



# THE FLY LEAF

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## THE FLYLEAF

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### CASIMIR BULAS, PH.D.

Many patrons of the Fondren Library will regret that ill-health forced the retirement of Dr. Casimir Bulas from his post as Acquisitions Research Librarian at the end of the academic year 1965-1966.

The story of Dr. Bulas is in a sense the story of his mother-country Poland. The War of 1939-1945 deprived him of his Professorship of Classical Archaeology at the University of Cracow, and his health was undermined by Nazi imprisonment and Communist persecution. After many hardships he made his way to the United States and joined the staff of the Fondren Library in 1952, during the librarianship of Dr. William S. Dix.

Dr. Bulas became known at once for his extraordinary linguistic ability, which was, of course, of the greatest value in a university library. In addition to his native tongue and to Classical Greek and Latin, which are his basic scholarly languages, Dr. Bulas is fluent in English, French, German, Italian, Modern Greek, Spanish and Russian. Dr. Bulas's archaeological speciality was the Homeric Poems as illustrated in Greek art, but his most recent and greatest piece of scholarship is his English-Polish, Polish-English dictionary. This is the only modern work of its kind and will unquestionably be the authority for years to come.

At Rice, Dr. Bulas read all the dealers' catalogs and diligently searched for all the out-of-print items which members of the faculty requested. He never forgot a book, although his boxes of order slips became so voluminous that it was more than even such a linguist and scholar could do to keep abreast of everything.

Over the years, the Librarian received many notes from Dr. Bulas, each referring to an item for which he was searching, usually something which a faculty member had requested from a dealer's catalog and which had been reported sold. Dr. Bulas was a true watchdog of the treasury and did not believe in paying exorbitant prices. He had his favorites and his villains among the dealers and did not mince words in giving his opinion of the latter. He had a particular aversion to paying high prices for small books, whatever their rarity, and he never forgot a price. He was also a skeptic about first editions, especially those whose artificial value was based on minute differences of no scholarly significance.

The Fondren book budget is divided among the various departments of instruction, and the spending of the money is largely up to the faculty members themselves. In addition, there are a few general departments of the budget which are under the immediate control of the Librarian and his staff, and funds from these are used to purchase items of general use and to fill in gaps which the departments could not otherwise afford; in this connection the money contributed by the Friends of the Fondren Library has been of continuous and significant assistance. The Librarian does not by any means pass upon every book to be purchased by the Fondren, but he has a particular interest in the special funds and a sort of reversionary interest in the others. Therefore, as the notes from Dr. Bulas indicate, he was called upon to act as a sort of referee about general purchases, and to make final decisions about books which he had personally recommended.

In the belief that many readers of the FLYLEAF will remember Dr. Bulas and wish him well, and that all readers will enjoy his comments and perhaps learn a little more about library processes from them, the Librarian is making available a series of Bulas communications, received over a long period of years, and treasured until this moment. The actual names of all individuals are, of course, completely concealed.

The first pair of items illustrate the difficulties confronting a searcher who is working from a dealer's catalog which has been marked by a faculty member. It indicates how inaccurate are many of the entries, but it is absolutely necessary to get them straight if we are to order the LC (Library of Congress) cards, or make our own according to uniform rules.

Also, and this is very important, it helps to explain why the person who ordered the book may later look in the card catalog under the dealer's entry, fail to find the book, and conclude that the book has not even been ordered, when as a matter of fact it may have been cataloged or may have been on our shelves all the time. Here are two examples of such a search, just as Dr. Bulas wrote them out for the benefit of a Librarian who was new to the profession and still believed everything he saw in a catalog:

Example I.

Dealer's title: Milton, John: A manifesto of the Lord Protector etc., 1738.

Operations:

1. Look in our main catalog under Milton: not here.
2. Look in LC catalog under Milton: not there.
3. Look in Brit. Mus. catalog under Milton: is here with cross reference: see England, Scotland & Ireland,

Commonwealth.

4. Look in Brit. Mus. catalog under cross reference and find a detailed description of the book. Now, if you have a certain experience you should know that LC must have it somewhere under "Great Britain," which comprises 2 vols.
5. It depends on your experience and luck how long you search for the book in LC.

Here it is:

Great Britain. Sovereigns,  
etc., 1619-1658  
(Oliver Cromwell)  
A manifesto of the lord protector...  
written in Latin by John  
Milton...now translated into  
English. 1738.

6. Look in our main catalog under the above entry because the book may be here or on order since we file the orders only under the main LC entry. After the book has come here, there will be also an added entry under Milton.

#### Example II.

Dealer's item: Codex legum antiquarum.  
Frankfurt 1613.

Operations:

1. Look in our main catalog under Codex: not here.
2. Look in LC catalog under Codex: not there.
3. Look in German catalog of anonymous works under Codex and you find the editor: Lindenbergh, Friedrich.
4. Look in LC catalog under Lindenbergh:

not there.

5. Look in German biography under Lindenberg: not there.
6. Look in our main catalog under Lindenberg: not there but you happen to find: Lindembrogius, Frederic, 1573-1648. This may be the man in spite of his French first name and Latin last name.
7. Look in LC catalog under Lindembrog, Friedrich, and you find the very same book of 1613.

There is obviously a misprint in the German catalog of anonymous works because in German biography the man is under Lindembrog. C.B.

The following notes are presented as is, without much explanation (some of the circumstances having been obscured by the passage of time) but all indicative of the Bulas nose for books:

In this catalog I looked rather at the prices than at the titles. C.B.

This book was charged \$25.00 by G — two years ago. Here it is \$15.00, so I think we could take it. C.B.

I don't think we particularly need this and, besides, we have no money. C.B.

If we want books on the Civil War, we must pay through the nose. C.B.

I think very little of these prices because I Ordered the 1st edition of 1848 for \$9.50, while here the 1876 ed. is listed \$30.00. Both dealers are American. C.B.

These are expensive first editions and some re-editions (pp. 14-16). I don't know if we care. C.B.

It is for the first time that I find a quotation of the complete edition. The price is not bad: \$3.00 each volume. C.B.

This copy was sold, but the Italian dealer offered another copy at a much higher price. We thought it was too high, so we did not buy it. Now this copy from G— is in 4 vols., calf, gilt. I think it is not overcharged. Prof. B— has been looking for this edition for a long time. C.B.

Tremendous bargains (if we care). C.B.

I'm sure it's overpriced, but I have been keeping after this book for almost one year. C.B.

This is the last issue we are still lacking in the imposing set of Monumenta Germaniae Historica. A few days ago I located Vol. II, 2, in a German catalog, now we can get Vol. II, 1. These volumes were destroyed during the war, so this is a chance that may not present itself again. I'm very sorry for this outlay. C.B.

This is not a bad price since the price charged by a British dealer was \$9.80. I remember an American quotation of \$25.00, but I was prudent enough not to order it. This could be charged to Friends or dated July 1st. C.B.

I find the prices simply extravagant, so I can't send this catalog to anybody. See p.e. #112. Since one "i" is undotted and another "i" is broken, you pay it extra. C.B.



"Guarda e passa." Dante, Inferno. C.B.

I hardly checked this catalog because of the appalling prices, but see #22 on p. 5 just for curiosity [Murders in the Rue Morgue for \$5000.00]. C.B.

I don't buy from C — if only I can. His prices are mostly on the high side. C.B.

I persuaded Prof. G — into waiting, and here's the result [\$2.80 instead of \$7.50]. C.B.

It's only \$5.00 instead of \$60.00, but I don't think we need it [a remaindered French publication on jewelry and accessories]. C.B.

Who on earth will pay \$185.00 for #116? I got it for \$3.00. Of course, it was the 1935 edition. The whole catalog has been keyed to that high note. [George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, 3 v., 1st edn. 1935.] C.B.

Incredible, but true. This book was sold by S — for \$29.00. Now I have found a quotation of \$7.25. I'm wondering whether we shall get it. C.B.

X — is the most greedy and brazen-faced dealer I've ever come across. I have a hunch that he is cornering the best British books. I am certainly not going to line his pockets, but the prices of these three items are surprisingly good. C.B.

My excellent friend, Mr. C — , is an honest dealer, but he's not very lucky. Last Friday I received from him six orders back because the books are not available or they were in poor shape. Y — in New York is an extortioner, but he is the most clever dealer I've ever seen and he always offers clean and sound copies. C.B.

This is the most blatant example of differences in prices I ever saw. A book of 1932 was recommended by Prof. T— from B— for \$12.50 and almost at the same time it was recommended by Miss T— from a British catalog for \$3.50. I discovered it at the last minute and sent the order to G.B. That's why I'm always so disinclined against ordering British books in the U.S. unless it's a scarce item or it's actually badly wanted. C.B.

That man X— is lost to all shame. He charges \$45.00 for a book on Coleridge, published in 1924, 108 pages. I bought it not long ago at a reasonable price, of course. C.B.

There is a considerable difference in price [\$2.75 against \$1.00 in the original catalog], but this must be scarce. I found it only once in two years. Besides, Dr. T— knew a lot about books, so I think we should get this book. C.B.

You told me a few months ago that \$10.00 for Wecter's The Hero in America was very high. Now the same dealer quotes the same book at \$20.00. I don't recommend buying it, sure enough. This is only to show you what is happening to the books lately. C.B.

I know that Prof. K— cares for this book very much, so we'll have to pay \$10.00. This is another example of X— 's greediness and ruthlessness. C.B.

You approved, some time ago, \$150.00 from Special for Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi, 1888-1953, for Prof. W—. Now we are advised by the dealer that the set has been sold, but we can have another set for \$200.00. Since it's a big dealer in Copenhagen, I want to believe that he is not chiseling. C.B.

Here's another pirate. I don't like sending want lists because the dealers always take advantage, but I did so in April and I am getting quotations from three dealers.... Please sign or reject the slips as you like. C.B.

We need not go to Canossa. Here's a quotation [~~\$16.00~~] from a third dealer. The first quotation was \$19.00, but the rate of exchange was arbitrary, the second one was \$25.00. C.B.

This dealer issues thick catalogs, but I find hardly anything there. Besides, he mostly overcharges the books. Take p.e. the slip here attached.... But if you need the book right now, you'll have to surrender. C.B.

That Dictionnaire des Antiquites Grecques et Romaines by Daremberg-Saglio in 10 vols. for \$200.00, which I recommended, has been sold. That was certainly a good price. It's a pity. C.B.

This fills one of two small gaps in a very long run. C.B.

I am interested in this cyclopedia because there will be scores of items [archeological entries] signed by me, but I realize that the work is rather expensive (ab. \$430.00) though paid over a number of years. On the other hand, we have nothing of that kind and it will be a wonderful edition. C.B. P.S.: Prof. C— will be delighted to have it, says he, provided it can be paid for from Special or Reference.

Please see #227 [The Criterion] in this catalog. Prof. Y— was greatly interested in this periodical and wanted me to buy a lot of scattered numbers, but Dr. M— made objections saying that we should buy only complete volumes. Here's a small set. I would buy it because these are

the first three volumes. C.B. P.S.: I'm afraid it's gone.

This is a most unlucky item [Thos.' Bewick's Quadrupeds]. I have ordered it many times, various editions. Sometimes it is cheap, sometimes expensive. Lately I ordered it from the same dealer (F—) at the price of \$2.94, the 1800 edition, for Prof. D—. To-day I received this postcard to the effect that he can't supply the 1800 ed., but he offers a 1824 ed. for \$6.30, calf bound. What should I do? C.B.

I send this back to you and I simply state that we do not have any of these books. I don't make any recommendations. C.B.

[On a catalog of a "clearance sale of old and rare books"] : This is all humbug because I never saw any catalogs with only the original prices. C.B.

Says Prof. D— : "This would make a nice gift for a Friend." C.B.

I send catalogs out only to the members of the faculty who still have some money. C.B.

German is already in the red, but this is a continuation and is only \$1.15. C.B.

I think these books can be charged to English, where there is still some money. As for the deficit in periodicals Mrs. J— is running, the dealers will be simply delighted to be paid after July 1. C.B.

This English catalog has been issued especially for Americans. I give just a few examples: p. 20 #169 Arber: the latest British offer was \$9.80. Here it is \$25.00, the highest price charged in U.S. It is still wanted by Prof. C—.

p. 30 #291 Kane: this is the original edition, but the reprint of 1925 could be had here in this country for \$7.50. I hope to get it sooner or later.

p. 37 #391 Saunders: the same edition quoted by H— in England at .85, here is it \$5.00. I think these examples speak for themselves. C.B.

This is obviously Knight's Penny Magazine, which we already have. Mrs. S— concurs. But a burnt child dreads fire so I am not going to report it to Prof. M— [who had been critical of objections to ordering certain items]. C.B.

You know the man better than I do. As usual, I find the books greatly overcharged, and I am not going to send this catalog to anybody. C.B.

I am not recommending this title, but this is a very important book [Bibliography of Proverbs] for special studies. We are building the library up "for eternity." C.B.

You told me much time ago that we did not care for anthologies, and I agree with you. I don't see the point of publishing this book unless it is meant for private readers and not for libraries. C.B.

[When the money was exhausted for a certain department]: I'll be sorry if I can't use this second string to the bow (and see what a difference [price only half the original estimate]), but a Polish proverb says that even Solomon can't pour out from an empty vessel, or as the French put it: "Ou il n'y a rien, même le roi perd ses droits." C.B.

We have this book in 6 vols. Now we can get it in a one-volume edition. Do we actually need it? Do you know the oriental story? First a library carried by a caravan of camels, then a library

carried by just one camel, then a book, but since the king was dying, the whole history of mankind was summarized for him in these words: "They were living, they were suffering, they were dying  
C.B.

The Librarian misses the scholarly stimulation of Dr. Bulas's presence and comments and assistance on many a difficult linguistic or bibliographical matter. He hopes that the readers of the FLYLEAF will now feel that they know Dr. Bulas a little better.

H.C.

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