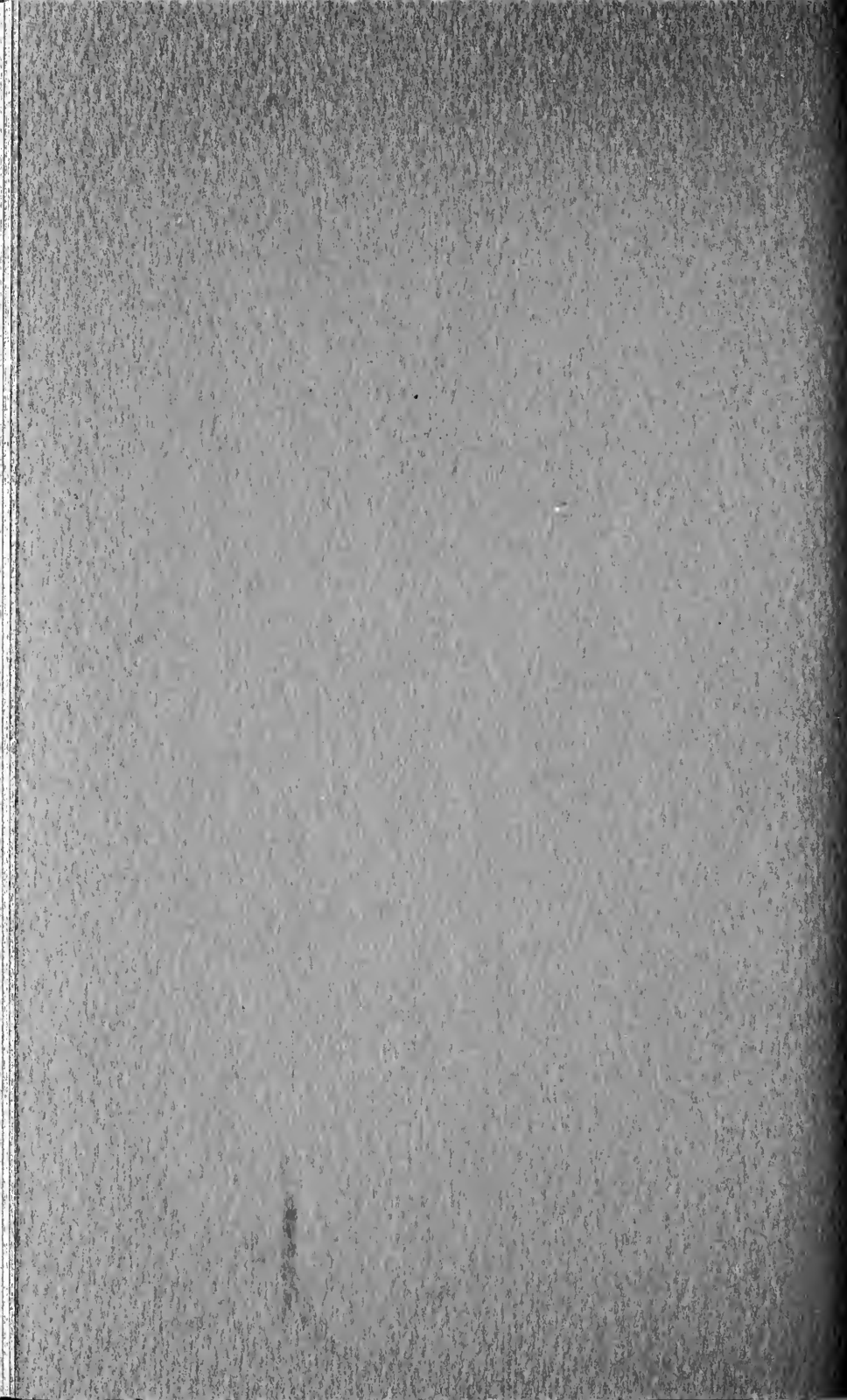




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THE CARE, FEEDING, AND RIDING OF A HOBBYHORSE

by

W. A. Philpott, Jr.

Secretary of the Texas Bankers Association

Given at the Spring Meeting of the
Friends of the Fondren Library
April 20, 1955 Lecture Lounge

A hobby cannot be portrayed on canvass with a brush, nor described with words strung on a line. It is a condition, or state of being, requiring full engrossment of attention, the expenditure of considerable time and money. It is a sort of galloping virus which attacks many of us, bringing on a mad enthusiasm over this or that; and the line separating the enthusiasm from the madness is dim indeed. A confirmed hobbyist differs in slight degree only from those unfortunate inmates who are under the watchful eye of a keeper in a white coat.

Everyday life as busy men and women have always lived it is perplexingly tedious; full of weariness for body, mind, and spirit; a monotonous succession of samenesses -- same toil, same habits, same worries, same standardized entertainments, same conversation, even the same wife from day to day. Couple this with the pressure-tempo of today and it is no wonder intelligent folk are constantly looking for an escape, an erasure of the drab, routine realities about them, a rabbit-hole (like Alice in Wonderland), down which to drift and enjoy the fantasies of a dream world.

Youth pleads with Mr. Sandman to bring a dream -- but all of us like an occasional glimpse of the dream life by which the Walter Mittys escape the uninteresting realities of earning a living, keeping healthy, loving our families, obeying the law, or even building a philosophy.

This is the entrance cue for hobbies. A sturdy avocation will permit each of us to pass some time pleasantly on matters not as important, perhaps, as watching the ticker-tape, operating a bank, pleading a case at court, or cutting out an appendix - but still necessary for our wellbeing. Some men divert themselves by drinking to excess, beating their wives, playing scrabble, going to dog races, watching television - silly pastimes, indeed, which do not quite qualify as wholesome hobbies.

Besides escaping from our everyday selves, our troubles and burdens, yes, our very own colorless, monotonous, selves, we have our imagination immeasurably stimulated by a well nurtured hobby. Recently we were rummaging through a box of junk coins, acquired years ago, but neglected until a day of leisure, when we could explore and meditate. We came upon four small Spanish silver pieces, fashioned a bit crudely into a man's sleeve set. With the present vogue for French cuffs and sleeve jewelry at wild-fire heat, we examined the 18th century trinket with zealous interest. The coins were 1/2 real silver pieces (size of U. S. dimes), dated 1727, minted at Seville. Bronze eyelets and brass bars joined the coins to make them a pair of cuff links, obviously produced at a jeweler's bench more than two centuries ago. A bit of cyanide and the pieces became as brilliant as the day they were minted. Then our imagination took flight. The original owner had to be a young Don - maybe his Dad was the mint master at Seville. Certainly the coins bore the date of the owner's birth, year of his marriage, or some memorable family anniversary. And so flew our

imagination for the better part of an hour - reconstructing the story of the antique cuff links. Could the dream faculty supply us with greater fantasy?

Hobbyists are often intemperate, inconsistent, and not too cautious of consequences. Men may at times neglect business, friends, and family to chase butterflies or look for botanical specimens. A hunting enthusiast will wait hours in a cold, wet, boat for a duck, and complain bitterly at a ten minute wait for a woman to powder her nose - provided she is his wife. Soberness, say we, is necessary. Yes, to temper diversions is often a matter of life or death - as witness this story, lately going the rounds.

The hobby of Sam Cautious was his health. In his youth he practiced the physical culture teachings of Bernarr McFadden. He was a disciple of Luergi Cornaro, the 15th century Venetian who preached temperate rules for longevity. Sam was clean in his person, used only nationally advertised soaps, deodorants, physic concoctions for health. He saw his dentist four times a year; went through his doctor's clinic twice annually; slept with his window open; breathed only through his nose; never climbed stairs; took long walks in the woods; ate fresh vegetables, wheat germs, unrefined sugar, plenty of carrots, and spinach; took exercise soberly and seriously; golfed, exercised, and lived by rules of regularity. Sam did not smoke nor drink nor lose his temper. He was careful to get proper rest, including eight hours of sleep every night. He did everything (according to directions) anyone would suggest - if it promised to preserve his health. Alas, here is a quote from his local paper: "The funeral of Sam Cautious will be held Thursday. He is survived by eighteen medical specialists, six health institutes, four gymnasias,

numerous manufacturers of health foods and anti-septics. Wonder drugs couldn't save him. He forgot about trains at grade crossings." It doesn't pay to ride hobbies too hard, too far, or across the railroad tracks.

It will amaze us to analyze charming people we know. We will discover the most fascinating persons are those with many outside interests. The more impressive the person the more engaging are his hobbies. Many great men have indulged themselves in whims and fancies. Napoleon collected lockets containing the hair of contemporary beauties. Charles Lamb carved walking sticks during his leisure hours. Rabelais tried all his life to be a tailor. Franklin Roosevelt found diversion in his stamp albums. Winston Churchill relaxes and escapes ulcers by painting landscapes. President Eisenhower paints, fly-fishes, and plays golf.

That man who has a sturdy hobby will never tire of life. He has something of super interest to fill every spare moment. Hobbies have three general objectives: the gaining of knowledge, the acquiring of specimens of this and that; the creation of things. Any outside interest is a hobby whether it be bird watching or raising Jersey cattle. If a person spend his leisure keeping bees, mowing the lawn, shooting doves, going fishing, or sailing a boat - those are his hobbies. If the housewife takes delight in admiring sunsets and dreaming about the blue of the Mediterranean, in digging in her flower beds, in doing church-charity work, in collecting pewter plates or patchwork quilts, in being nicer to her neighbors than they are to her - all these things are diversions. They are hobbies, they merit cultivation, they keep body, mind and spirit fresh. An object of our compassion is he who has spent his life accumulating

money, failing to direct his attention to more satisfying things along the way. When he comes near the end of the race, he is broken in health, forced from the active ranks by younger men. All he can show is a pile of money; and when he most needs a diverting interest, he discovers he does not know how to play at anything. Equally to be pitied is a woman on the declining slope, whose children are grown and have flown, who hasn't cultivated a sideline, who has deluded herself with the thought that she "hasn't had time" for any diverting activities.

A parenthetical observation has its place here: a sure-fire way to earn (and merit) the odium of fellow hobbyists is to show indifference when they start talking. A friend waxes enthusiastic about his bird dogs, his fishing tackle, the chances of filling a straight open in the middle, or his favorite recipe for mayonnaise. We listen because we were taught early to try to be a gentleman, even under such stress and strain as this. But we are not interested in such things, and we are amazed that any fully grown man can be. Conversely, friends lose affection for us when we attempt to hog-tie them, the while exclaiming the beauty of a Syracuse medallion, trying to impress them with the great rarity of a first edition of Tamerlane, or advising them to play golf. Listen to his interests as attentively as possible, and never attempt to make a numismatist or bibliophile out of a friend - particularly if he is already a sow's ear!

Foremost among the hobbies which divert men and women are those caused by the collecting germ. All of us have such a virus naturally - the collective Bacillus. In some it is directed, cultivated, managed, and becomes a joyful art. To those who do not direct it, the collective mania results in everything about the house being preserved, nothing

being thrown away, until all the closets are overflowing in the Fibber Magee manner. The attic is a conglomerate of boxes and barrels and papers and bundles of everything; and the garage and basement overflow with variegated junk. "Never throw anything away" is a slogan which has cluttered up many an otherwise pleasant and promising life.

The specialist collector has a two-fold return: he knows more about the particular object of his search than the average, and he has specimens of his cherished commodity which are rare and hard to obtain. The collecting mania breaks out in the most incredible forms. A man in New York has a street-car transfer from every city and town in the world where street cars operate, - his collection representing 25 years of play; a woman in Toronto has gotten together the world's largest safety pin group - those handy fasteners from every country and representing every era back to the Pharoahs! Whether it be stamps, old pistols, snuff boxes, match covers, ancient china, glassware, antique furniture, tapestries, andirons, books, Indian relics, mineral specimens, old documents, sea shells, birds' eggs, Japanese prints, autographs, paintings, Greek sculpture, rare money, or little dogs and trinkets for the whatnot - all things which have more than one variety, someone will collect them.

A word about our own interest - numismatics - the study of coins and currency. It is closely linked with the exact facts of history. Old coins have furnished much dependable data to historians, concerning many dynasties, kings, and princes - data which otherwise would have been lost. Many of these old pieces, which come down to us in excellent condition, are things of beauty. Many have significant messages. Coins and currency are easy to house and to handle, unless the collector is as

foolish as the careless amateur who lost a rare golden ducat, and about whose unfortunate experience we composed a silly limerick:

A collector once lost a gold ducat
 From the tea-pot in which he had stucac;
 "I'll bet you my life,"
 He grumbled, "My wife
 Has found where I hid it and tucat!"

In such a case the collector should have bought a coin cabinet for his collection, or, better still, he should have educated the friend wife numismatically.

The practical side of coin collecting is apparent. If the collector studies coin and currency values and buys judiciously, there is no better investment, since rare coins increase in value daily. No asset is more liquid, and coins can be disposed of quickly at a profit. Neither is numismatics the hobby of kings and millionaires. Metallic coins date back to 900 B.C. For an outlay of \$50 a coin representing each 50 years of civilization from 900 B.C. to the fall of Constantinople in 1453 could be purchased. For another \$50 expenditure a coin from each 50 years since 1453 to the present day could be acquired. No hobby is cheaper, dollarwise, or so far-reaching in historical significance and interest as is numismatics.

You fine folk are friends of a library, meaning you are lovers of books. It is proper, therefore, that we talk a bit about books. Since our earliest recollection we have been consumed by a genuine passion for books. But to be a book collector one must have in addition a real affection for dusty corners and tall ladders, leisure to conduct an indefinite search, patience and perseverance,

rather a thorough knowledge of rare book values, and moderate funds to spend. In the chase there is luck. The required knowledge of values may be acquired in twenty years of diligent catalogue reading, much browsing in old book shops where book dust abounds - and we can work for the leisure and the funds. So, if a person thinks this apprenticeship is difficult, this training period long, he had best stick to his stamps and sea shells. But if the sheer love of the game, the pursuit as well as the capture, the satisfaction of ownership as well as the excitement of the chase decide him to continue to the bitter end, let him be sure that the happiest of hunting grounds (the old book shops and the auction lists) are his to exploit while life endures - and if he buy wisely the profits will take care of themselves.

On our bookplate is an obscure line from a favorite Roman statesman, Cicero. A free translation is: "My books are always at leisure for me - they are never engaged." A fine book and a fine friend are among our valued possessions. Either is a great rarity, equally to be desired. As much as we prize friends of every degree and station, books have some advantages. Cicero must have been thinking of the superior qualities of books over friends when he wrote the sentence we quote. No doubt he had invited a friend to lunch, thinking to confer on an important matter in the Senate. The friend likely had a previous engagement to attend the Circus Maximus, or was shortly off to the country with buddies and a flagon of Falernian wine. So, the great Philippic writer and matchless orator turned to his books which he knew were disengaged.

Today we telephone a friend. Maybe we want

comradeship on the golf course, a lively game of cards, conversation and counsel on matters of state during an auto excursion, a barbecue-pitted steak in our own backyard. Can we discover a friend at leisure? As Cicero found his friends in 40 B.C., so do we find our associates 1995 years after - engaged! As he found his books unoccupied, today we find ours at leisure. One's books are at instant call. There they stand, row on row, silent, unobtrusive, submissive - ready and willing to match one's every mood. They are ready to thrill with some new fact or choice phrase; ready to inspire with the recounting of deeds of history's great; ready to encourage meditation on life's processes; ready to transport us to ages past, to continents far away, to realms yet undiscovered; ready at our pleasure to open old, current, and future spheres of knowledge, information, entertainment, by merely turning a leaf! What friend or set of friends can offer so much, so willingly?

Among collectors and booksellers we are pointed out as a condition crank. An old book's state of preservation often means more to us than what the author puts between its covers. Some rare volumes must be acquired as they appear. Most can be picked for condition as the better ones come along. It requires more delicacy properly and safely to handle a fine book than to fondle a tender infant. Since bookmaking began marvelous treasures have been produced. The slip of a careless finger, the drop from a clumsy hand can mar a fine volume beyond repair. Rough, reckless treatment of books is a crime; and any murder committed in defense of one's library should be justifiable homicide. A book abused (binding stained, perhaps by a cocktail glass, or in the olden days a kerosene lamp; hinges broken by opening and placing it face down; back strips

torn by hasty removal from a shelf) is as unforgivable as any irregularity in human behavior. While a book well kept, protected by the owner's life (and a sturdy slipcase) is a joy to behold. The former indicates grievous negligence by an unappreciative owner; the latter represents the property of the true bibliophile, who is grateful for the fine things of life.

The transition from this line of thought to a few admonitions for the owners of rare and fine books is an easy one. Well groomed, immaculately preserved books, many of them produced generations ago, are in mint state today because some book lover valued them highly and cared for them affectionately. When our finer books pass from our hands to the next possessor they will be as spotless and unsullied as when they came into our ownership. With this objective ever in mind we have enforced two rules: we have never permitted the casual and the curious "thumber" to handle our books - our cases are always locked; and two, there must be no lending of books - they view the title pages and contents while we hold our property. If an over zealous friend must have a book, we buy him one, but never lend him one. To be sure, lend succor, advice, sympathy, moral support, yes even money, but do not lend books. A refusal may displease a friend at the moment, but future generations of bibliophiles will love you for it.

Books, then, are to be treasured above friends on the following counts: books will not talk back; they will not conceal or deceive; they will not act selfishly or thoughtlessly; they will remain constant in their companionship; they will pass on to others the same delights you have experienced; and when one needs a comrade to fit his mood, they will not have an engagement to play bridge or baby-sit the grandchildren - they will always be at leisure.

But we came, remember, to speak a plea for hobbies - and we sidetracked ourselves and ran smack into the library. So, we will put a conclusion here - in order for a bit of informal talk about a few exhibits we brought along. As to hobbies, every man and woman should adopt, accept and perfect an all-consuming one. And ride the hobbyhorse constantly, relentlessly, and furiously. No person can be completely happy or really safe from that old ogre, worry, without a strong, healthy hobbyhorse to ride. A full grown, well fed, sleek hobby will make anyone more personable to his (or her) fellows, and much more pleasing to himself (or herself).

DESIDERATA

The following items, not yet on order, represent needs and desirable possibilities of various kinds. All would make appropriate and timely gifts to the Fondren Library.

The first of eight volumes of the Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo, already mentioned in the FLYLEAF, has now appeared, and reviews indicate that this is a great reference work which ought to be on our shelves, though it does not fall within the compass of any departmental budget. It is virtually a biographical dictionary of world drama. Wilson's Library Bulletin reports that the illustrations are magnificent, and adds, "The art work is as distinguished in its way as that found in the big Italian encyclopedia." The title invites a play on the word "spectacular." Subscription price, \$193.50.

Bibliography of American Literature, edited by Jacob Blanck. Vol. I --Henry Adams to Donn Byrne -- will be ready in November 1955. This definitive bibliography will be published in eight or nine volumes, under the supervision of the Bibliographical Society of America. \$15.00 a volume.

C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge University Press. \$6.00.

Books and Publishing Lecture Series, I, 1953-54. Simmons College School of Library Science. \$1.75.

Richard Mummendey, *Language and Literature of the Anglo-Saxon Nations as Presented in German Doctoral Dissertations, 1885-1900*. University of Virginia Press. \$12.50.

Prose Works of Philip Freneau, edited by Philip Marsh. Scarecrow Press, 1955. \$12.00.

Mitchell Wilson, American Science and Invention: A Pictorial History. Simon and Schuster. \$10.00.

Chapman's Homer, edited by Allardyce Nicoll. Bollingen Series. Pantheon Books. \$10.00.

IN SEARCH OF A DONOR

The following have been acquired on the Friends' account, but might well be adopted by individual Friends:

Samuel R. Brown, The Western Gazetteer: or Emigrant's Directory. Auburn, N. Y., 1817. This work covers what it calls the "western states" -- Kentucky, Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, Tennessee, and Mississippi, as well as the territories of Illinois, Missouri, Alabama, Michigan, and Northwestern. \$17.50.

Adam Mickiewicz, Poezje. Lwow, 1929. \$12.60. There is very little on Polish literature or history in Fondren.

THE ANN LEWIS SHELF

A shelf of current works of a religious nature, known as the Ann Calhoun Lewis Memorial Collection of Books on Religion, has been established in the Liberal Arts Reading Room.

The purchase of books from the new shelf has been made possible through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Albert M. Lewis, parents of the Rice sophomore who died during the past year.

The new shelf is a welcome addition to the Fondren's collections of current literature and an appropriate memorial to a student who was active in her church and in her campus religious club. Books for the shelf will be handled in the same manner as those for the PAIS and OWIS Alumnae collections: they will be given brief cataloging and placed on the shelf at once, with full cataloging at a later date.

THE QUILLIAN FUND

A young Rice alumnus, who wishes to remain anonymous, has given \$500.00, to be spent over a period of three years, for the purchase of works on Protestant theology and general church history.

The new fund is named in honor and in memory of the Reverend Paul Quillian, formerly pastor of the First Methodist Church.

OWLS AND PAIS

Recent gifts from the Owen Wister Literary Society Alumnae and the Pallas Athene Literary Society Alumnae will insure the continuance of the two shelves of current works which bear the names of these groups.

The first is for the purchase of current fiction, the second for the purchase of recently published books on world and national affairs. These funds make it possible for the Library to acquire many works which are needed but which might have to be foregone and to make them ready for circulation with a minimum of delay. Most of the books so acquired are later added to the permanent collection and placed in the stacks.

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An acquisition of great worth to the Fondren theatre collection is the number of rare items given recently by Mr. W. E. Japhet. Most valuable among them is an autograph letter by one of Booth's actors and a satin souvenir programme of the tragedian's performance of Hamlet at the Pillot Opera House on February 23, 1887. The letter, to Mr. Japhet's father, is written on stationery of the David Garrick, the private car in which Booth was travelling. Among the other programmes are ones of Sarah Bernhardt's La Tosca (February 4, 1892) and Joseph Jefferson's The Rivals (February 9, 1892). These items were collected by Mr. Japhet's parents, who were ardent patrons of the theatre, as was also Mr. Japhet himself. We at Rice are grateful for the gift. An itemized list of this collection follows:

Clipping, Houston Daily . . . Feb. 4, 1892: Adv. of Sara
Bernhardt in Tosca

Programs of the Sweeney-Coombs Opera House

- Oct. 30, 1891: Lewis Morrison, in Faust
 Dec. 18, 1891: Alexander Salvini, in The
Three Guardsmen
 Feb. 4, 1892: Sarah Bernhardt, in La Tosca
 Feb. 9, 1892: Joseph Jefferson (Jefferson
Comedy Co.) in The Rivals
 Nov. 30, 1897: Walker Whiteside, in Hamlet
 Jan. 6, 1898: Modjeska and Joseph Haworth
in Macbeth
 Mar. 4, 5, 1898: Margaret Mather, in Cymbeline
 Mar. 8, 1898: James A. Herne, in Shore-
Acres

Programs of Pillot's Opera House

- Feb. 23, 1887: Edwin Booth, in Hamlet
(program on satin)
 Feb. 18, 1888: Patti Rosa, in Bob
 Feb. 20, 1888: A. M. Palmer, in Jim,
The Penman
 Feb. 25, 1888: Frederick Warde, in Gaston
Cadol
 Feb. 25, 1888: Frederick Warde in Brutus by
John Howard Payne

GIFTS

- Mrs. C. F. Arrowood 43 volumes, mainly history, including Cambridge Modern History
- Alan Bouvray 3 years of Amer.Chem.Soc. Jnls.
- Mr. & Mrs. J. E. Walters Donation in honor of Herman Brown
- Chaille Rice Literary Society Gift of \$28.82 for the purchase of records for the Music Room
- Yun-An-Mao, Consul The Republic of China China Handbook, 1954-55
- K. R. Dailey 6 volumes on administration and training of executives
- James Karl Dunaway National Planning Conference Proceedings, 1954
- Elizabeth Baldwin Literary Society Alumnae The 1954 gift of the EBLS was used to purchase the new edition of Grove's Dictionary of Music and a part of an important edition of the complete works of Haydn: Symphonies 82-92 (Series I, v.8,10)
- R. M. Foote Story of Maryknoll, by Nevins
- Houston Great Books Council Great Books Discussion Readings, 1st year course
- Theodore M. Greene Modern Philosophies and Education

GIFTS

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|----------------------------|--|
| William M. Jones | Texas Testimony Carved in Stone |
| Mrs. Augusta Jones | <u>Gouzenko, The Fall of a Titan Marquand, Thirty Years Troyat, Pushkin Von Eckardt, Ivan the Terrible</u> |
| Mrs. Walter G. Langbein | Collections of old songs
3 Scrapbooks, newspapers (assorted) |
| Eric Lethmayer | 4 publications on Austria |
| Charles Collis Lyle, Jr. | <u>Neuestes Deutsch-Japanisches Wörterbuch</u> |
| Mr. & Mrs. I. B. McFarland | <u>New York Mirror</u> , Nov.25, 183 |
| Alan D. McKillop | Eyre-Todd, <u>Byways of the Scottish Border</u> |
| Gerald MacLane | <u>Publications of Members, 1930-1954, Inst for Advanced Study</u> |
| D. J. McMahon, Jr. | Maps of archaeological sites in Mexico and South America made by Architectural Department |
| E. Patrick Quinn | Collection of 154 new long-playing records, consisting entirely of jazz and popular dance music, with particular emphasis on the creations of the young "West Coast" group |

GIFTS

A Rice engineer	Anonymous gift from a Rice engineer of \$150 for books in science and engineering
Dr. J. P. Schumacher	Collection of geological and geophysical publications
Wallace C. Thompson	<u>Book Lover's Southwest</u> , by Stanley Vestal
Radoslav A. Tsanoff	<u>Ethics</u> , new edition
Fender Turnbull	<u>West Texas County Histories</u> , by Conner
Roy L. Webb	\$50, representing half of an honorarium for a talk before the Rice Institute Engineering Lecture Group
Anne Wheeler	Gift for purchase of Beresford, <u>Lost Villages of England</u> , and Goldsmith, <u>An History of the Earth</u> , 8v.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

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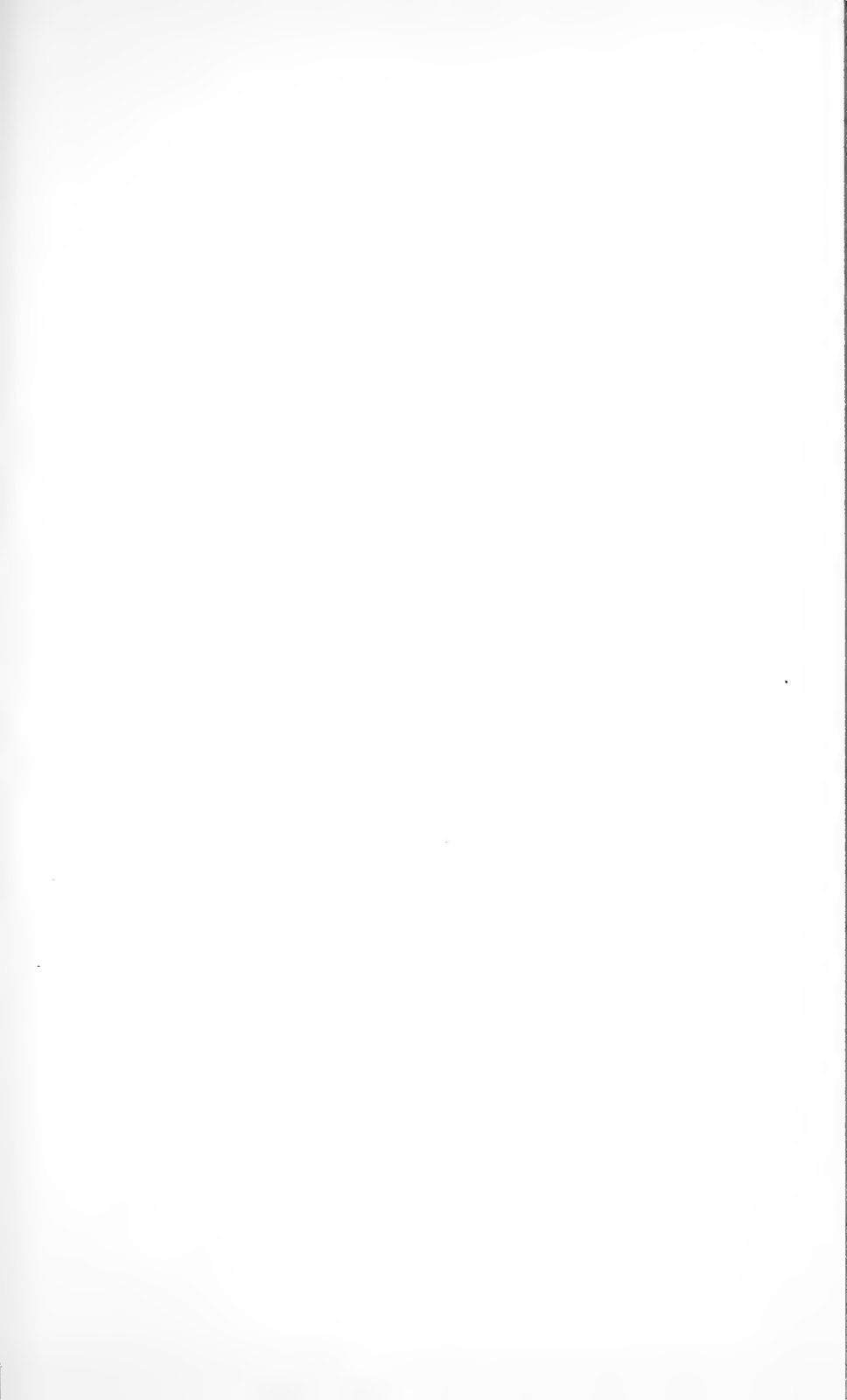
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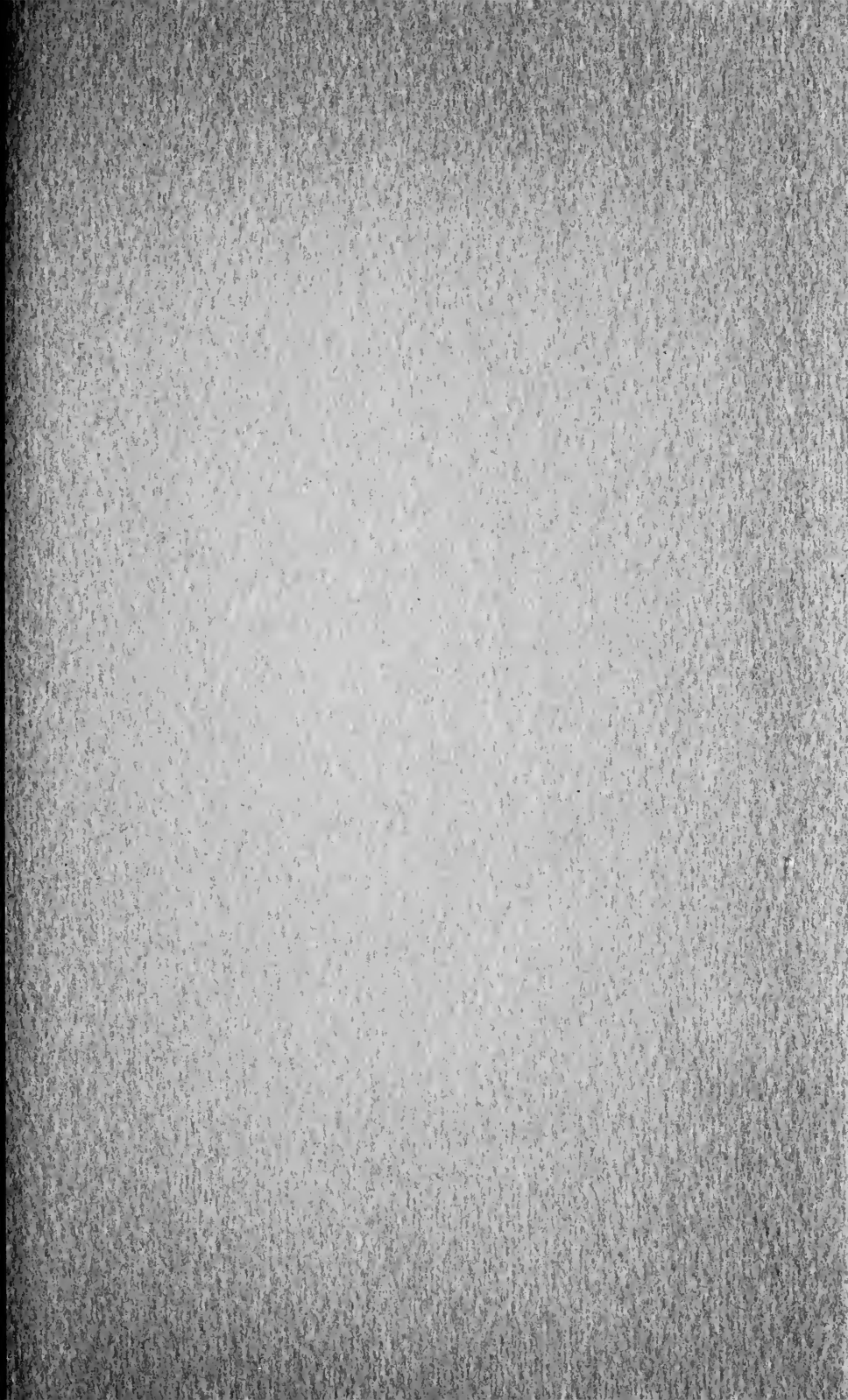
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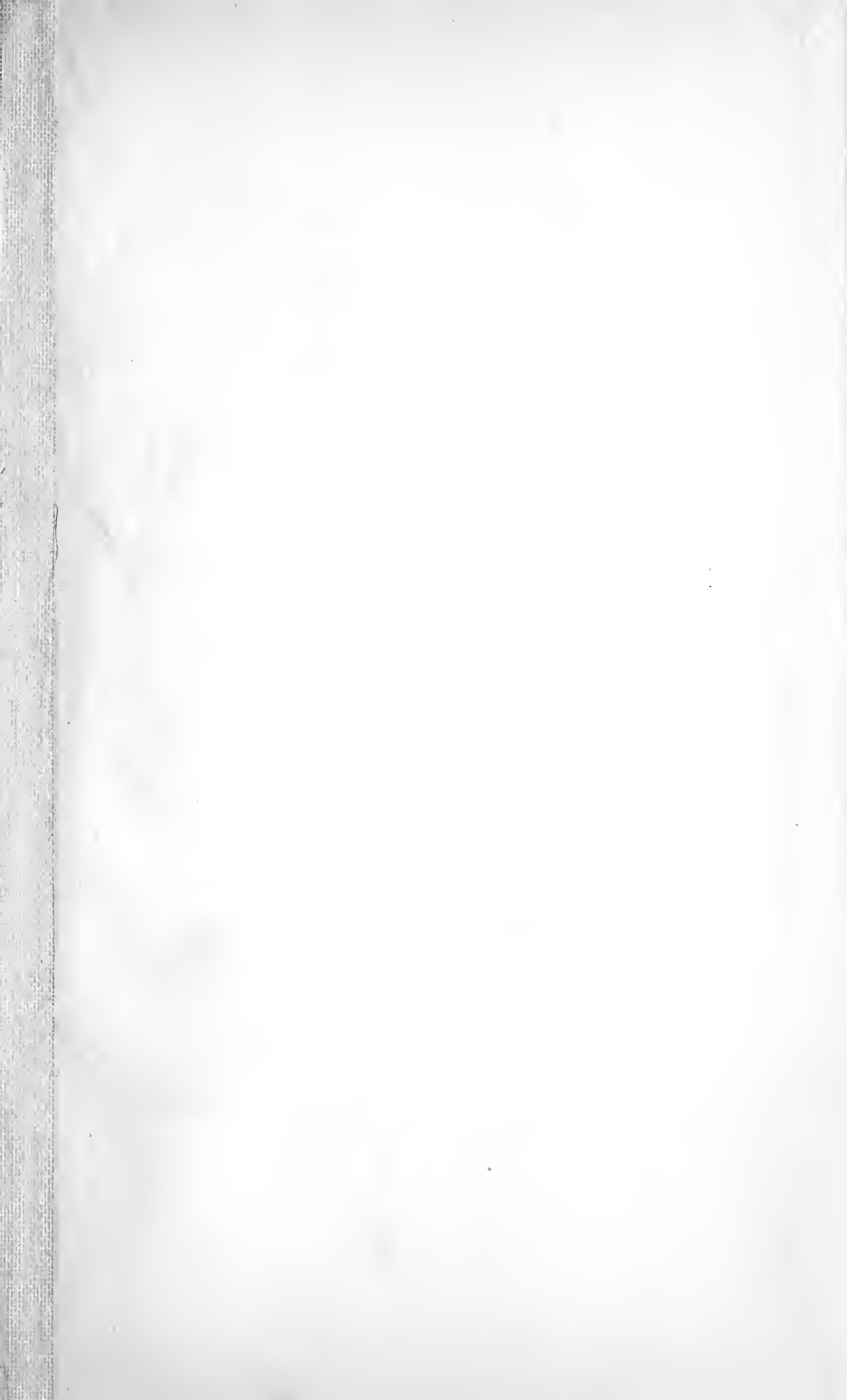
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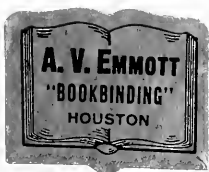












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