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Library Notes: Selected Acquisitions [v. 3, no. 1]

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Selected Acquisitions

Manuscripts of the English Romantics

A development of major significance in the world of scholarship occurred on 27 June, when Mr. W. Hugh Peal, Class of 1922, presented to the University of Kentucky his private collection of manuscripts of the early Romantic poets—William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey and Charles Lamb. Mr. Peal's collection of Lamb letters is described by Prof. Edwin Marrs, editor of the Lamb correspondence, as second only to that of the Huntington Library. The Peal collection of Wordsworth letters has been called the finest in private hands. Included are approximately ninety Lamb manuscripts, over fifty by Coleridge (including a lock of hair), over sixty-five by Southey and thirty-five by Wordsworth. This extraordinary gift places the University of Kentucky among the finest institutions anywhere for access to the original correspondence of four of the most important figures in English literature. In addition to this highly important group of papers are valuable letters by still other major writers, including Voltaire, the Earl of Chesterfield, Robert Burns and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The magnificent array of Peal manuscripts was accompanied by a simultaneous gift of rare books of related interest. Several of the titles are by Charles Lamb, who has figured very prominently in Mr. Peal's collecting interests. One of the best-remembered books of the nineteenth century is Charles and Mary Lamb's Tales from Shakespear: Designed for the Use of Young Persons (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1807) in two volumes, illustrated with engravings by the celebrated poet, painter and mystic William Blake. Other key works by Lamb in fine first editions are Elia: Essays Which Have Appeared Under That Signature in the London Magazine (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1823) and The Last Essays of Elia: Being a Sequel to Essays Published Under that Name (London: Edward Moxon, 1833).
Dear Mr. G.

Having observed with some concern that Mr. Godwin is a little particular in what he eats for supper, I herewith beg to present his palate with a piece of dried salmon. I am assured it is the best that swims in Trent. If you do not know how to dress it, allow me to add, that it should be cut in thin Slices & boiled in Paper previously prepared in Butter. When it cools, I remain much as before.

Yours Sinc.

[Signature]

Charles Lamb, author of “A Dissertation on Roast Pig,” sends a piece of dried salmon to Mrs. Godwin with the advice that “Some add Mash’d Potatoes.”
Several Lamb association items center about the publisher Edward Moxon. Lamb’s *Album Verses, With a Few Others* (London: Edward Moxon, 1830), is dedicated to Moxon, and Mr. Peal’s copy, in the original boards, is the dedication copy itself, with the manuscript of the dedication tipped in. It is housed in a handsome solander case by the Rose Bindery of Boston. An autograph note to Moxon is inserted in Mr. Peal’s copy of the issue of *The Englishman’s Magazine* (September, 1831) containing Lamb’s “Peter’s Net,” and there is also a copy of Moxon’s *Sonnets* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1830). (The latter was formerly in the library of the well-known bibliophile and author A. Edward Newton.)

Deserving of special notice is a first edition of Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions* (London: Rest Fenner, 1817). It carries on a preliminary leaf the text of Coleridge’s “Youth and Age” written out in Lamb’s hand. (This copy is from the library of the noted English collector Harry Buxton Forman.) Also of special interest is Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* (London: J. & A. Arch, 1798), the classic collection which embodies the Romantic revolution in English literature.

Mr. Peal’s recent gifts comprise some of the most notable books and manuscripts now in the Special Collections Department. Their arrival has had the effect of enhancing the research capacity and the prestige not only of the library but also of the university itself.

**Japanese Handmade Papers**

A splendid selection of over one hundred examples of fine papers made by Eishirō Abe, National Living Treasure of Japan (*Jūyō Mukei Bunkazai*), recently came to the University of Kentucky as a gift of Mrs. Howard D. Porter of Cincinnati. These remarkable specimen leaves are a representative showing from Mr. Abe’s first American exhibition, held at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York in 1976. (The balance of the papers was placed at the Cincinnati Art Museum and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.) Included in the Kentucky group are a variety of fibers (kōzo, mitsumata and gampi) as well as decorative styles (pleated dip, folded flowers, natural fleck and intense confetti, among others). This gift forms a major addition to our book arts collection, in which the lore of papermaking is a key element. It will prove a valuable asset, as well, to the Department
of Art where papermaking is a part of the curriculum and to the King Library Press, where papers of unusual quality are an essential component in the press's fine printing and craft binding activities.