



THE FLY LEAF

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FROM THE NEW EDITOR

Custom dictates that a new editor issue a statement concerning his "editorial policy." We have noticed, however, that most of these statements seldom produce any new ideas. They are usually restatements of policies set by predecessors. Now that we have assumed the duty as editor of THE FLYLEAF, we are in a position to understand the reluctance of new editors to introduce innovations of these customary remarks.

Most newly appointed editors are novices at the task; they have never before edited a journal (as is the case with the present novice), or they have formerly brought out journals of an entirely different nature from the one for which they are now responsible. In either case, the fledgling will be slow to make changes.

Certainly, Professor McKillop's editorial

policy leaves little if any room for change. The knowledge of books which he brought to the task and the facility of expression and wit in his well-turned paragraphs are goals which are earnestly sought but hardly won.

Our editorial policy, therefore, will be in spirit, at least, what it has been heretofore: to serve the Fondren Library and to keep her friends informed of her needs and desires. Differences in this policy and that of our predecessor will be in method and style, not in purpose and aim.

W.S.D.

EARLY AMERICAN SHEET MUSIC

For some time, a large quantity of sheet music has been held in the library in anticipation of some sort of research and orderly filing of the material to form a usable collection. The first step in this process was that of inspecting the music to see what we had. It was at this time that the immense volume and variety of the items at hand made apparent the need for limiting the collection so that it could be brought into order and conveniently accommodated.

A few general categories now suggested themselves as helps in shaping the collection. One of these (significant for its sheer bulk, among other things) was that of American Popular Sheet Music. Happily, most of the material in this classification was published within the century 1830-1930; and while the library would welcome items of an earlier date, it is as well that we have not been confronted with the popular music output for the years following 1930, for it was in the thirties that the "Swing"

movement and a renewed interest in phonograph records stimulated song writers and publishers to their present condition of uncontrollable productivity.

Within this category, another date was seen to bear a relation to the character of the individual songs: after the late eighteen-seventies (or at about midpoint in the century 1830-1930), popular sheet music began to display signs of hasty preparation, mass-production printing methods, and, in content, an air of unabashed commercialism that we associate with today's musical ephemera. In particular, the use at this time of movable type in music printing resulted in some of the ugliest pages ever seen. By contrast, the published music of the decades before 1870 was printed on heavy, white wove stock that has retained its color to this day; it is cleanly, carefully engraved and highly legible. In sentiment, the earlier songs usually preserve a lofty, if sometimes cloying, attitude toward love, motherhood, the flag, and all children and animals.

Among the very interesting and valuable items found so far in the collection of American popular music published before 1870 are first editions of COLUMBIA, THE GEM OF THE OCEAN and BEN BOLT. A setting of Thomas Moore's ARABY'S DAUGHTER, probably dating from the eighteen-fifties, introduces a melody by George Kiallmark which turns out to be identical with the tune of Woodworth's THE OLD OAKEN BUCKET, a song which did not appear until after 1870. An undated, early edition of THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER uses the old "Anacreon in Heaven" melody in its original form, somewhat different from our modern version. Two folk songs, OLD ZIP COON (or TURKEY IN THE STRAW) and JOHN BROWN HAD A LITTLE INDIAN turn up surprisingly in a medley of songs in piano solo arrangement taken from a forgotten minstrel show of around 1845. This is surely one of the earliest printed versions of the JOHN BROWN song.

Music for the period 1870-1930 is now being examined and filed. In addition, a promising collection of operettas and musical comedies of

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries awaits our attention. A number of songs have been noted which take American cities as their subject; a handful of them seem to be works chanting the glories of Houston, Galveston, and Pasadena (Texas?).

This music is now housed in the Music Room where research and filing is in progress. Most of it has been put away in large cabinets and is in alphabetical order by title. It can be examined by readers at the regular Music Room hours.

William Rice
Music and Fine Arts Librarian

"If some books are deemed most baneful and their sale forbid, how then, with deadlier facts, not dreams of dotting men? Those whom books will hurt will not be proof against events. Events, not books, should be forbid."

- Herman Melville

THE HOUSTON POST ON MICROFILM

Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Hamilton are giving the Fondren Library the current HOUSTON POST on microfilm. The POST itself will give the reels so far filmed of back issues (to 1920) and others as they come out. The Fondren is indeed glad to have this fine gift and offers warm thanks to the Hamiltons and to the POST.

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"A book reads the better, which is our own, and has been so long known to us, that we know the topography of its blots, and dog's ears, and can trace the dirt in it to having read it at tea with buttered muffins, or over a pipe, which I think is the maximum."

- Charles Lamb

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