to speak of the first (Paris) edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is presently coveted at \$800.00. (To the best of our knowledge only one copy has turned up on the market in many years.)

Beyond this, first and early British and American editions of famous books, or of not famous books written by famous authors, constitute important source materials for research in modern literature. In order to establish such a research collection and to protect increasingly valuable volumes against loss or mutilation in the general stacks, a 20th Century Collection of significant works in their original editions is being established in the Rare Book Department. Care is taken to purchase only clean and well preserved copies, if possible in their original dust jackets; all too often have we found some of those now so expensive volumes stamped, embossed, rebound, with illustrations lacking, badly marked up, and otherwise mutilated in our stacks. Needless to stress, those copies would not serve the purpose of the newly established collection.

One of the more fascinating aspects of assembling suitable authors and titles is the crystal-ball gazing involved. For it stands to reason that some promising but

still largely unknown authors will in time take their places next to the T. S. Eliots, Hemingways, and Faulkners. To play it safe and wait until their reputations are clearly established would be both shortsighted and uneconomical, for at that time their first editions would again be scarce and expensive, or residing in dilapidated states in the general stacks. Thus it is necessary to take risks and pick potential winners while the race is still on. Proven dead wood can always be eliminated later, easier than gaps filled and omissions corrected. Besides, a first edition of say, John Hawkes, James Dickey, or Iris Murdoch can be easily acquired at the original price today, while even some first editions of Saul Bellow already cost more than the dust jacket price indicates, and will be even higher tomorrow.

How does one go about assembling such a special collection? Obviously one man's list of authors or titles will necessarily be subjective and partly arbitrary. A pooling of nominations among some members of the English Department faculty as well as librarians has therefore been decided on as the best procedure.

It might come as a surprise to many people to learn that there are secondhand book dealers both in England and America who specialize in modern literature and little magazines. Among them, to mention a few, are firms like Bertram Rota in London, Charles Rare Books in Kent, Laurie Hill in Toronto, the Asphodel Book Shop in Cleveland, Marlyn Books in Detroit, the Gotham Bookmart, the 8th Street Bookshop and the Phoenix Book Shop in New York, Henry W. Wenning in New Hav-

en, the Brick Row Book Shop in Austin, Brian Leckley in Winthrop Harbor (Ill.), Herbert West in Hanover, etc. Some of their catalogs make exciting reading in themselves.

To cite a few of the authors represented, there are Hart Crane, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Edith Wharton, W. H. Auden, Ford Madox Ford, Dylan Thomas, Virginia Woolf, and of course Joyce, Pound, Hemingway, and Yeats, among the established English and American literary lights, and such names as James Baldwin, Vladimir Nabokov, Ralph Ellison, Robert Lowell, Richard Wilbur, Graham Greene, Kingsley Amis, and Muriel Spark, representing the younger already renowned generation. And there will be the afore-mentioned dark horses, from Edward Albee and James Wright to Robert Duncan, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and LeRoi Jones.

The collection, which includes fiction, poetry, drama, and some criticism, but is limited, as has been noted, to works written originally in English, is housed at present in the Rare Book Department's upper vault. We stress the words "at present" because we can already foresee the day when it will outgrow its quarters and may have to move to a different (supervised) location.

Felix Pollak
Curator of Rare Books

Special Collections in the U. W. Libraries

Montauban Collection — 982 books, pamphlets, and manuscripts on French Protestantism, dating from the 16th to the 18th centuries, from the private library of a prominent Huguenot family, acquired in 1951. Parts in Rare Books Department.

Moses S. Slaughter Collection — 48 titles of Latin classical literature, 16th - 18th century editions. Named after a UW professor of the Classics Department. Rare Books Department.

O. Henry Collection — some 20 first editions by William Sydney Porter, given by Mr. Norman Bassett. Contains also a signed document and several "Porteriana." Rare Books Department.

O'Neill Collection — 25 first editions of Eugene O'Neill's plays, and some ephemera, such as letters and photographs. Gift of Mr. Norman Bassett. Rare Books Department.

Pamphlets on English Social and Political History of the 18th and 19th centuries — 200 items, acquired in 1963, supplemented by additional pamphlet materials in the University collections.

Papyrus Collection — 83 ancient Greek papyri, acquired from Egypt in 1920, and consisting primarily of commercial and official documents from the 3d century B.C. to the 7th or 8th century A.D., though the majority were written during the first three cen-

turies of the Christian era. Rare Books Department.

Peter G. Toepfer Chess Collection — 800 volumes acquired in 1918 and described as “one of the most extensive and thorough libraries on chess in the world.” Stacks.

Priestley Collection — 135 items by the English scientist Joseph Priestly, acquired in 1958, supplementing the University’s previous holdings and including titles and editions not in Fulton’s bibliography of Priestley. Rare Books Department.

Private Press Collection — close to 400 volumes as samples of the work done by Private Presses. Its aim is a wide representation rather than inclusiveness within the output of individual presses. Rare Books Department.

Richardson Collection — about 300 volumes on medical subjects, particularly anatomy. These are mostly rare books but do include some history and biography. Two incunabula are included. Among the most valuable is a 1665 first edition of Hooke’s *Micrographia*. Medical Library.

Robinson-Waite Collection — the private collections of two pioneer Wisconsin doctors, these 800 or so volumes were donated to the Medical Library in the early 1900s. This affords a good representative library of a doctor of the period who had interest in history, and is particularly good for 19th century materials. Medical Library.

Rousseau Collection — 243 works by and about Rousseau and his impact on 18th century thought, including much ephemera, acquired in 1962. Rare Books Department.

Russian Underground Collection — An unusual assemblage of approximately 1,000 clandestinely circulated books, tracts, brochures, pamphlets, newspapers, broadsheets and broadsides, propaganda materials for the Russian Revolutionary Movement that culminated in the 1917 uprising. Printed between 1825 and 1925. Rare Books Department.

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