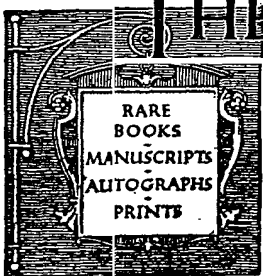


# THE COLLECTORS' GUIDE



In this section the readers of **THE BOOKMAN** will find the latest announcements of reliable dealers in Rare Books, Manuscripts, Autographs and Prints. It will be well to look over this section carefully each month, for the advertisements will be frequently changed, and items of interest to collectors will be offered here. All these dealers invite correspondence.

WITH the opening of the new galleries of the American Art Association in the Madison Avenue Block, between Fifty-seventh and Fifty-eighth Streets, the season of book auctions in this country came into full swing. The Association started with a fifty thousand dollar book sale—that of the library of Mrs. William F. Sheehan of Manhasset and New York—which was notable for its collections of first editions of famous authors in fine bindings. Among these collections were the works of Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, Stevenson, Hardy, Lever, William Morris, and others. These usually lacked some of the greatest rarities, and did not include works in parts, as issued, but brought good prices. The Scott, for instance, comprised 122 volumes, including all the Waverley Novels, and was finely bound by Bird-sall in full crushed levant, bringing \$2,950. These sets would have brought higher prices had they been composed of fine copies of the first editions in original bindings in suitable cases. The owner of a very rare first edition is often tempted to have it put in a binding worthy of the volume, yet in many cases the value of the volume is depreciated by an amount equal to the cost of the binding or more. Of course, where the original binding is beyond repair, only a new and fine binding will satisfy the fastidious collector. But in the preservation of the rarest works the collector should go slowly in the matter of rebinding, and cases can be made which in appearance are equal

to bindings and preserve the original volume intact.

A series of diversified sales has been conducted at the Anderson Galleries, in which Americana and first editions of modern authors predominated. The Americana included an extraordinary collection of early western material, for which dealers in rare books are all looking—there is a certain market for it in the public and private libraries of the middle states and the far west, in addition to a host of private collectors who are gathering up the records of the great western movement of the last century. The high prices paid for some of the early narratives of western discovery and settlement are only a repetition of what happened long ago in the east. When these books were written, the west was in its infancy, and so busy with other things that it did not have time to gather up its contemporaneous history. Now there are well endowed and well supported libraries in the middle and far west which must have the local material which could once be gathered for a song, and the inevitable law of diminishing supply and increasing demand has brought a market at high prices for early western matter. It is a condition of things which is likely to continue, and there is little prospect of any lower prices for what is known in the book catalogues as “Early West”.

Boston has had two book auction sales and there are prospects that the book auction business, which has not

been carried on in the Hub since 1919 — when the firm of C. F. Libbie and Company retired after forty years of successful operation — may again be revived. The firm of William K. McKay and Company conducted the sale of the library of Alfred A. Ordway of Haverhill, Massachusetts, a noted Whittier collector, with satisfactory results. Among the offerings were some Whittier manuscripts and the Foote copy of "Moll Pitcher" with two autograph letters from Whittier in which he said he "hoped it had died out of print".

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The rage for the collection of first editions of the writings of modern authors continues unabated, and several sales confined to this class of material have been held at Anderson's this season. The prices show some curious variations, and in only a few cases can they be said to be standardized. Nowadays every rising young author feels it incumbent on him to issue his work first in a very limited edition "signed by the author", which is taken up before the regular "first" edition is published. Many of these are very evidently designed with a view to their possible speculative value in the book auction market. Such a venture may be regarded as a piece of profiteering, as the general run of collectors never has a chance at the volumes until they reach the auction room — which some of them are not slow in doing. These autographed copies are eagerly taken up, while the "first published edition" may bring an advance over the published price which will not cover the cost of cataloguing. The present demand for first editions of authors who are constantly producing new books makes quite a drain upon the dealer, who is compelled in self-defense to buy about everything that comes out and take the risk of securing one or two that will compensate him for carrying a large number that are ultimately des-

tined to reach the sixpenny box. That is the way it appears on the surface. It is possible — or is it? — that all the first editions of our present generation of poets, essayists, and novelists will become as eagerly sought as those of the despised Victorians, Dickens and Thackeray. If so, the dealer who buys everything — and keeps his stock — may well congratulate himself upon his shrewdness.

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The copy of Sanderson's "Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of

Independence" which was extra-illustrated by the late Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet of New York City and sold at Anderson's last month, contained a complete set of autographs of the signers. The set was one of the finest known, but was only one of four complete sets which Dr. Emmet made, his principal collection, now in the Morgan library, being the finest possible. It contained a full letter of Thomas Lynch; and of the fifty-six autographs in the set, fifty-one are Revolutionary letters, thirty-one were written in 1776, and many relate to the Declara-

tion. The collection of Simon Gratz of Philadelphia is nearly equal to this, and contains a Hancock letter of July 5, 1776, sending a copy of the Declaration to one of the states. Mr. Gratz's collection of the signers of the Constitution is the best in existence, composed wholly of autograph letters signed. Eight of the letters are addressed to Washington and others relate to the business of the Convention. It may not be generally known that some of the signatures of the Convention delegates are more difficult to secure than those of the signers of the Declaration.

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The material relating to the early history of the east has become somewhat standardized in value, and the variations in prices for the same book at different sales are in large part accounted for by the condition of the particular work offered. At a sale at Anderson's of the library of Frank H. Severance of Buffalo, a copy of Champlain's "*Les Voyages*", Paris, 1632, brought \$560 for a fine copy; Creuxius's "*Historiæ Canadensis*", Paris, 1664, \$120; Tonti's "*La Salle's Last Expedition*", London, 1698, \$150.