

students. He is to be saluted as a lifetime student and scholar—and thanked for the rich legacy he was left, from which we and others will be able to continue to learn.

Mortimer Herbert Appley

CLIFTON WALLER BARRETT

Clifton Waller Barrett, shipping magnate, author, bibliophile, and creator of the Barrett Library of American Literature at the University of Virginia, died at his home near Charlottesville on November 6, 1991. He is survived by a daughter, five sons, and several grandchildren. His wife of sixty-five years, Cornelia Hughes, widely and affectionately known as 'Cornie,' died in 1989.

Born on June 1, 1901, in Alexandria, Virginia, Waller, as he was always known, was a scion of an old Potomac River family, but the forebear in whom he took most pride was his grandmother Kate Waller, Virginia's first female physician. Close by his boyhood home was the high school (formally the Episcopal High School) where the sons of the old colonial families have traditionally prepared for William and Mary or for the university (officially the University of Virginia) at Charlottesville.

Young Waller hero-worshipped the older boys of the high school. His wish to become one of them came to naught because of the democratic views of his mother, a writer, and his father, a diplomat and liberal newspaper editor (*The Alexandria Gazette*, one of the nation's oldest). He was sent instead through the Alexandria public schools.

His subsequent academic career at Charlottesville was a brief one in two parts, interrupted by World War I. For a young man of Waller's quiet but deep sense of national obligation, unshakable liberalism, and love of democracy, 1917 could mean only one thing, military service: the Student Army Training Corps (the ROTC of that day) followed by Plattsburg. His return to the university at

war's end did not last long enough to produce a degree, but during these months he came under the influence of members of the English faculty, most importantly H. P. Johnson and James Southall Wilson, who fired his interest and taste in English and American literature, of which he became an omnivorous reader.

In New York, as a junior executive of the Munson Steamship Line, he was introduced to the world of collectors by a friend who took him to an auction. There he was astonished to witness the sale of Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (the original manuscript, which he was one day to acquire). It was a startling revelation to him that such things existed and could be purchased by individuals like himself, often at moderate cost. He became a frequenter of bookshops, and at one of these, the firm of Thoms and Eron, he made his first purchase of a first edition, Booth Tarkington's novel *Cherry*. (Half a century later at a celebration of his ninetieth birthday on June 1, 1991, the original holograph manuscript of *Cherry* was presented to the Barrett Library.)

Barrett became known in the shipping community for his photographic memory, his almost total recall, a quality that served him well both as a collector and in business, leading among other things to a key post in the World War II War Shipping Administration. A friend who visited him at its Atlantic headquarters marvelled at his concentration and composure, recalling later that 'he had a desk and a chair or two in a back corner of an enormous cacophonous room crowded with clerks. . . . Waller always knew where every ship was, at sea or in port, and what it contained, without reference to any files.' He had already formed, with a partner, his own shipping line, the North Atlantic and Gulf Steamship Company, an enterprise, begun with a single ship, that grew in the postwar years to own and operate more than sixty vessels.

His eclectic, gargantuan reading continued, accompanied by some tentative writing. There was an authoritative government monograph on sugar transport, and in 1944 his first literary essay, a booklet entitled *Blueprint for a Basic Library*. It included an appended 'great books' list of seventy-five works ranging from Vergil

and Homer to Samuel Butler. Ten years later, when he made his early retirement from business at age fifty-three, his first act was to spend six months in Italy polishing his self-taught knowledge of Italian so that he could read Dante in the original.

Long afterward Charles Ryskamp was to write of him that 'if his knowledge of American literature is almost unparalleled, his reading of English literature is not far behind. He enjoys French, Spanish, and Italian literature as it was written, and it is as great a pleasure to hear him talk intimately of Moliere, Cervantes, and Manzoni as it is of James Fenimore Cooper and Robert Frost. His love of literature knows no time nor place.' Barrett's own readable book, *The Italian Influence on American Literature*, is regarded by eminent authority as a classic in its field; his essay on the history of the University of Virginia is probably the best thing ever written on that much-discussed subject.

As his collecting snowballed in volume in the postwar years, Barrett narrowed its range and focus. He sent off his English manuscripts (Galsworthy, Masefield, and other favorites) to the Alderman Library, concentrating his acquisitions on American authors, with heavy emphasis on the years 1775 to 1850 and on America's 'Redwoods,' such as Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, and Whitman. By the time of his retirement in 1954, he was known as the premier collector in that field. His Manhattan apartment filled up with books. The house at Garden City gave his wife only temporary relief. Finally in 1960 he transferred the bulk of his collection to the University of Virginia. Robert Frost was among the luminaries attending the presentation ceremony in Alderman Library. But still his collections grew, filling up the rented rooms adjacent to the Seven Gables Bookshop, from which occasional shipments went off to Charlottesville.

For his business career, Barrett told his friends, 'I chose shipping; for my real life work I chose book collecting.' With the ending of his active participation in business, and the 1954 sojourn in Italy, nearly half of his long lifetime lay ahead of him. He would devote it to books and to his own library and the libraries of others.

'My guiding star,' he wrote, 'has been Thomas Jefferson's declaration, "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." I have accordingly devoted myself to the advancement of education and the promotion of libraries.'

In 1953, the year of his election to the American Antiquarian Society, Barrett read before the Society a notable essay, 'American Fiction: The First Seventy-five Years' (*Proceedings*, vol. 53, pt. 2), covering the period of highest concentration in his collecting.

He developed close rapport with the Society's director, Clarence S. Brigham, and with Brigham's successors, Clifford K. Shipton and Marcus A. McCorison. For the next quarter-century he involved himself in the work of the Society and its library, giving freely of his time, money, and books. In 1958 he was elected to the AAS Council, in 1959 to the vice presidency. In 1964 he succeeded Carleton Richmond as president, serving in that office until 1970 and on the Council until 1977. An editorial undertaking by the AAS in which he took special interest was the co-sponsorship (with Clark University) of *The Writings of James Fenimore Cooper*.

His last formal paper before the Society was on 'John Greenleaf Whittier, Antiquarian, Politician, and Poet' (*Proceedings*, 1957). He also wrote the obituaries of Earl Gregg Swem (*Proceedings*, 1965) and John Sicher Van Eisen Kohn (*Proceedings*, 1977), his long-time collecting coadjutor.

The vast number of organizations, scholarly, civic, and social, that claimed Barrett as a member (partially listed in his entry in *Who's Who in America*) is perhaps less remarkable than the high proportion of them in which he was not only an interested participant, but found time and energy for leadership.

These leadership posts included hospital boards, welfare agencies, the vestry of the Episcopal church, and other civic organizations in Manhattan, Garden City, Lake Placid, and Charlottesville. His work for public education ranged from the chairmanship of Garden City's Board of Education and the Lake Placid Educational Foundation to the governing boards of Sweet Briar College,

Mount Vernon College, Clark University, and the University of Virginia, on whose Board of Visitors he was a member for the maximum legal limit of two four-year terms, serving as chairman of key educational committees.

Most congenial to him were clubs, boards, and other associations directly concerned with books and libraries. Among those that he headed as chairman or president, in addition to AAS, were the Bibliographical Society of America, the Grolier Club, the Walpole Society, the Fellows of the Pierpont Morgan Library, the Friends of the Columbia University Library, the Associates of the University of Virginia Library, and the Regents of the James Monroe Memorial Library. Others in which he was especially active as a trustee or committee member included the boards of trustees of Monticello and of Mount Vernon, the New York City Art Commission, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Virginia Historical Society, the Princeton Library Associates, the New York Public Library, and the John Carter Brown Library.

Barrett must, one imagines, have taken to heart another Jefferson maxim, the fatherly advice to his young daughters that 'it is wonderful what we can accomplish if we will always be a-doing.' Yet he never seemed busy or hurried. To the students who came out of nowhere to his door he appeared a man of infinite leisure, putting them at ease with his warmth and interest in their studies, charming them with his lively talk of books and writers.

He was decorated a commander of the Order of Cespedes, in Cuba, and member of England's Order of St. John of Jerusalem. In 1959 he was Regents' lecturer in American literature at the University of California. Brown and Clark universities awarded him honorary degrees. At the University of Virginia, which in deference to its founder has never granted an honorary degree, he was honored by election to the Raven and Phi Beta Kappa societies, by a Barrett Chair in American Literature, by the Barrett Fellows Program in English, by a Barrett Publications Program in the University Press of Virginia, and of course by the ultimate

monument, the University's unrivalled library holdings in American literature. A 1992 summer symposium bears his name.

Mr. Barrett participated with obvious pleasure in his ninetieth birthday luncheon in the Alderman Library on June 1, 1991, six months before his death on November 6. Favorite Robert Frost poems were read by two of his sons at his funeral in Charlottesville. He was laid to rest among his forebears in the churchyard of old Aquia Church in Stafford County.

Francis L. Berkeley, Jr.

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