



Caxtonian

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January 1999

William Caxton, Club Patron, Began a Rich Tradition with *Le Morte d'Arthur*

By Pierre Ferrand

Many Caxtonians are aware that their patron saint, William Caxton, spent 30 years away from England, thus sensibly avoiding most of the 15th Century Wars of the Roses. He stayed chiefly in the (then) great trading city of Bruges, as a leading "merchant adventurer." It was after he retired from business, in his 50s, that he learned the mysteries of printing in Cologne. He eventually returned to introduce this state-of-the-art technology (long known in China) into England. He was, of course, responsible for the first English book ever printed, a translation from the French. But his most famous publication, still read today, is Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, adapted from French sources.

The Arthurian legend has been well acclimatized in English literature, though Milton did not pursue his early plan to write an epic about the King, and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is only peripherally Arthurian. There have been notable retellings of the story of Arthur in this century, including T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* and Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*, among others, and the entertaining musical, *Camelot*. We do no longer have to fall back on Tennyson's Victorian *Idylls of the Kings* or his pure-hearted *Sir Galahad*.

Richard Wagner's Lohengrin is of course an anonymous Arthurian knight in disguise. The most famous versions of two episodes of the legend, because of the compelling music rather than the literary merit of the librettos, are Wagner's less than pure-hearted *Tristan und Isolde* and his quaintly tempted *Parsifal*. It is rather amusing to note that Wagner, a champion of racially authentic Germanic art, used a genuinely German subject only once in his operas, in *Die Meistersinger*. The "Venusberg," a key episode of Tannhaeuser, is derived from a



Wood engraving by Robert Gibbins, from *Le Morte d'Arthur*, by Sir Thomas Malory and first printed by William Caxton. This illustration at the beginning of Chapter 1, Book the Seventh, from Golden Cockerel Press, London, for Limited Editions Club, New York, 1936. (Through the courtesy of the Newberry Library.)

medieval French prose romance, *Le Paradis de la Reine Sybille*, and, in turn, inspired Wagner's Flower Maidens episode in *Parsifal*. In *The Ring*, Wagner draws primarily on Icelandic poetry and myth rather than on the German *Nibelungenlied*.

There were notable retellings in medieval German of the stories of Tristan and of Parsifal. I was able to pick up at the Newberry Library Book Fair the excellent Brockhaus edition in two volumes of Gottfried von Strassburg's unfinished 19,552-verse epic on Tristan, and do not despair of encountering a good edition of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal* one of these years.

These versions of the stories were adapted from the French, including some texts now lost. We have, however, the remarkable Beroul version of the Tristan legend (another incomplete poem in 4,484 verses), and part of the Thomas version. These and some sections of the German adaptations of the

Tristan myth have been presented in modern French in the form of a complete and elegant narration by the superb medieval scholar Joseph Bedier in *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseult*. I obtained through the Newberry Book Fair both the Beroul text (in the scholarly edition of the Societe des Anciens Textes Francais) and the Bedier (1924) version, which is true to the medieval spirit and has been translated into English. An interesting but unorthodox and irreverent version of the Tristan legend in German is *Koenig Hahnrei* (King Cuckold) by the early 20th Century expressionist playwright Georg Kaiser, which I also found at the Newberry Book Fair.

The writers who provided the first known literary versions of a number of Arthurian stories were the 12th Century French poets Marie de France, who used

Arthurian themes attractively in two relatively short poems, and Chretien de Troyes, who has been quite appropriately called France's first novelist. His versions (including one, incomplete, of the Parsifal story), are novels of manners and acute psychological studies rather than mere adventure tales, and have been published in English in the Everyman collection. (His poem on Tristan has not been preserved.) I picked up a fine copy of the "Romans" of Chretien de Troyes in French during a recent trip to France, (the convenient "La Pochoteque" edition, 1994, containing the medieval French originals).

Needless to say, the Arthurian legends are of Celtic origin. There are traces of them in the (Welsh) Mabinogion. A rather dry chronicle of King Arthur, (chiefly as a mythical conqueror rather than as the presiding officer of the Round Table) forms

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Caxtonian

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Musings...

If we didn't have the great drama *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), it would be necessary to compose a drama to bridge the abyss between the ancient world and the modern — a role *Faust* so admirably fulfills.

Goethe created a hero in his two-part masterpiece who embodies evil as well as good. The brilliant Dr. Faust, unsatisfied with what he alone could achieve, entered into an alliance with Mephistopheles, Satan's personal agent, to achieve the ultimate experiences life could offer — but for a price: Faust's *very soul!* Goethe then caused Faust to work out his redemption in the midst of forces strongly aligned against his best interests and inclinations.

Faust is the literary creation that introduces us to human life as a both-and, rather than an either-or, enterprise, upon which many of the established religious, intellectual, and educational systems are founded. It is a study that develops human responsibility, as Goethe wrote elsewhere, to fulfill inherent positive essences of the individual being and to bring them into reality — not just in thought — but through deed. "In the beginning," Faust said, paraphrasing St. John, "was the *deed.*" The soul's ongoing warfare to achieve equilibrium through Goethe's masterwork is dramatic, volatile, and life-long. Sixty years transpire between the writing of the first part of *Faust*, in which evil dominates the central character, and the second part, in which we witness the character's redemption, through the draining of swamps and the establishment of a new Earth, "Raised by a bold and busy people's will." Shortly before death, Faust concluded: "Freedom and life belong to that [person] solely/Who must reconquer them each day."

A number of years ago, in my ongoing study of Goethe — and my interest in the understanding of certain Faustian inclinations that we all share — I was pleased to find *Goethe: Five Studies* by Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965). I discovered that Schweitzer, one of the 20th Century's greatest humanitarians, wrestled with similar issues and found Goethe — and *Faust* in particular — of great importance in his life. In one of his studies, Schweitzer wrote that Goethe found the "good" in human life is not an imposed conception "as an obligation," but that "good is a part of our personal being, thus perfecting our personality, not everyone in the same way, but each as an ethical being in his own right."

Schweitzer's great work in Lambaréné (in what was then the Belgian Congo) for more than 40 years may be the finest example of the fulfillment of one man's ideas in another man's work. Editor Norman Cousins, who spent much time with Schweitzer before Schweitzer's death, rescued several of Schweitzer's manuscripts and recorded much of the culminating thought of the good doctor in *Albert Schweitzer's Mission: Healing and Peace* (1985) and other books. Of Schweitzer, Cousins wrote, "True spiritual evolution means that there is an awareness by the individual of the natural goodness inside him; therefore he is not reaching out but actually discovering his true self when he brings the goodness to life." Schweitzer, held distant by institutional religion, refused to debate his theology. He told Cousins, "I decided I would make my life my argument."

In that regard, it is important to remind you that I write from my own private Lambaréné, where the work of reclamation and restoration proceeds slowly and against great odds. On the most profound level, all of us wrestle with the essentials of the human spirit, and in prevailing, we establish the most lasting and important equality of all — the equality of goodness of the soul forging a commonwealth of peace that transcends all ideologies. Perhaps this is the meaning of the final lines of *Faust* (Part Two): "The Eternal-Feminine/Draws us onward."

Robert Cotner
Editor

Book-Hunting in the Arctic – Iceland, a ‘Literate Culture’

By Glen N. Wiche

Part III of III

If the Faroe Islands are an example of a cultural renaissance and Greenland is a sometimes somber reminder of a cultural collision, then Iceland is perhaps the finest example of an *intensely* literate culture.

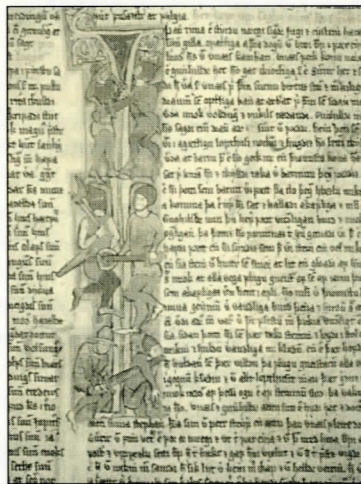
I can't remember precisely when it was that Iceland first captivated me. It might have been when, as a very young bibliophile, I first learned that William Morris had sought inspiration in its solitude. Or perhaps it was when I first read W. H. Auden's *Letters From Iceland*. Or, maybe it was hearing about the famous Russian-American chess matches in Reykjavik. But whenever it was, I do remember very clearly that the Icelanders were *very* attached to their proud literary heritage. And when I learned that any Icelander can today read the ancient Icelandic sagas as if they were reading their morning newspaper — so little has the Icelandic language changed over the centuries — I knew I must go to this place some day.

Iceland is in many ways the most unusual of the three countries I visited. It does not have the obvious physical beauty of either the Faroes or Greenland. Much of the country is uninspiring, flat land. And Reykjavik for all its colorful charm — resembling nothing so much as a toy town — does not have much architecture of note. There is precious little of antiquity; the earliest surviving building dates from only the 1790s. Iceland's beauty lies in its people's dedication to their language and their literary heritage, as I found out during my all-too-short stay.

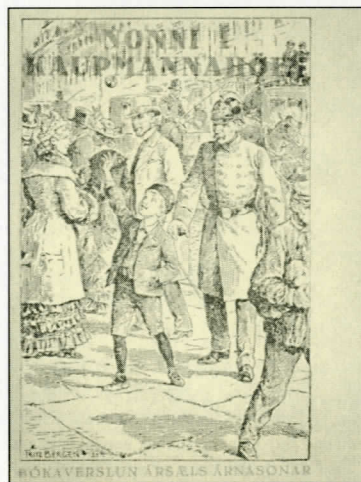
My objective was the Arni Magnusson Institute. Arni Magnusson was born in Iceland in 1663 and educated in Denmark. When he returned to his homeland, it was as an official of the Royal Commission whose duty it was to take a census of Iceland. These years were the low point of the country's fortunes. Beset by repeated volcanic eruptions, crop failures, plagues, pirate attacks, and neglect from the Copenhagen authorities, its peoples struggled to survive. Arni Magnusson was born with a love of antiquity, and during these difficult years he took it upon himself to gather together hundreds of medieval manuscripts and fragments that would have otherwise been



Vault of the Magnusson Institute, Reykjavik. (Photo by and from the collection of Glen N. Wiche.)



Illuminated manuscript, Magnusson Institute, Reykjavik. (Photo by and from the collection of Glen N. Wiche.)



Nonni in Copenhagen (1923) by John Sveinsson. (From the collection of Glen N. Wiche.)

destroyed during these chaotic times. These manuscripts are now housed in the Institute, which so proudly bears his name in Reykjavik.

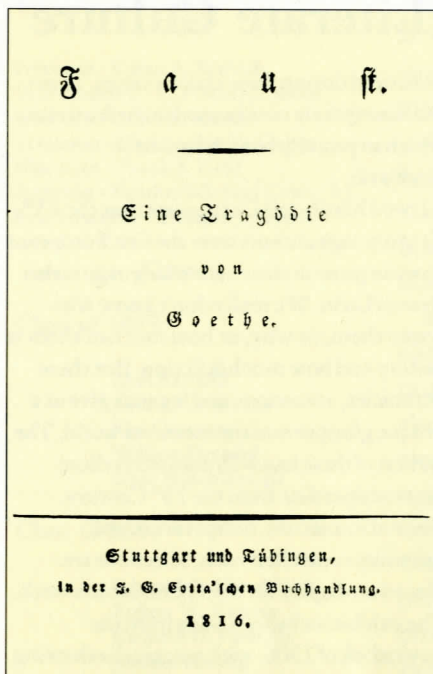
I need hardly tell Caxtonians that the 13th Century saga authors were the first Europeans to write prose in their native language rather than in Latin. We really don't know who wrote them, or why, or how much of them is history and how much is fiction. But these chronicles, romances, and legends give us a unique glimpse into the medieval world. The earliest of these hand-illuminated vellum manuscripts date from the 13th Century.

Stored in a secure, temperature and humidity controlled vault, selections are placed on display for brief periods each week. The exhibit includes a page from the Reykjabok of 1500, with marginalia showing horsemen on their way to a wedding. This page is from the famous King Sverri's Book and dates to 1387. Another of my favorite bits of marginalia is from a 16th Century law codex. The caption reads "*Here Ilie drunk/ Here Isit asleep and dead drunk/ Now I can't drink anymore.*" Of the later treasures I am sure you would recognize an often reproduced late, 17th Century sketch of a saga character.

When Arni Magnusson finally returned to Denmark to take up a professorship at the University of Copenhagen, the manuscripts went with him. And then he suffered a catastrophe, with which every bibliophile can commiserate — the great Copenhagen fire of 1728, which destroyed much of the city and its noble university. How he chose which manuscripts to save and which to leave to the fires one can not know, but we can all understand what agonizing decisions they must have been. Fortunately, the most important manuscripts appear to have been saved, but that was cold comfort to the old antiquarian who died heartbroken just two years later. Arni Magnusson had willed the surviving manuscripts to the University of Copenhagen. And there they remained for two centuries.

After Iceland finally gained its independence from Denmark in 1944, repeated attempts were made to recover the Magnusson manuscripts. Finally, in 1961, the

(See BOOK-HUNTING, Page Six)



The title page of an early edition of Goethe's *Faust* (Part One). (Courtesy of the Newberry Library.)

A Partial Chronology of Books by Johann W. von Goethe 1749-1832

Gotz von Berlichingen, 1773.*
Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers, 1774.**
Iphigenie auf Tauris, 1787.
Egmont, 1788.
Torquato Tasso, 1790.
Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, 1796.
Hermann und Dorothea, 1798.
Faust (Part One), 1808.***
Die Wahlverwandtschaften, 1809.
Aus Meinem Leben, Dichtung und Wahrheit
 (autobiography), Vol. I, 1811; II, 1812; III,
 1814; IV, 1833.
Italienische Reise, 1816-17.
Westostlicher Diwan, 1819.
Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, 1819-21.
Trilogie der Leidenschaft, 1822.
Faust (Part Two), 1832.

Goethe's Influences in German Literature

- * Inaugurated romantic school
- ** Inaugurated sentimental school
- *** Inaugurated modern spirit in literature

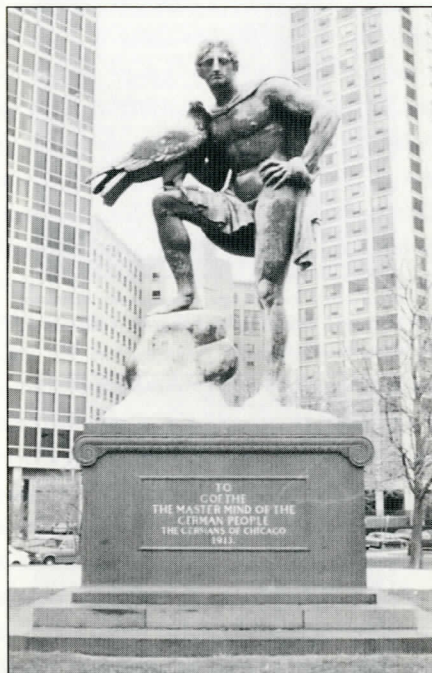
A Lyric Writer's Lament (A Faustian Bargain) For Robert Cotner

By Laurel Church

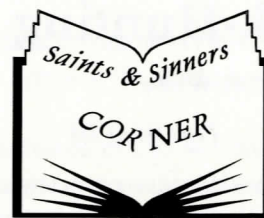
Call 1/666-ANY-TIME
 I'll work in any request,
 You give me a C sharp or an E flat,
 I'll give you chorus and
 rhymes for all seasons
 but Christmas, please don't ask
 me for that, my winters are mine,
 and that's final.

Just remember, ring 1/666-ANY-TIME,
 afternoon, morning, or night,
 for sixty-slash-forty, your favor,
 I'll give value upon every request
 with experience that counts and nothing
 held back, you'll never find cause
 for regret.

Editor's note: Caxtonian Laurel Church is a working poet and the chair of the Communication Department, Aurora University



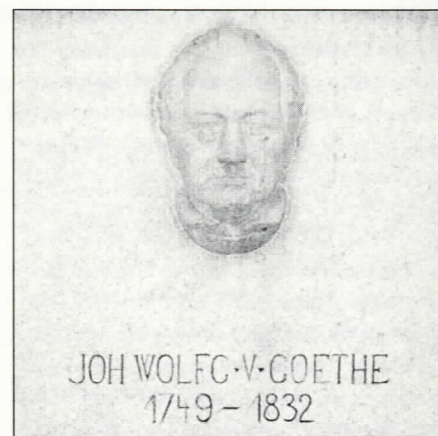
Bronze statue commissioned by Chicago's German community and given to the city in 1913 in honor of their national hero, "The master mind of the German People," Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The statue, located on Chicago's North Side, stands at Sheridan Rd. and Surf St., in the heart of what was at one time a German neighborhood. (Photo by and from the collection of Robert Cotner.)



Abel Berland, distinguished Caxtonian and an Honorary Member of the club, was featured in *Biblio* (October 1998), in an article by Nicholas A. Basbanes. The article, "His Dearest Friends," focuses on Berland's superb collection and the collector's intimate association with the books he has assembled over the years. Basbanes wrote, "What is immediately striking about Berland's books is that they are not kept behind glass as museum objects but remain within their owner's reach, to be read, consulted, and enjoyed on a daily basis."

Caxtonian Tom O'Gorman, and our resident honorary Irish cultural ambassador, was featured in a fine article by Lucia Adams in a recent *River North News*.

Caxtonian Dempsey J. Travis was featured with an article and full-color portrait in *Chicago Magazine* (November 1998). The article by Marc Spiegler and Sara Austin, "Reliable Sources," presents six "local personalities the reporters call when they need 'reliable sources.'" Travis, the author of several books, will present a program on the tradition of jazz music in Chicago at the January Caxton dinner meeting (see page 8).



A part of the 1913 commemoration to Goethe is a small likeness of Goethe, and quotations from *Faust*. (Photo by and from the collection of Robert Cotner.)

Chicagoan Finley Peter Dunne — The Long View of a Distant Descendant

By Irene Clare Beck

Finley Peter Dunne, a Chicago newspaper writer and editor, earned national fame a century ago for creating Mr. Martin Dooley, an Irish saloon keeper and the first memorable Irish-American character in print. The weekly columns beginning in 1893, which featured Dooley's lilting brogue and Dunne's own wicked wit, gave public voice, for the first time, to the views of Chicago's Southside Irish — and those beyond. His columns pointed to the plight of

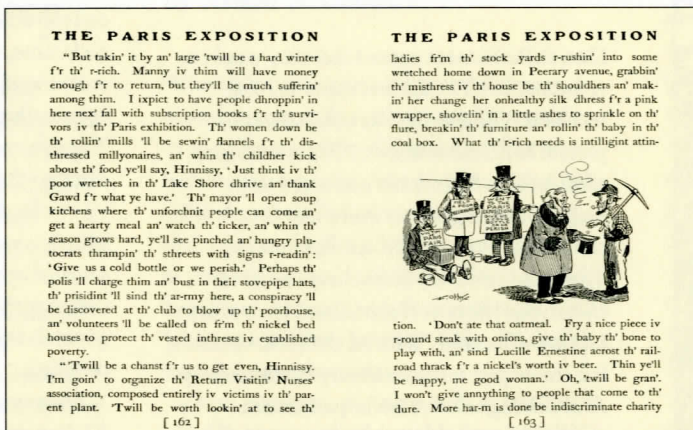
urban immigrants and the political ploys of those too powerful to attack without such a humorous guise.

I first knew the newspaperman as Peter Finley Dunne, the name my grandmother, Anita Dunn Carroll, used when she told me that she and the famous writer were cousins. (Our New York branch of the family spelled the name without the final "e".) That made her father, James Byrne Dunn, Peter's paternal uncle. Grandma knew that Peter's beloved mother died when he was about 17, and he had taken Finley, her maiden name, as his own.

Over the years, our family moved around in Brooklyn neighborhoods that echoed Chicago's Southside, never far from the background my great-grandfather and Dunne's father shared. Religion shaped their values; their education was informal, and their conversation centered around newspapers. Dooley's views mirrored those of my relatives.

But it was not until I married and moved to Chicago that Dunne reappeared — on our own bookshelves, among the books and letters my husband Bill had collected about Illinois writers. After reading biographers and historians, such as Charles Fanning, Ellen Skerrett, and Barbara Schaaf, I poked around the Chicago Historical Society and the Archdiocesan archives and learned more about the family.

Monsignor Dennis Dunne, another uncle, was one of the most widely known priests in Chicago in his time. He completed the building of Old St. Patrick's Church at Adams



Two pages from Mr. Dooley's Philosophy. (Courtesy of the Newberry Library.)

and Des Plaines Streets in 1856, when an anti-Irish, anti-immigrant atmosphere held sway. Monsignor Dunne rose to become Vicar General of the archdiocese, helping to found the 90th Union Volunteers, an all-Irish Civil War brigade. After challenging Bishop Duggan with misuse of funds, he and three other high-ranking priests were suspended and finally vindicated. But his vindication came too late: Monsignor Dunne died in 1868 in his brother's house across the street from Old St. Pat's, where Peter was a year-old infant.

Peter's oldest sister, Amelia, corrected his homework assignments and encouraged him to complete high school. She became a

literature teacher and later a principal for whom a Chicago Southside public school was named, the Amelia Dunne Hookway School.

Peter Finley Dunne switched his first and middle names as a young man, after he got a regular byline. He coined the term "Southpaw" to describe a left-handed pitcher while providing sports coverage for the Chicago White Stockings baseball team in 1887. Teddy Roosevelt and millions of others loved Mr. Dooley's take on the Spanish-American War. On that crest, Dunne left Chicago for New York in 1900, living well and high. None of his later

writings ever matched *Mr. Dooley's* impact, which had inspired contemporaries such as George Ade and later writers like James T. Farrell and Ring Lardner to create more realistic American fiction.

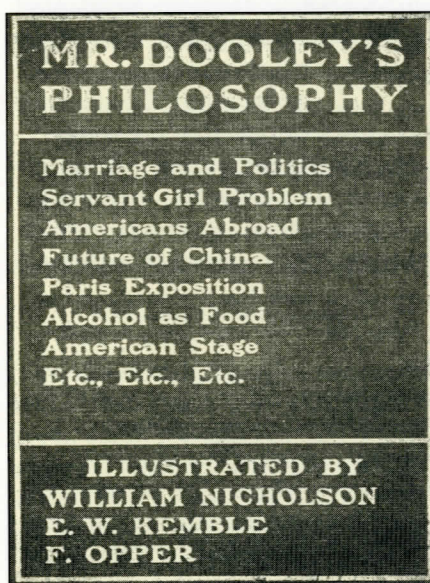
Yet his spirit has lived on in my family, who always cautioned the younger ones through the advice of Mr. Dooley: "Thrust ivrybody — but cut th' ca-ar'ds."

Chronology of Books by Finley Peter Dunne

1867-1936

- Mr. Dooley in Peace and in War*, 1898.
- Mr. Dooley in the Hearts of His Countrymen*, 1899.
- What Dooley Says*, 1899.
- Mr. Dooley's Philosophy*, 1900.
- Mr. Dooley's Opinions*, 1901
- Observations by Mr. Dooley*, 1902
- Dissertations by Mr. Dooley*, 1906.
- Mr. Dooley Says*, 1910.
- Mr. Dooley on Making a Will and Other Necessary Evils*, 1920.
- Mr. Dooley at His Best*, 1938.
- Mr. Dooley, Now and Forever*, 1954.
- Mr. Dooley on Ivrything and Ivrybody*, 1963.
- Mr. Dooley on the Choice of the Law*, 1963.
- Mr. Dooley Remembers: The Informal Memoirs of Finley Peter Dunne*, 1963.
- Mr. Dooley and the Chicago Irish: The Autobiography of a Nineteenth Century Ethnic Group*, 1976.

Compiled by Irene Beck



The cover of Finley Peter Dunne's *Mr. Dooley's Philosophy* (1900), dedicated to the "Hennessys of the world who suffer and are silent." (Courtesy of the Newberry Library.)

Caxton

(Continued from Page One)



La Treselegante Delicieuse, Melliflue et Tresplaisante Hystorie du Tresnoble, Victorieux et Excellentissime Roy Perceforest, Roy de la Grant Bretiane. *Paris: Egidius Gormontium 1531-32. This work examines chivalry before the coming of Arthur, links heroes of the Alexander legend to the Grail, and tells how the Grail came to Britain. This illustration comes from a copy owned by William Morris. (Used through the courtesy of the Newberry Library.)*

the latter half of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*. Geoffrey's book is available in the Everyman Series in a pleasant translation (with an Elizabethan flavor) from the Latin.

The above is a mere sampling of the original texts and some of the literary versions of Arthurian legends in a few languages. There exists, of course, a whole multilingual library of studies and commentaries on the subject, a few of them worthwhile. It is probably the most popular medieval theme in English literature. William Caxton certainly started something with his publication of *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

Editor's note: Pierre Ferrand is retired from banking, where he was an authority in international credit. During the past 15 years he has been researching and writing in a number of areas. His writings have appeared in the Chicago Tribune and elsewhere, and he has published on literature and history in scholarly journals. He is the author of a memoir, *A Question of Allegiance*, on his family's escape from Nazi-dominated Europe during World War II. He has just completed a book on Magdalen Herbert and her 10 children, which included the founder of modern deism, the religious poet George Herbert, and Sir Henry, the Master of Revels under King James and Charles I. We welcome him to the Caxtonian in this maiden essay on William Caxton and his work.

Book-Hunting

(Continued from Page Three)

Danish Parliament agreed that they would be returned. In 1971 the first shipment was received. The transfer has now been completed. In all, more than 1,700 manuscripts were returned, certainly one of the most magnanimous gestures ever made by a colonial power to a once-subject nation.

Just minutes away from these medieval treasures is the new National and University Library of Iceland. With its 900,000 volumes, it is the largest research library in the country. And although the Icelandic parliament resolved that the National Library and the University Library of Iceland be consolidated in 1957, it took another 37 years to accomplish this. Among the special collections are those of the Icelandic novelist Halldor Laxness (winner of the 1955 Nobel Prize for Literature), a collection of Holy Bibles in over 1,200 languages and a fine collection of chess books, which reflect the Icelanders' special regard for the game. When I visited the library, there was a fine exhibit of travelers' accounts of Iceland, and it was especially nice to see the original illustrations made on the famous 1789 Stanley expedition to the North Atlantic, which are part of this fine research library's collections.

Reykjavik is blessed with a number of excellent bookshops, dealing in both new and old books. In the new bookshops one will find a staggering array of Icelandic sagas and local history. In fact, the "best sellers" are the classics and the "pop-lit" is relegated to the fringes of the shop. What a refreshing change that was. There is one major antiquarian shop and several smaller ones. And I can attest that the Icelandic antiquarian booksellers are just as idiosyncratic as their American brethren, but very hospitable to the trade, I am happy to report.

Perhaps the best of urban living in Iceland is in the delightful community of Akureyri. It was also home to one of Iceland's most interesting literary figures. The Reverend Jon Sveinsson lived there from the age of seven in 1865. When his father died four years later, he left Iceland to go to France where he was educated by a French nobleman who had offered to pay for his schooling. In 1878 he became a member of the Jesuit order and

spent the remainder of his life teaching in Denmark and Germany. In 1906 his first book was published. Others soon followed. Known collectively as the "Nonni" books, after his nickname, these juvenile tales based on his early travels were hugely successful and were eventually translated into 40 languages. Nonni's home has been lovingly preserved and displays the many editions and illustrations of his works. My visit there was a fittingly pleasant way to conclude my time in this most unusual and surprising of countries: a humane country where monuments are built not to generals and politicians, but to poets and novelists.

This summer's Arctic trip was a long one — 32 days and 21 flights. I enjoyed my summer of collecting — the books, the people, and the experiences. But, as Vincent Starrett knew — when we collect, we are collecting happiness. It has indeed been my pleasure to share my adventures and I wish Caxtonians one and all good collecting — and happiness — wherever their adventures may take them.

Editor's note: Caxtonian Glen Wiche, antiquarian book seller, collector of books on Restoration England, the Civil War, and islands of the Atlantic, and world traveler, presented this three-part article at the Caxton Luncheon, February 13, 1998.

Chronology of Books by Dempsey J. Travis

b. 1920

- Don't Stop Me Now*, 1970.
- An Autobiography of Black Chicago*, 1981.
- An Autobiography of Black Jazz*, 1983.
- I Like Me*, 1984.
- An Autobiography of Black Politics*, 1987.
- Real Estate Is the Gold in Your Future*, 1988.
- "Harold": The People's Mayor, An Authorized Biography of Mayor Harold Washington*, 1989.
- Racism: American Style, A Corporate Gift*, 1990.
- I Refuse to Learn to Fail, the Autobiography of Dempsey J. Travis*, 1992.
- Views from the Back of the Bus During World War II and Beyond*, 1995.
- The Duke Ellington Primer*, 1996.
- "Introduction" in Clark Terry, *Louis Armstrong Odyssey: From Jane Aller to America's Jazz Ambassador*, 1997.
- Racism: Revolves Like a Merry Go Round*, 1998.
- They Heard a Thousand Thunders*, 1999.

Letter from Evanston . . .

An Irish Memory

In 1980, my wife and fellow Caxtonian Carolyn and I took a sentimental journey with my mother to County Mayo, Ireland, where she had been born in 1896. She had emigrated to Chicago in 1904, the year that James Joyce's *Ulysses* was supposed to have taken place, during the 24 hours of June 16.

When my mother departed Ireland, she left behind a younger brother, who never emigrated. She had not been back to Ireland since she left as an eight-year-old child. One of the great joys in my life was bringing her together with her brother after 76 years of separation. She stayed with him and his son and daughter-in-law for a week, comparing notes on a good hunk of history of the 20th Century. For the first few days, Carolyn and I enjoyed reveling in their stories — or I should say, her stories to him — about when they were kids.

He would sit in his rocking chair, smoking his pipe, nodding recognition of incidents in her narration. Being six years younger and without her gift of observation, he could not remember most of the stories she told but simply nodded in wonderment and occasionally turned to us with a twinkle in his eye and muttered, "Isn't she grand! How amazin' is her memory!"

After they settled down into a daily routine of storytelling, Carolyn and I drove to Dublin for a delightful, bookish interlude in our family's Irish adventure. At the Abbey Theater, we saw a fine Brian Friel play, but I enjoyed most sitting in the pubs and listening to the dialogues of the Dubliners and imagined some of the escapades of Stephen Daedalus. We visited Joyce's famous turret, described at the opening of *Ulysses*, and a book exhibit at Trinity College. We were amazed and surprised by what we found there: the *Book of the Kells* on display and a fine exhibit of Joyce's rare manuscripts, texts, and memorabilia.

In the exhibition room, we were the only viewers besides a thin, elderly woman in a rather ragged dress. But she seemed interested in the exhibit, which apparently was new to her. Carolyn struck up a conversation with her, commenting on the wonderful display of

Baltimorean Remembers Rare Finds in the Bay City

By Arthur S. Cheslock

When I first started working in Baltimore, I would occasionally walk over to Howard St. to visit the Smith Used Bookstore. The store had no phone — the owner believed that if the caller discovered his store did not have what the caller was looking for, he would not come in. In addition, books with soiled spines would have their covers removed and were rehinged with tar tape. But the story of Mr. Altshul's store is for another time.

It was, however, during a walk to the Smith Used Bookstore that I stumbled across Schill's Bookstore on W. Franklin St. When I discovered Schill's, the windows were dusty — indeed the windows were *never* cleaned — and always in the window was the same dust-covered set of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. My first visit to the store did not provide any indications of the pleasures I would experience in the future.

After I got to know the proprietor, I found him to be reserved but friendly. He had one employee who ran the store when Mr. Schill was elsewhere. Like the proprietor, he was an elderly man — at least 60 years old. He smiled a little more than his employer, but he shared the latter's reserve. What was so very interesting about the store was that its stock of books did not appear to have changed for more than a decade. Indeed, like the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the window, the books had accumulated many years of dust.

An examination of the books revealed that the scientific books had been published many years before my stumbling across the store, and that no new fiction had been added for many years. The prices on the books were the

same as when they were originally published. Among the books for sale were many books published by Arkham House, Fantasy Press, and Gnome Press. Although I was not into science fiction, my friends enjoyed it, and a cousin's husband taught a course in it. The prices of the books fit my budget, and I knew the gifts were always appreciated.

Prior to my discovery of Schill's, I had at Christmas-time sent out copies of Mencken's *Christmas Story*. The year after my discovery, I sent out four first editions of the Lovecraft's *The Quest of the Unknown Kadeth*. Other first editions by Lovecraft and Heinlien found their way into my friends' libraries. As for myself, I acquired a signed limited edition of Ezra Pound. I think the price was \$20.

But it was not until I was informed they were closing Schill's that I made my most important discovery. Both Mr. Schill and his associate always appeared to enjoy their privacy, and I had always tried to be unobtrusive. The associate, however, noted that I had purchased a number of books by A. E. Merritt. "I have always liked Mr. Merritt," he confided to me. "I thought you would like this book to remember me by." The book was a first edition of A. E. Merritt's *The Ship of Ishtar*. It was rebound in buckram. In the book's flyleaf was the author's inscription: "To Ben Nelson/Who flattered me by having this book bound/by A. Merritt." None of the stores on the block W. Franklin St., Baltimore, exists today. They were demolished many years ago, and in their place is a parking lot.

The Ship of Ishtar, a token of friendship, remains to this day on my book shelf. It brings to mind the memory of a dusty new bookstore that sold only old new books, and of two quiet gentlemen.

Editor's note: This article was inspired by the December Caxtonian, and was faxed to the editor by Mr. Cheslock, an attorney, a book collector, and a member of the Baltimore Bibliophiles.

Note!

The keepsake bookmark, produced by Hayward Blake for the 1998 Holiday Revels, will be available from Caxtonian Blake at the next luncheon and dinner meetings. See him if you'd like one of the delightful items.

Joyce memorabilia. The old woman beamed with obvious national pride at our praise of Joyce, who had brought such fame to Dublin and of our appreciation for the riches of the exhibit. After Carolyn's rather effusive declamation on the glories of Dublin and its wayward son, James Joyce, the old woman looked at her with a quizzical expression on her wrinkled face and asked, "A writer, was he?"

Edward Quattrocchi

Book Marks

Luncheon Programs

Your Special Luncheon Invitation. . .

Date: January 8, 1999

Place: Mid-Day Club

Speaker: Edward W. Rosenheim

Honorary Caxtonian Ned Rosenheim will honor us with a presentation "Reflections on Bad Poetry." In his book, *What Happens in Literature* (1960), Rosenheim defined for a generation the essentials of traditional poetry. In that book he wrote, "At its best, modern verse does not challenge our ingenuity or erudition, but our modernity. Its special characteristics are largely the products of our own age and world. And at its heart is the ageless power of all poetry — the appeal to the eternal human gifts of sympathy, wisdom, and imagination."

His presentation at the Caxton luncheon may well describe bad poetry as the "ageless power of verbosity of certain eminent and many, many not so eminent scribes — the appeal to the eternal attraction of wordiness in which the gift of language was either asleep or non-existent and thus is created a fascinating world in which didacticism, distraction, and tiring rhetoric, upon occasion unintentionally humorous, is created for the pleasure of a very few." That adaptation of Dr. Rosenheim's book by the editor cannot be corroborated nor approved. But it captures the spirit in which one of our wittiest of speakers *might* approach this interesting and important subject. In his presentation, he will discuss works by some of the eminent poets — Tennyson, Wordsworth, and Poe. And he will share "bad poetry by bad poets."

Edward Quattrocchi
Leonard Freedman
Co-Chairs

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of the First National Bank of Chicago, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Luncheon and discussion, 12:30 p.m. Dinner meetings begin with spirits at 5 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m., lecture at 7 p.m. The First National Bank of Chicago's parking garage, 40 S. Clark Street, offers a special parking rate after 5 p.m. to guests of the Mid-Day Club. When you leave, please tell the parking attendant you were at the Mid-Day Club, and your parking fee will be \$6. Members planning to attend luncheons or dinners must make advance reservations by phoning the Caxton number, 312/255-3710. Luncheon for members and guests, \$20. Dinner, for members and guests, \$35.

Dinner Programs

Your Special Dinner Invitation. . .

Date: January 20, 1999

Place: Mid-Day Club

Speaker: Dempsey Travis

Chicago Magazine (December 7, 1998) said of Dempsey Travis, he "is an entrepreneur, historian, and self-made multi-millionaire. He is the president of Travis Realty Company, which has been listed among the largest 100 Black Businesses in America."

We know him as a fellow Caxtonian and a specialist in jazz music in Chicago — among many other subjects about which he has written and published. The author of 14 books (See page 6), he began his literary career after he was 60 years old — and he has just finished his first novel, *They Heard a Thousand Thunders*, to be published this year. His books include works on W.C. Handy, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington. He has written three books on jazz, including *An Autobiography of Black Jazz* (1983), a history of jazz in Chicago, and the only book on jazz to be listed on the best-seller list. "Jazz wasn't born in Chicago, but it was raised here," Travis says. Jazz came to Chicago during the 1893 Columbian Exposition under the spirited leadership of W. C. Handy, rose to great heights in the first half of the 20th Century, and faded in the 1960s. This multi-gifted Caxtonian will share his wit and wisdom in an illustrated talk.

A professional pianist until the 1940s, Travis directed a military band for four years while serving in World War II. A graduate of Roosevelt and Northwestern universities, he is listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in Finance and Industry*, and *Who's Who in the World*. The *Chicago Sun-Times* listed him in its Sesquicentennial issue as one of the "People who made a difference." *Black Enterprise Magazine* presented him its first Annual Finance Achievement Award, and a recent issue of *Chicago Magazine* listed him as one of the 100 most influential Black Americans.

C. Fred Kittle
Vice President and
Program Chair