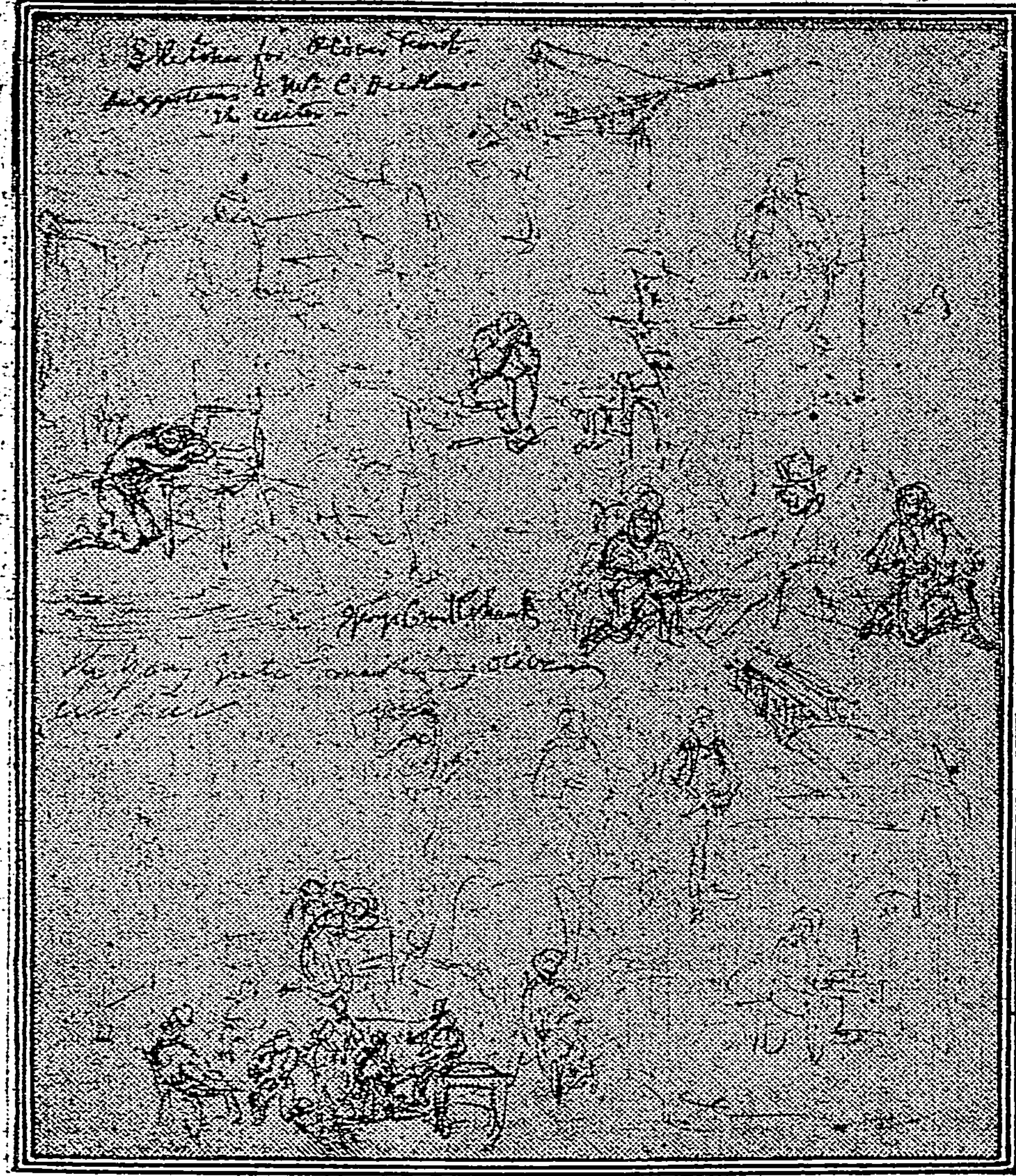
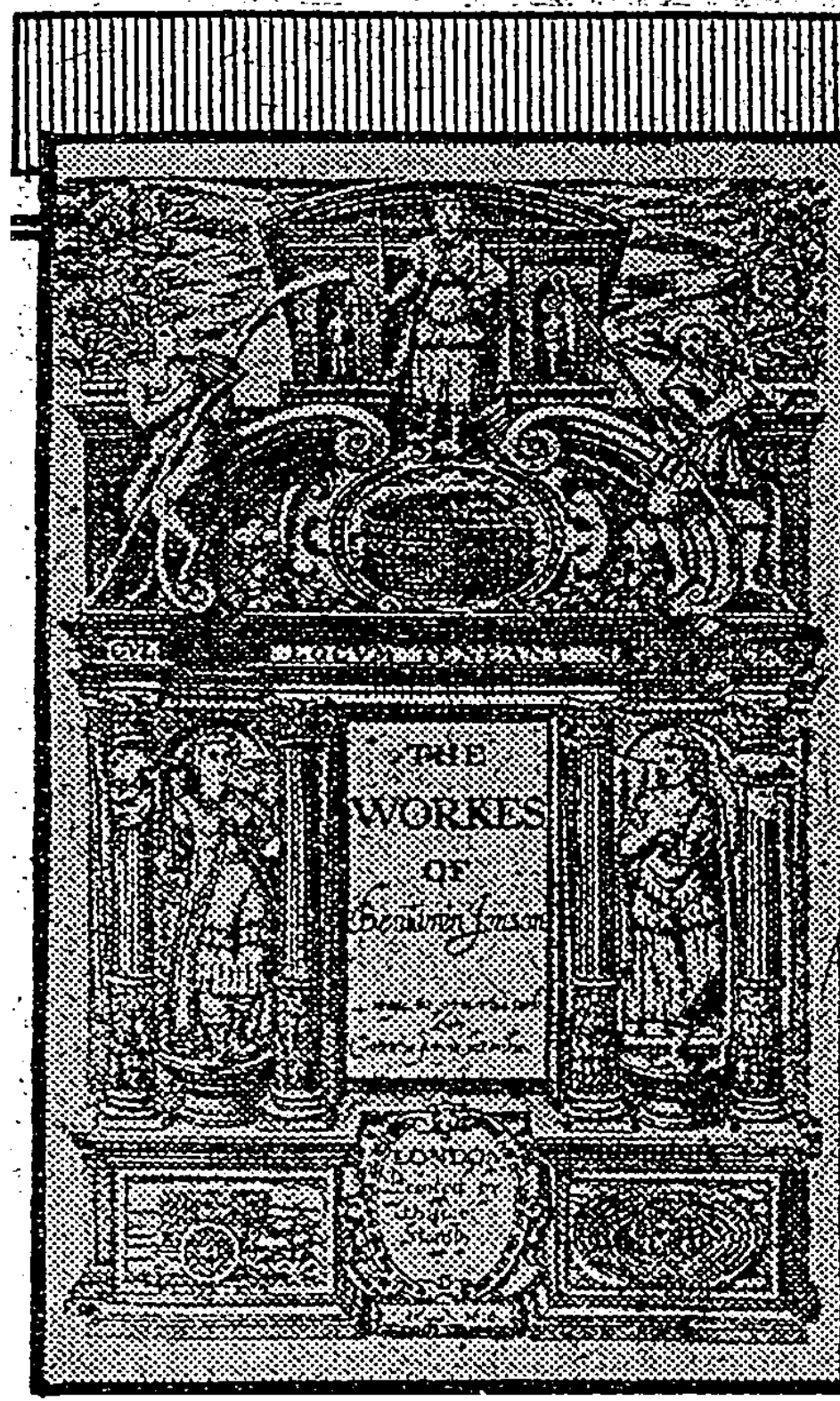


HARVARD TO GET HARRY WIDENER'S FAMOUS LIBRARY



Sketches by Cruikshank for Oliver Twist on Which He Based His Claim of Authorship of the Novel.

Titanic Victim, Though Hardly Out of College, Acquired a Fine Collection of Books That He Willed to His Alma Mater. His Grandfather Adds a Memorial Wing to House It.



Title Page of Ben Jonson's Works, 1616.



Harry Elkins Widener

MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARES COMEDIES, HISTORIES, & TRAGEDIES.

Published according to the True Originall Copies.



LONDON Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

Title Page of the First Folio Shakespeare, 1623.



Countess of Pembroke's "Arcadia" Showing Inscription by the Earl of Ancram.

By George S. Hellman.

WIDENER, a week or two ago, announcement was made of the gift of P. A. B. Widener in memory of his son, George Widener—a gift which is to insure in perpetuity to the relief of crippled children—the generosity of the Philadelphia philanthropist was widely and widely recognized in the public press. Of less general interest, perhaps, but still of very specific and intimate interest in the sphere of bibliophiles and in other circles of culture, was the bequest, simultaneously made public, of Harry E. Widener's library to his Alma Mater.

The importance of this library is quite out of proportion to the number of items which it includes, for while there are numerous other American collections of wider range, there is not one excelling it in quality. Of its kind it will long remain an exemplar, reflecting the knowledge, discrimination, and enthusiasm that formed it. It has, moreover, the distinction of being the finest library ever gathered together by so young an American.

The collection is primarily a collection of the famous works in English literature. It includes first editions of Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Johnson, Goldsmith, Gray, Keats, and Shelley—indeed, all the great names of the last four centuries. The volumes of modern authors—Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, Meredith, Stevenson, and the others—are further distinguished by being in many instances copies personally associated with their authors, some with presentation inscriptions, others with manuscript corrections and annotations.

But Mr. Widener was not satisfied alone in having a rare book or a rare book inscribed by the author; it was with him a prerequisite that the volume should be in immaculate condition. Such collecting demands both patience and judgment and the alert co-operation of intelligent book dealers. In this connection no paper concerning this library would be complete without special mention of Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach of Philadelphia and Mr. Bernard Quaritch of London, who, throughout many years placed their scholarly attainments at the service of Mr. Widener. His enthusiasm as a collector and his winning personality as a man won him so many friends in the world of book dealers and book collectors that he was afforded many opportunities of obtaining treasures whose acquisition cannot be explained alone on the basis of the wealth which he commanded.

He was, moreover, indeed fortunate in having his family, and most especially his grandfather and his mother, participate in his interests as a bibliophile; but the eminence which he achieved so early in life as lover, student, and possessor of rare literary treasures was due in largest part to his own tastes and attainments.

A man of many interests—social, athletic, business, and philanthropic, he yet lived with his books as few men live with their books. His library was his bedroom, and his waking gaze fell on his cherished companions. The splendid catalogue, the greater part of which he



Portrait of Cowper, Showing Manuscript Note by Thackeray.

himself compiled, which he issued a few years ago for private distribution among his friends, makes evident the extent of his studies and the excellence of his technical knowledge. His volumes are the choicest flowers from many rare fields, the very nuggets gathered from other great libraries of the past and from the most important of contemporary collections. Harvard has indeed reason to be proud of this inheritance from one of its most loyal sons.

As I recall those volumes which made perhaps the chiefest appeal to Harry Widener, there comes first to mind the remarkable collection, practically complete, of all the books by or about Robert Louis Stevenson, one of his favorite authors. The series of Dickens volumes is of no less importance with its presentation copies of "David Copperfield," "Martin Chuzzlewit," "Oliver Twist," the dedication copy of "Nicholas Nickleby" to Macready, and many others. Perhaps his favorite single volume was the Countess of Pembroke's copy of "Arcadia," written by her brother, Sir Philip Sidney, showing on the title page in the autograph of the Earl of Ancram the record of its presentation by the Countess of Pembroke to her daughter the Countess of Montgomery, from whom Ancram had received the book. This association volume of one of the noblest of men, who was at the same time one of the greatest authors of Elizabethan England, still bears its contemporary binding of old red morocco, the back and sides ornamented with small hearts and flames of gold, and in the center the initials of the Houses of Sidney and Montgomery.

A book which Harry Widener always loved to show with amusement to his friends was his remarkable copy of the "Ingoldsby Legends," a presentation copy from the author to his friend E. R. Moran. It so happened that one of the pages in the body of this book had been left blank, and here in Barham's autograph appear these four lines of clever verses:

By a blunder for which I have only to thank
Myself, here's a page has been somehow left blank.
Ah! my friend Moran, I have you.
You'll look
In vain for a fault in ONE page of my book!

THOS. INGOLDSBY.

Very notable also is the Brontë collection, including a considerable number of the characteristic letters of the author of "Jane Eyre" and "Shirley." In one of them she writes:

You are not to suppose any of the

characters Shirley intended as literal portraits—it would not suit the rules of art—nor my own feeling to write in that style—we only suffer reality to suggest—never to dictate—the heroines are abstractions and the heroes also—qualities I have seen, loved, and admired are here and there also put in as decorative gems to be preserved in that setting.

This letter is but one of a large number of important literary letters enriching the books of the Widener collection. Mr. Widener was very fond of manuscripts, and had acquired many of rare distinction. I fancy that he cared most for the unpublished memoirs of Robert Louis Stevenson, a fragment covering twenty-two pages of an autobiography that never reached completion. The delightful nature of this manuscript is adumbrated in the very first page, which is as follows:

I have the more interest in beginning these memoirs where and how I do, because I am living absolutely alone in San Francisco, and because from two years of anxiety and, according to the doctors, a touch of malaria, I may say I am altogether changed into another character. After weeks in this city, I know only a few neighboring streets; I seem to be cured of all my adventurous whims and even of human curiosity; and am content to sit here by the fire and await the course of fortune. Indeed, I know myself no longer; and as I am changed in heart, I hope I have the same chance to look back impartially on all that has come and gone heretofore.

There is, after all, no truer sort of writing than what is to be found in autobiographies, and certainly none more entertaining. As if any, it is fiction of the higher class which is the quintessence and last word both of veracity and entertainment. A man is perhaps not very sure of his facts in matters that concern him so nearly as the facts of his own career; he is not perhaps in a position to expand or brooder; but where can he have so fine an opportunity of condensation? I shall try here to be very dense and only to touch on what concerned me very deeply; for, as I am after all a man, that must be to some degree the concern of mankind.

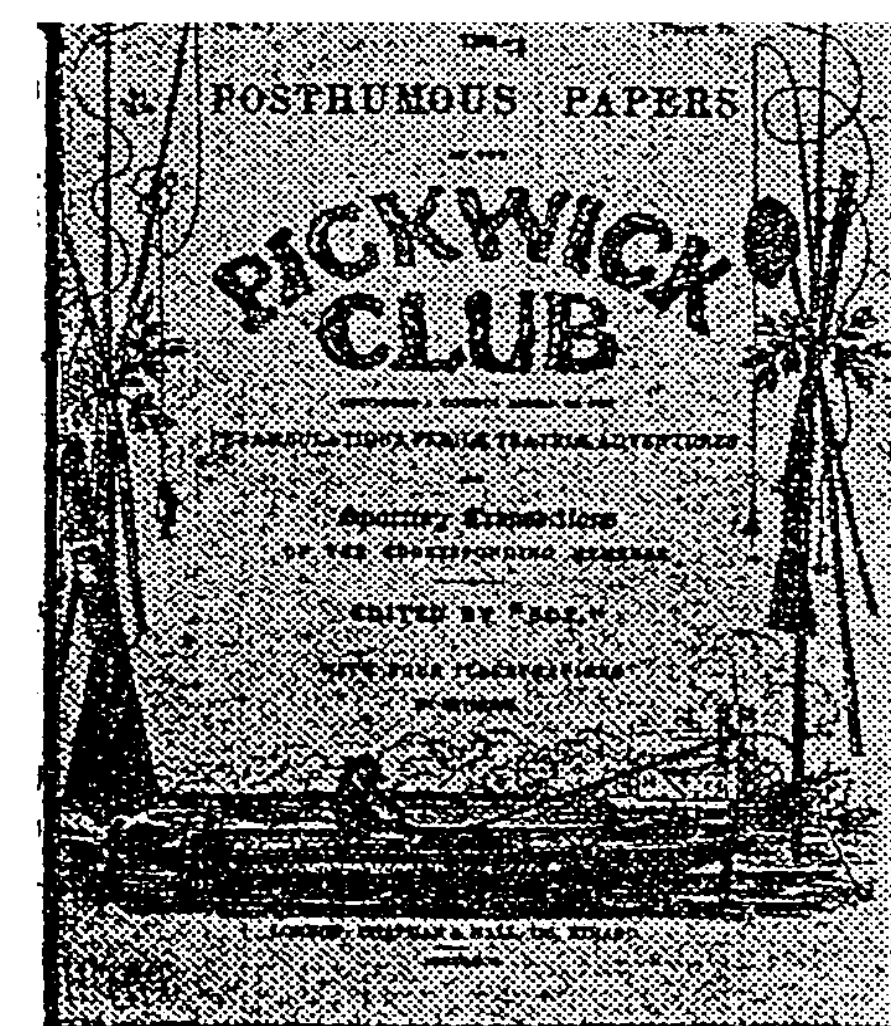
While Mr. Widener had many fine volumes of Byron, an item that is very much out of the ordinary is to be found in a copy of Thomas Moore's "Lalla Rookh." On the flyleaf of this book Byron had written the following verses which Mr. Widener after research had decided were unpublished. In view of his care in such matters, these lines may be looked upon as hitherto unknown, and very characteristic of the world-weary and disillusioned poet:

The keenest pangs the wretched find,
Are rapture to the dreary void,
That leafless desert of the mind,
That waste of feelings unemploy'd.
If any group of persons well-versed

In English literature were to gather together, and each member of such a group were to make a list of, let us say, the hundred most famous books in English literature, in all probability Harry Widener's collection would include practically all the names on these various lists.

Here are magnificent copies of Beaumont and Fletcher; a presentation copy of Boswell's "Life of Johnson"; the very rare items of the two Brownings; the "Anatomy of Melancholy," unusually large and in the original binding; a presentation copy of Samuel Butler's "Hudibras"; Thackeray's copy of the "Poems of Cowper"; Robinson Crusoe in immaculate condition; an inscribed copy of "Romola"; "The Vicar of Wakefield"; Gray's Elegy; Herrick's poems; the rarest of Lamb items; "Paradise Lost"; the Shakespeare folios; "The Faery Queen"; Sterne's "Sentimental Journey"—but, then, why continue a list that would sound much like an index to a history of English literature?

In addition to the books and autographs the Widener collection is very notable for its drawings by such artists as William Blake, George and Robert



Wrapper of Part I. of Dickens's "Pickwick Papers," 1836.

Cruikshank and Thomas Rowlandson. The Rowlandson water color drawings, about 150 in number, constitute perhaps the finest series of nineteenth century humorous drawings in any private library.

Of drawings by the two Cruikshanks there are some 250, a considerable portion of these being dramatic portraits. The most interesting Cruikshank item is a sketch for "Oliver Twist," the drawing on which Cruikshank based the claim that it was he who had given Dickens the suggestions which he had elaborated in his novel. Blake, that most fantastic and imaginative of all the English artists of his time, is represented, among other items, by the original drawing entitled, "America: a Prophecy"—a drawing reproduced in Gilchrist's "Life of William Blake." Equally interesting is Blake's original water color drawing, published in Blair's poem, "The Grave," entitled "The Reunion of the Soul and Body."

But of all Mr. Widener's drawings the most delightful are to be found in a small volume of unpublished sketches by Aubrey Beardsley, a book in which the consummate technique of this original genius finds remarkable expression.

Among personal mementos of famous authors, one which was always certain to interest all visitors to Mr. Widener's

library was the original Petty Cash Book kept by Charles Dickens when he was a clerk of Edward Blackmore, a lawyer in Gray's Inn. The first entry in this vellum quarto volume was made by Dickens in 1828, when he was only 16 years old. To this volume Mr. Blackmore refers, in Forster's "Life of Charles Dickens," as follows:

He came to me in 1827 and left in November, 1828; and I have now an account book which he used to keep of petty disbursements in the office, in which he charged himself with the modest salary first of thirteen shillings and sixpence, and afterwards of fifteen shillings a week. Several incidents took place in the office of which he must have been a keen observer, as I recognized some of them in his Pickwick and Nickleby; and I am much mistaken if some of his characters had not their originals in persons I well remember.

From even so brief a survey it may be seen that in the field of English literature Mr. Widener's library had attained a degree of perfection perhaps never before achieved by a man still in his twenties. Had he not perished in the Titanic catastrophe, beyond question with that quiet and gentlemanly courage which all who knew him can never doubt, his library would surely have eventually become one of the greatest collections of books in modern times. It is not generally known that he had already begun a collection of American literature along the lines of his English volumes; but, as a matter of fact, during the past year or two, he had acquired many rare association books of Lowell and Longfellow, of Whittier and Holmes, and others of the famous New England authors. His tastes were catholic, his zeal unbounded, and in his too early death America has lost a collector whose research would have resulted in important contributions to literary scholarship.

Probably since his graduation from Harvard some years ago, no week passed during which Harry Widener did not spend many of his leisure hours in the book stores of New York and Philadelphia, or in those of London and Paris when he was abroad; and as he sat by the hour discussing matters of interest to lovers of books the information that he was so well qualified to impart was quite as valuable as that

which he received. He was a frequent attendant at the important auction sales where, for all his liberality as a collector, he would never let the excitement of the moment get the better of his judgment. When at the dispersal last year of the Robert Hoe library his family's bid for the Gutenberg Bible was out-scared by Mr. Huntington's bid of \$50,000, the record price ever paid for any book, few in that large audience realized that the young man who quietly jotted down the price on the margin of his catalogue was himself the possessor of volumes not less famous, among which his magnificent first folio of Shakespeare may, in the course of time, become even more valuable than is the Gutenberg Bible to-day.

And not alone at American auctions was Mr. Widener in the field whenever any rare item came up for the contest of bibliophiles. I recall that shortly after many of the manuscripts of George Meredith had been publicly disposed of in a London sale, which included the manuscript of that most delightful story, "The Tale of Chloë," I expressed to Mr. Widener my disappointment that my bid had failed to obtain this item, for me the prime treasure among these Meredith manuscripts. He agreed that this was the one most worth having, but made no further comment. The next time that we sat together in his library at Lynwood Hall, he opened a drawer and, remarking that he had a new acquisition which would interest me, drew forth the manuscript of "The Tale of Chloë."

It must be difficult for his many friends to realize that the pleasurable hours in his unique room belong to the irretrievable past, but there is at least satisfaction in the thought that the treasures which meant so much to him will be preserved with becoming dignity and appreciation in the great library of America's oldest university. There they will have as worthy companions books that belonged to John Milton and manuscripts of Percy Bysshe Shelley and other volumes of noble association; but not for many years, if ever, is Harvard likely to receive a gift of books which will so add to the lustre and literary importance of its library as the collection formed with such loving care by Harry E. Widener.