



## The Library Chronicle

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# The Singer Memorial

John C. Mendenhall

In rummaging among my old Manuscripts, I came  
across the following careless, and occasionally mutilated, copies of  
verses, written at various and long distant periods, and most of  
them long since forgotten. I have caused my leisure hours to be  
copied down here, either as <sup>indications</sup> ~~memoranda~~ of the progress of my feelings,  
and of past events of my life, or as compositions worthy of being  
preserved. They may serve as memorials to my children, of ~~some~~  
one progress of whose life, without being checked by any remarkable  
events, has been regularly onward for Poverty and Obscurity, to earn  
for itself independence and honor <sup>during</sup> ~~in~~ satisfaction. I am now near  
its close, ~~anticipating~~ <sup>anticipating</sup> little and feeling less here, from the result of  
my various experience has satisfied me how <sup>since a portion</sup> ~~little~~ of our real,  
Substance, ~~desires~~, is derived from the gratification of vanity,  
and ambition, or a vice.

J. K. P.

New York 1843.

P. S. A few of these pieces have been published, in  
Periodicals.

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## THE SINGER MEMORIAL

By DR. JOHN C. MENDENHALL

I have been asked to describe for the *Chronicle* the recent fine memorial gift by Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Singer of their son Godfrey F. Singer's collection of eighteenth century novels. Mr. Singer, a member of the class of 1928 College, and an assistant instructor in English from 1928 until his untimely death in January of this year, had in December been elected secretary of the Friends of the Library. He was, so to speak, a natural born collector, delighting from his earliest years in music and books and making splendid collections of both. He loved to have his own books about him at school and at college; there were few books mentioned by his instructors which he did not acquire, and upon becoming particularly interested in an author, or in a period of literary history, he made every effort to acquire original editions, manuscripts, and other associated pieces which might vividly embody the man or the times. In the course of his study he developed a great fondness for that fascinating and wonderfully well-balanced century, the eighteenth, and for his thesis-subject in proceeding to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy chose the novel in letters, as perfected by Samuel Richardson and imitated by a host of subsequent novelists in England and America. The fashion was one which reached its height about 1785; thereafter it declined rapidly as a major mode in fiction, but it has left its mark to this day and meantime pro-

duced some of the most remarkable novels of the age. Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* and Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, with their brilliant pictures of manners in the great decade 1770-1780, are outstanding examples.

Mr. Singer's thesis, to which he gave the title *The Epistolary Novel*, was a notable contribution to scholarship. As most of the novels necessary to complete the study are very rare and difficult to find, his first task was to locate as many of them as possible. This he set about with characteristic zeal, and acquired what is beyond question a unique and probably unrivaled collection of the novel in letters, of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is this group of books which constitutes the Godfrey F. Singer Memorial. It comprises more than five hundred titles and over fifteen hundred volumes. By action of the University authorities the collection has been installed in a pleasant alcove newly created in the reference room of the Library, the earnest, it is hoped, of an imposing rare-book room of which it will be the first and cherished nucleus. Though on view to all interested persons, actual use of the alcove is confined to duly accredited students in research in the field which it represents. For such, it furnishes a great and unusual opportunity, as a brief mention of some of its contents will indicate.

Here, for example, are several of those ponderous tomes, the heroic, or, as the French call them, long-winded novels, of a preceding century, the seventeenth, which gave to the modern novel on the one hand scope and sentiment, and on the other, the idea of historic background, as in the famous novels by "the author of *Waverly*." Until quite recently no copies of these extraordinary works were available in Philadelphia, and hardly anywhere in this country. Included in the Singer collection are several of the best of them, amongst them *Cassandra* and *Clelia*, and the rarer *Almahide*, which influenced John Dryden, in beautiful English editions, translated; and a native English example, *Bentivolio and Urania*, a story, if we may call so curious an allegory such, which was written in so strange a style that editions subsequent to the first explained the numerous hard names in marginal glosses. Well, indeed, its printer might provide for such aid, for what hardened reader, even, might at first sight recognize the esoteric meaning of Polistherion, Sosandra, Morosophus, as the City of Beasts, the Saver of her Husband, the Half-wit? No

doubt in its day this extraordinary nomenclature was one of the fascinations of the book.

Here, too, are interesting examples of the forerunners of the epistolary novel, like *The Post-man Robb'd of his Mail, or, the Packet Broke Open, being a Collection of Miscellaneous Letters, Serious and Comical, Amorous and Gallant, amongst which are the Lover's Sighs . . . in Five Books; Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1694), and *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen* (1726). Other works, semi-scandalous or wholly so, dwell upon that subject, horridly fascinating to Protestant England, of convent life (*The Nunnery, or the History of Miss Sophia Howard*); or the perennially gratifying one to a politically party-mad nation, of the inevitable wickedness, the moral (and nowadays the economic) depravity of the opposite party (Mrs. Manley's *Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians*; Zarah being a transparent designation of the masterful Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, who dominated Queen Anne during the earlier years of her reign).

Here are the great, the near-great, and the great mob of the undistinguished, who, like newspaper advertisements, become at least momentarily important again when rediscovered after a hundred years or more. We cite in inverse order, Samuel Jackson Pratt's *Emma Corbett, or the Miseries of Civil War* (the Civil War being the American Revolution), which gives us a glimpse, in 1779, of General George Washington in one of his magnanimous moments, probably the first, but certainly not the last appearance of that famous character in fiction. Likewise there is Mrs. Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* with its vivid glimpses of life in Canada in the days just succeeding the English conquest, glimpses of which the authenticity is vouched for by the fact that the authoress accompanied her husband, the chaplain of the Quebec garrison, thither in 1763. Rarer novels of the same author, like her *Excursion*, are included. Quite as popular, and of rather greater contemporary reputation, was Sarah Fielding, great Henry's sister, whose books "By a Lady," or "By the Author of David Simple," are not lacking in what were doubtless family gifts of ironic wit and good sense. All five volumes of her *David Simple* are found here, the fifth, written nearly nine years after the first, being very rare; also her *Ophelia* and others. To any but the student of

the period the names of Mrs. Eliza Haywood, Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, Sarah Scott, Robert Bage, are not likely nowadays to recall much, but here are opportunities for better acquaintance with what will be found to be quaint personalities and amusing tales. Do not titles themselves like *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*; *The Female Quixote, or the Adventures of Arabella*; and *Hermesprong, or Man As He Is Not*, suggest unsuspected originality? So too do many works, the anonymity of which still defies elucidation, like *The Adventures of a Hackney Coach*. Here also may be mentioned *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman, Thirteen Years a Slave in America* (1743), a story that provided inspiration to both Smollett and Scott. Rarer works by other novelists than those for which their names linger in scholarly memory are numerous. We note Sophia Lee's *Life of a Lover* (in six volumes); *The Picture*, by the Miss Minifies, that writing sisterhood of Fairwater in Somersetshire; *The Phoenix*, by Miss Clara Reeve; an edition of Sarah Scott's popular *Description of Millenium Hall*, inscribed on the title page to Goldsmith; and *Harcourt*, "By the Author of *Evelina*," together with other ascriptions worthy of that earlier arch pirate of the century, the "unspeakable" Curll.

Probably of greatest interest to the cultured reader and of utmost value to the advanced student are splendid original editions of *Tom Jones*, *Amelia*, *Clarissa*, *Sir Charles Grandison*, *Peregrine Pickle*, and *Tristram Shandy*. Absorbingly interesting as is the last work, it is not, I think, until one has seen it in the slender little volumes in which it was first read that the full charm of its airy and whimsical nonsense can be realized. When, in addition, one discovers in three of the volumes of the set the autograph of "Yorick" himself, one realizes an even greater thrill—not that the copy was Sterne's, we suppose, but that Sterne, a lion of the drawing-rooms, was an early (and easy) victim of that even then modern pest, the collector of autographs. Almost as thrilling is it to handle a book which once was handled by the famous dramatist Sheridan, as his book-plate indicates, or volumes in the fine set presented, as the autograph records, by Henry Mackenzie, that "Addison of the North," to a beloved sister. Mackenzie was first in the field to recognize the genius of Robert Burns, by a review, within a few days of its appearance, of the famous Kilmarnock edition of the poems. Mac-

kenzie belongs in the collection because of his novel in letters *Julia de Roubigné*, a tragic story written in his youth.

How worthwhile and comprehensive is the collection may be gauged by these typical examples. Early American fiction, especially that of Charles Brockden Brown, is well represented, as well as English. Included are "firsts" of *Jane Talbot*, *Edgar Huntley*, *Wieland* (several other editions with early memoir), and *Arthur Mervyn*. In passing we note also *Memoirs of the Bloomsgrave Family in a Series of Letters to a Respectable Citizen of Philadelphia etc.*, by Enos Hitchcock, D.D., inscribed to Mrs. Washington; and *Amelia, or the Faithless Briton*, issued in book form in 1798 after having run some years previously in the *Columbian Magazine*.

It will hardly be deemed impertinent, in view of their interest, to mention some of the other items associated with the novels. Some of these easily explain their presence: Voltaire's *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733); Mrs. Barbauld's *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson* (1804), with all the magnificent colored plates and facsimiles; *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu* (the famous "Queen of the Blue-stockings"), edited by her nephew in 1809; *Letters Supposed to Have Been Written by Yorick and Eliza* (1779). Curiosities are the oversize quarto of Jonas Hanway's *Journal of Eight Days Journey from Portsmouth to Kingston . . . , to which is added An Essay on Tea* (1756), Hanway having introduced the modern umbrella; *Lexiphanes* (1767), a Lucianic-Jonsonian satire on the great lexicographer, Dr. Samuel Johnson; biographical oddities like the *Life of Arthur Lord Balmerino* (1746), he being one of the two Scotch lords who were beheaded publicly for treason, the last execution of its kind on Tower Hill; the *Journal of Occurrences at the Temple during the Confinement of Louis XVI* (1798), and an *Essay on . . . Rheumatism, to which are added Observations on the Medical Treatment of the Rev. Mr. Sterne* (the novelist) *during his last Illness* (1776). I cannot forbear noting a group of poems included with the other books, the most curious being a "first" of Cowper's *Olney Hymns; Cottage Poems*, by the Rev. Patrick Bronte, Halifax, 1811; and an autograph manuscript of poems by J. K. Paulding (1843).

I cannot close this brief notice without a word of tribute to the ardent and enthusiastic character of the young scholar who collected, and the generosity of the parents who pre-

sented the books to our Library. He loved learning and all other good things; he was always considerate and helpful to others while he was with us; and by the leaving with us of these fruits of his scholarship we are assured of his example's being always present as a worthy inspiration. It is not without interest to mention that in addition to the novels themselves, a working reference library, including all the important histories of fiction since Miss Clara Reeve's *Progress of Romance* (1785), makes the use or examination of the collection more profitable.

Steps have been taken to add to the collection from time to time. Already a rare novel of Bage (*Barham Downs*) and two original manuscript novels in a copper-plate hand of 1753 have been acquired by gift and purchase since the installation of the Memorial. It is destined to grow, with the years, in value to the scholar and the lover of rare books.

## PENNSYLVANIA'S "HOME OF SARASVATI"

By DR. W. NORMAN BROWN

The Hindu goddess of learning Sarasvati is represented in sculpture and painting with a manuscript book in one of her four hands; and no "Home of Sarasvati" deserves that name, to a Hindu's mind, unless it has a notable collection of manuscripts.

Sarasvati's book is long and narrow; for in most parts of ancient India books were written on tough and durable palm leaves which when prepared for writing might vary from six inches in length to thirty, and were usually less than three inches in width. The writing ran across the page the long way, and each page therefore had only a few lines. The writing in northern and western India was done with ink; in southern India a stylus was used to scratch lines in the leaf, and the symbols were made visible for reading by dusting a dark powder into the scratches.

The reader of a book, if sitting down in the usual Indian cross-legged fashion, might lay it out flat before him on the ground or on a low desk, or he might hold it in his hands on one of the carefully fitted termite-proof teakwood boards that make a stiff cover for the book. After reading one side of a folio, the user would turn the page over, before and