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A CHECK-LIST
of
FIRST EDITIONS

WITH A PREFACE

By

H. E. BATES



FOR SALE BY

CASANOVA
BOOKSELLERS ❁ PUBLISHERS
2611 NORTH DOWNER AVENUE
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



- Laver
- Lawrence
- Lehman
- Le Gallienne
- Leslie
- Lewis
- Lewisohn
- Lincoln
- Lowe
- Mc Almon
- Machen
- Manhood
- Masefield
- Masters
- Mathers
- Melville
- Mencken
- Millay
- Milne
- Montague
- Moore
- Morley
- Morton
- Mottram
- Nathan
- O'Flaherty
- O'Neill
- Powys
- Saltus
- Sassoon
- Stevenson
- and others

1934-5

Part II—L to S

P R E F A C E

By H. E. BATES

From time to time, though less frequently than in the past, an English author receives from America a batch of letters all bearing the postmark of the same vicinity. They are invariably beautifully typewritten, the paper and envelopes bear collegiate arms, and the signatures are those of students. More than half of them are written by young ladies. Their contents vary from requests for autographs (for which blank card is inclosed) to verbose requests, almost demands, for the author to give his reasons for believing in God or Mohammed or the efficacy of private prayer. The author, if he is vain — and all authors are — concludes that some distant Kentonian campus has resounded with his name or that the state of Virginia has come to the conclusion that he is one with Shakespeare. If he is a fool — and all authors are — he scribbles out his signature, expounds his views on God and morality or whatever it is at length, tells the Virginians that he reciprocates their tender feelings, and sits down and waits for the result. The result never comes. He concludes that Americans are ungrateful devils and resolves that he will never waste a signature on an American again, and keeps that resolve as long as there are no letters from Illinois or Massachusetts to praise his name. When they arrive his vanity succumbs again.

It took me a long time to realise that these letters were meant to be something more than sop-food to my vanity. It was not until the banking crisis of 1931 when such letters ceased abruptly altogether, that I realised that they had an economic significance, and that what I had regarded as many expressions of America's regard for me were in fact nothing more than manifestations of This Bookcollecting Racket. In short, I had been fooled. I had been distributing my signature over the face of America with a prodigality that seemed more idiotic every time I thought of it. And I saw that for me it was a losing game, whatever it was for the students of Virginia. For apart from the fact that I was rarely, if ever, thanked for my pains, my books continued to be unread by Americans, my publishers in New York succeeded each other in rapid bankruptcy or in a feverish desire to throw Bates, the literary Jonah, overboard, and no single American editor, until Mr. Whit Burnett came to my rescue, would trouble to print my stories in his pages. I saw clearly that I was a damn fool.

But now when I reflect on it, I hardly think I was a bigger damn fool than the students of Virginia. For though I never received a penny for my trouble I certainly hadn't invested a penny which I could lose, whereas it was obvious that the Virginians had invested a good deal in me and my future as a writer. What the Virginians banked on were two things — my doubling in value of their first editions by adding my autograph, and my writing a second *Anna Karenina* or its equivalent, so that they might receive in return for the original five dollars they had paid for a first edition of *The Two Sisters*, a hundred dollars or a thousand, just as they knew people had done, in the same way, with *Conrad's Chance*.

What I don't think the Virginians — and by that I mean all young American collectors, — understood were the economics of the game. I believe all of them hope that in time there would be only one copy of *The Two Sisters* left in the world, and that their own. They did not trouble to consider that originally there had been issued 1500 copies of that book and that perhaps as 50 of that num-

ber were still reposing, unsoiled and perhaps unread, in the sacred bookrooms of all good collectors on both sides of the Atlantic, the chance of *The Two Sisters* becoming a rarity was, in short, pretty rotten, and the only remedy the Virginians had by this time, apart from kicking themselves, was to throw their copies of my first novel down the nearest drain.

There is just one man among all these collectors who has no cause to kick himself. And he is the small English bookseller who, in 1927, bought the 400 page MS of *The Two Sisters* at just about twice the price that the Virginians paid for their copies of this book. He has no cause for regret, and possibly never will have. For he began at the point where most collectors hope to come off — secure in the knowledge that his MS was the only one in the world and that there would never be another. However he regarded it, that MS was a good investment, for if posterity decided that I was a bad egg he could still keep the story as a piece of literary curiosity, a relic of the age when authors wrote their novels with pens instead of typewriters.

All of which brings me to the point of these remarks: that the young collector, if he wishes to revive his faith in collecting, should explore the possibility of MSS. He will find it infinitely more exciting and I believe in the end profitable pursuit than the indiscriminate hoarding of precious work on handmade paper. If he doubts my word as to the profit of this business let him consider for a moment the difference between the prices fetched by first editions of Dickens and the price paid for MS sheets of *Pickwick Papers*. It is obvious that the young student-collector will not hope to acquire the *Pickwick* sheets but I believe he will find it possible to acquire the MSS of such English authors as Coppard, Davies, *Manhood*, O'Flaherty, O'Faolain and others for surprisingly modest sums. For myself I may say that I have repeatedly sold MSS of stories for very little more than the price asked for a first edition of my novels. And of these stories there was only one copy and there will never be another.

All this may appear to be something of a back-hander to Mr. Schwartz. But it is very obvious that Schwartz will begin to stock MSS as soon as his customers demand it, just as he has been stocking first editions. And I look forward to the day, when he will be issuing not a catalog of first editions, which even he with all his originality cannot make unique, but a catalog of MSS. I should begin to believe then that Americans are not such fools as I sometimes think them now.

— H. E. BATES.

AIKEN, Cor

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ALDRICH, *

The Poe

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BENET, Sta

Heavens

BENET, W

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BOYLE, Ka

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* My Nex

CABELL, J

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* A New

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CATHER, V

Youth

* One of

A Lost

* Shadows

* Obscure

CHESTERT

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CONGREVE

The Wor

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CONRAD, J

* Laughing

* Suspense

* Tales of

* Last Ess

COOPER, J

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