

A MANUAL FOR BOOK-LOVERS

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A manual for book-lovers by Herbert Stuart Stone & Eugene Field

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HERBERT STUART STONE & EUGENE FIELD

**A MANUAL FOR
BOOK-LOVERS**

A Manual for Book-Lovers com-
piled by Herbert Stuart
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duction by Eugene
field



*CAMBRIDGE IN MASSACHUSETTS
PUBLISHED BY STONE & KIMBALL
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AD LECTOREM.

THE introduction to so dignified a volume as this should be wholly dispassionate: so the task to which I apply myself is a difficult one; for since last evening I have been perturbed, unwontedly perturbed, in spirit. I was planning the preface to this very volume, and had about determined to begin this *Ad Lectorem*, in wise fashion, with that equally wise answer which Plato made to Ximenes the Cretan, when the latter asked the famous philosopher-collector why he preferred a first edition to an "eighteen thousandth," — I had nearly reached this determination, I say, when who should burst in upon me but my charming bibliophilic friend, W. Irving Way, bearing the astounding information that he had just picked up a first edition of Andrew Lang's "XXIII Ballades in Blue China" for eighty cents, — a treasure recently listed by the Scribners at twenty dollars!

It seems that during a regular visit to the Saints and Sinners Corner that day, Mr. Way conceived

the notion to investigate other parts of McClurg's book-mart adjacent to that resort of bibliomaniacs, and some good fairy tempted him to search out and cast curious and lingering and loving eyes upon a certain case in which lay a number of dainty parchment-covered books. In the lot Mr. Way detected a copy of the "Ballades in Blue China;" and he asked the handmaiden in attendance thereabouts to show him that pretty volume, and let him hold it tenderly and reverently in his hands. He marvelled when he looked at the book and found no price therein; and from mere curiosity (as he alleges, and as I do fully believe), he demanded the price; and the guileless handmaiden (God bless 'er!), after consulting with a veiled, mysterious person in the financial department of the establishment, answered that although the regular price of that book was one dollar, the usual reduction of 25 per cent to the trade would be allowed in this instance. Mr. Way furthermore alleges (and this also do I implicitly believe) that the time occupied in getting that book of Ballades into his possession, and in getting his eighty cents into the hands of McClurg & Co., was neither more nor less time than is required by a ray of light to travel 186,000 miles, linear measurement.

Since it became known that for a few paltry dimes our fellow-hunter acquired that genuine prize, poignant anguish has been experienced by the rest of us, and none has suffered more than I; for though I covet not the responsibilities of a scapegoat, God knows I would cheerfully bear, instead of that man Way, the burden of shame resulting from having done a bookseller. It is true that I have one of these first "Ballades;" but what of that? Can an appreciative man have too much of a good thing, — when that good thing is a rare first edition?

You gather from this that I love "first editions;" so I do, although I should tell you at once that the number of first editions I actually possess is very few; furthermore, the few are not particularly rare. But some time I shall have a larger and more interesting collection; I am quite sure I shall, for I have located a number of treasures, and am conducting so aggressive and withal so discreet a campaign for their comprehension, that they are practically mine already. Three of these lovely *morceaux* I happened upon in a New England town quite recently. No, I shall not name that town! I had been permitted to prowl in the library of the little house where for many years have lived two female relatives, — women of refined

tastes and much culture. At last I said, "Are these *all* the books you have?" The answer was, "Yes, these are all, except, perhaps, a few queer little old worthless specimens in the back room upstairs." To that back room I hurried, and bless me! the first books I clapped eyes on were three delicious little Hawthornes, — "Grandfather's Chair," "Famous Old People," and "Liberty Tree," — each of the date of 1841, and each in the quaint original covers, as clean and beautiful as when they first came from the binder. My friends seemed surprised when I expressed delight at this find; they artlessly told me that about a year before they had sold for fifty cents a barrelful of just such "old stuff," to a peripatetic junk-dealer.

Several years ago I accompanied a party of amateur anglers upon an excursion to Quincy, Ill. As I was the only expert, — the only member of the party that had any positive genius for fishing, — I soon wearied of gadding about in the sterile waters of that section, and forthwith applied myself to visiting the places of interest in Quincy. I went first to the Soldiers' Home, and presently called upon Major Rawson, the officer in charge. That courteous gentleman gave me access to his library; and one of the first objects I espied therein was a first edition of Whittier's "Mogg Megone," — as

dainty a little treasure as you could hope to see. With a magnanimity I shall ever commend, Major Rawson bade me put the book in my pocket, if I fancied it; it had been kicking about, he said, for the last fifty years. After some discreet expostulation, I did the Major's bidding; and that charming little Whittier is now one of my most precious possessions.

I cite these instances, not because they are new in the avocation of book-hunting, but because, on the contrary, they occur in the experience of every bibliophile. Mr. Way's experience with the Lang Ballades *was* a genuine oasis; in fact, the desert of Mr. Way's career seems to me, — and I say this in no spirit of bitterness, — the desert of his career seems to me to be strewn with oases. I recollect that less than a year ago this same gentleman picked up for twenty-five cents a first edition of Lowell's "Fable for Critics." Some men have a genius for that particular kind of luck. My admirable friend, the Rev. Dr. Bristol, is continually unearthing one treasure or another, his most remarkable discovery having been a folio Shakespeare with the author's autographic inscription therein. Then there is my other swooping friend, O. F. Carpenter. What should *he* do one fateful day, but step into a second-hand book-