My Business Secrets: BOOK TREASURES THAT ARE NOT.

Mr Frank Russell, Dundee, speaks in the following article of the features of the business of bookselling.

MUCH has been written of the charm of libraries, but the book shop particularly the second-hand book shop, which after all is the making place of most libraries, has not received its due, for there is no place of business that has a less business like air.

A few incidents in the life of a bookseller and the reading tastes of his public were among the matters discussed by Mr Frank Russell, Barrack Street, Dundee.

"One of the most outstanding things that I have noticed as a bookseller in Dundee," Mr Russell said, "is the fact that people, so long, at least, as they are buying books for themselves know exactly what they want.

"When it comes to buying books for others as presents they are sometimes not quite so sure of themselves, but they do undoubtedly, after a little experimenting, know exactly what they themselves want to read.

"The novel reading public falls roughly into three classes—the girls who delight in Ethel M. Dell and Margaret Pedler; older women who prefer Annie S. Swan and the homely writers; and men, from about seventeen to thirty, who delight in Zane Grey and the writers of the great out-of-doors.

"After that come the readers of the classics—Scott, Dickens and Thackeray—and last of all the definitely 'bookish' people.

Most Remarkable Book.

"In popular fiction the most remarkable book of recent years was A. S. M. Hutchinson's 'If Winter Comes.' For a time everyone seemed to be reading the book—and a good many buying it, too.

"Its popularity carried on the sales of the author's next book, as is often the case, though not to the same extent as his first great success.

"One curious thing about the reading public is the apathy of the younger generation to Dickens and Scott, and the reason is only too easy to trace.

"Almost invariably when one mentions Dickens and Scott to them their reply is, 'These old fogeys. We had quite enough of them at school, thank you.'

"What the ultimate issue of this reaction from the classics of English literature is to be no one can hazard, but one can only hope it is but a passing phase.

"The lure of the first edition is unceasing. No bookseller who has any real interest in his work can go to look over a library which is being sold without experiencing all the thrills of the hunt for rare editions.

"He has no idea what the library may contain, and that adds zest to the search, for among a wilderness of books which no one would be glad to have even as a gift he may come upon a volume which is the envy of all collectors.

"But it is not mere rarity which gives a book its value. There may be works of which only a few volumes have been published, but which have absolutely no value for the unromantic reason that the books themselves are not worth reading.

"It is only intrinsic merit or the sentiment of local associations that can give a rare book any value.

Early Editions.

"In Dundee, as in every part of Scotland, booksellers are continually meeting with people who have early editions of the poems of Robert Burns. There is never a copy of the Kilmarnock edition sold at Sotheby's without someone coming to me with an early edition of Burns' works under the impression that they are of great value.

"It saddens me to have to tell them that their treasure is worth only a few shillings at most, for the editions of Burns published early last century have no definite value. The only editions that bring big prices in the auction room are those published during the poet's lifetime in Kilmarnock and Edinburgh.

"Try as we may we cannot get people to understand that, and recently a woman insisted on sending a copy to Sotheby's even after I had told her its true value. What probably misleads people is the fact that in almost every new edition the publishers reprint the poet's preface to the first edition. If possessors of these later editions would only examine their books carefully they would find that after the preface to the first edition is printed the preface to the second.

"Generally people with books that are really rare have a good idea of their value. Once, however, just after I had begun business I bought an edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica at its owner's own valuation—£9.

"A few weeks later I sold the volumes for £18, and I thought my profit so excessive that I was not content till I had sought out the man and persuaded him to accept part of the £9 I had made on the deal.

"Generally when a new book is published by a well-known author such as John Masefield or Thomas Hardy, a bookseller as a sort of speculation will buy about half a dozen copies, and keep them tucked away in some corner of their shelves till the demand of the ordinary reading public has worn off and the demand of the collectors begins.

Mr Russell.

"And almost everyone with true taste and a true love of books is something of a collector—although the price of rare volumes hampers them.

The Gift He Wanted.

Not so long ago a customer of mine saw a book which he coveted greatly and would have bought had the price not been greater than he could afford at the time.

"A few days later another man came to buy a book as a present for a friend and, as most people are when buying books for others, he was not quite sure what he wanted.

"I asked what his friend was interested in, and he mentioned his name, knowing that he was one of my customers. It was the man who had wanted the book.

"I had no hesitation in knowing what to recommend; and next week a very happy man came to tell me he had got the book he had envied so much."

"That and incidents like it are what make a bookseller's life so varied and so interesting—commercial life without the grind of commerce and with a great deal of humanity in it."

THE SORROWS OF PRINCES.

Tragic Story of an Exiled Dynasty.

"The Sorrows of Princes" would be a not inadequate sub-title for this volume—("My Fifty Years," by H.R.H. Prince Nicholas of Greece. Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers), Ltd., London. 21s)—in which the author tells in brief the history of the tragic dynasty that Denmark gave to Greece and Greece has now driven forth into exile.

Prince Nicholas was a son of that Prince George of Denmark who was elected with the consent of the Powers to the throne of Greece in 1863. He was a brother of King Constantine ("Tino").

His father was assassinated in 1912 in the triumphs of the first Balkan war.

His brother came to the throne with all the glory of the laurels he had won in that struggle—he acted as Greek commander-in-chief throughout—only to be exiled, to have his son raised to the throne in his stead and die tragically in Athens with no relative near; to be himself recalled, and then exiled again after the horrors of the Greek debacle in Asia Minor; to hear of his favourite advisers and generals shot as traitors to their country; and ultimately himself to pass away in Italy in the flower of his manhood, dying, the author says, of a broken heart.

Greek Ingratitude.

Whatever one thinks of the part King Constantine played in the great war, there can be no doubt that both he and his father tried to do their best for Greece according to their lights, and it is of the ingratitude of the Greek democracy that Prince Nicholas most bitterly complains.

"Few people," he writes at the close of the book, "can realise that royal families are just human beings, that their 'blue' blood is just as red as anyone else's, and their tears every bit as bitter; few of them are able to indulge in the luxury of palace hotels and transatlantic liners. To be born a prince is an accident, but not always a privilege, and by no means a career.

"Although he may be conspicuous, although his position may be envied by those who know nothing about it, he is less protected by the law of the land than the humblest boot-black and chimney-sweep.

"Without notice or compensation no one would dream of expelling a servant. Nor would it be possible, as with us, to confiscate a private fortune. But revolution led by discontents, and not inspired by the apt claims of the oppressed, finds excuses for all its crimes, and turns them into laws. Surely if democracy really stands for equality, it ought to erect its social edifice on a foundation of justice and fair play."

But, if Princes have their sorrows, they have their pleasures, too. The earlier part of the book is full of tales of visits paid to and pleasant days spent in half the Royal residences of Europe. The Grecian Princes had an uncle or a cousin on practically every European throne, and they saw them all at intervals.

There are some interesting sidelights on the character of our own King Edward, then Prince of Wales, in the account of a visit Prince Nicholas paid to England. King Edward is, of course, the "uncle" of the following extract:—

"I particularly enjoyed our intimate meals at Marlborough House with my uncle and aunt and my two cousins. Nothing seemed to affect my aunt's appetite and good spirits, and she was pleased I was so enthusiastic about my stay in London.

"Uncle Bertie never spoke much, and would sometimes be rather impatient when little details were not quite as he expected them to be. He had ordered pencils and paper to be in readiness in all the rooms in case he needed to write, and when the servants forgot they didn't forget his annoyance.

"Uncle Bertie was always particular about the personal appearance of his entourage, and, above all, the cut of their clothes. He sent for his own tailor to take my measurements. It was my uncle himself who helped me to choose the stuffs, and gave the tailor instructions as to the proper style. The bill was a stiff one, and my allowance very small, but I was too proud of my new clothes to complain. I have never since deserted my English tailor."

Who's Who in City and County.

Sergeant-Major George D. Bedson, M.C., Dundee's Council officer, was born at Fort Garry, Manitoba, 65 years ago. These were the real struggling pioneering days of Canada, when little Fort Garry—then an outpost of the Dominion's civilisation—stood where Winnipeg now thrives.

Just before his 21st birthday Mr Bedson enlisted in the 1st Black Watch at Edinburgh Castle.

Sergeant-Major Bedson's service abroad was in Egypt (twice), Malta, Gibraltar, Mauritius and India. He was with the 1st Black Watch until July, 1902, when he was posted to the City Rifles, Dundee, and served with them until 1911, when he reached the age limit. It was in the following year that he was appointed council officer.

In 1914, when 53 years old, Sergeant-Major Bedson again donned the Black Watch tartan. As Regimental Sergeant-Major he served with the 9th (Ser) Battalion Black Watch in France, returning to civil life shortly after the Armistice.

He is the proud possessor of the Military Cross, Egyptian Medal with five clasps, Egyptian Bronze Star, 1914-1915 Star, General Service Medal, Victory Medal, Long Service and Good Conduct Medals. On top of all that, he has now been recommended for the Meritorious Service Medal.

As Council officer, he calls meetings, attends meetings, prepares, allocates and lets rooms at City Chambers required for meetings, has charge of the Lord-Provost's and Magistrates' robes, chains, &c., accompanies the Lord-Provost and Magistrates on certain public occasions, acts as macebearer, and as guide to City Chambers, &c., &c.

* * * *

Mr W. P. Nairne, Perth.—A leading Perth dominie, who combines happily in his teaching the fundamental three "R's" with advanced methods, and evinces acute understanding of the youthful mind.

As headmaster of the Southern District School he now presides over the destinies of a seminary in which he was not only a pupil, but a pupil teacher. He received professional training at Moray House Training College and Edinburgh University. His first scholastic appointment was at Kinross, and he was afterwards appointed to Caledonian Road School, Perth, where for nine years he was second master.

In 1911 he was appointed headmaster of Cherrybank School, and three years later was promoted to his present position. Prominently identified with the County Musical Festival movement, he is the conductor of choirs that have won several leading trophies; and, keenly interested in philanthropic work, he is deputy chairman of directors of the city Y.M.C.A. Boys' Club.

In spare hours he has written several books of an educational nature, besides contributing articles on a variety of subjects to various periodicals. He is a welcome speaker at Brotherhood meetings, and his lectures to literary societies throughout the country are an intellectual treat.

BEST PERFORMANCE I HAVE EVER GIVEN—*John Barrymore.*

John Barrymore writes his "Confessions of An Actor" (Holden, 10s 6d net) while he is only still midway through his career. The fact is worth noting if only because the practice is uncommon enough to rank almost as an experiment.

The plan is not an unqualified success. Unquestionably, it allows a freshness of writing and discriminating choice of material that would not be possible for Barrymore, say, 30 years hence, but, on the other hand, it leaves the reader not wholly satisfied.

The effect is that of seeing the first act of a two-act play, and being told that the second act will be shown at some distant date not yet ascertainable. And, somehow, it's the second act one is keenest about.

In the case of Barrymore's "Confessions," the first act ends abruptly with the actor's "Hamlet" in London. What an adventure and personal triumph that must have been for Barrymore.

"'Hamlet' was not put on in London until I had been through two years of the greatest disappointment. I had a very good company lined up, but I could not get a theatre. Everyone I went to see was most cordial and kind, but no one had faith enough to help me.

"I could not altogether blame the lessees and managers of the London theatres, because Shakespeare has not been particularly successful in recent years in the West End.

"Finally, after two years of negotiations that came to nothing, I met Frederick Harrison, who owns the Haymarket Theatre. He agreed to let me rent the house for six weeks. Half of the money for the production was raised in London, the other half I put up myself. Had it not been successful, I stood to lose 25,000 dollars (£5000)."

"Unforgettable."

Barrymore believes that the finest bit of acting he ever did was on the first night of "Hamlet" in London—before the play began.

"I powdered the beads of sweat off the forehead and sauntered on to the stage smoking a cigarette. I wanted to put up a bluff of casualness to the other members of the company. It was much worse for me, playing Hamlet under my own management and direction in a new country, but I understood that they were apprehensive, and I appreciated their reason for being so.

"I did the best I could to encourage them. I think this is the best performance I have ever given. No other make-believe that I have accomplished has been so authentic, I am sure, as my simulated calmness that night.

"Then came my own first scene. I threw my cigarette away, and on the darkened stage I sat waiting for the curtain to go up. Those seconds that I sat there are reasonably unforgettable."

For many long years before Barrymore played "Hamlet" in London he was being shaped for his great triumph by all the familiar ups and downs of a young actor's life. His youth was care-free and irresponsible. He was indolent. He did not want to be an actor; painting was his ambition.

"I am by nature and by the grace of God a very indolent person. Acting is a profession that requires infinite and intensive labour and patience, particularly in the creation of a character and the projection of a play. Because of my virtue of laziness I have had to work doubly hard whenever I have accomplished anything at all in the theatre. I have had to fight my own tendency to loaf, as well as go through the very serious business of putting a play on.

"Ever since I was a boy and wanted to be a painter I have had the urge to be a creative artist. In spite of the handicap of my laziness that still holds."

Barrymore "Discovered."

Every great actor, of course, has his great day—the day when he discovers his greatness. This is how the news came to Barrymore.

"I was broke once more and in Atlantic City. A certain set of lapis lazuli cuff buttons, which I rather liked, had already gone, and my hotel bill was getting worse and more unpayable.

"I was in a situation like this in London once, years ago. I had a cab and no money to pay for it. Everywhere I drove I was turned down, and every time I approached a new prospect I had to ask for more money than I had just been refused, as the cab bill was mounting. When I finally found a complacent person to lend me some money the cab bill was four pounds.

"At Atlantic City that night I was dining alone, eating some shrimp bisque—I have never eaten it since—when Mort Singer, the theatrical manager, came up and began talking to me. He told me that he was putting on a new musical piece called "A Stubborn Cinderella" at a new theatre in Chicago. 'Would you like a part in it?' he asked.

"'Oh, I don't know; I've something in mind that I'm considering.' All I was considering was what the hotel might do to me, and who was going to pay for the shrimp bisque.

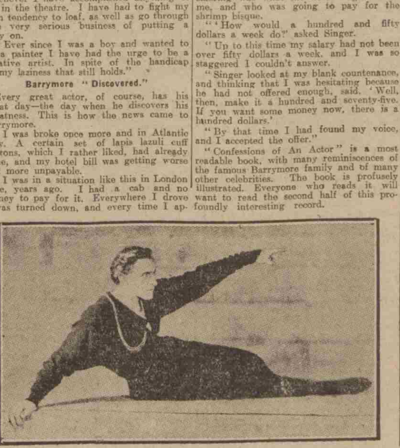
"'How would a hundred and fifty dollars a week do?' asked Singer.

"Up to this time my salary had not been over fifty dollars a week, and I was so staggered I couldn't answer.

"Singer looked at my blank countenance, and thinking that I was hesitating because he had not offered enough, said, 'Well, then, make it a hundred and seventy-five. If you want some money now, there is a hundred dollars.'

"By that time I had found my voice, and I accepted the offer."

"Confessions of An Actor" is a most readable book, with many reminiscences of the famous Barrymore family and of many other celebrities. The book is profusely illustrated. Everyone who reads it will want to read the second half of this profoundly interesting record.



John Barrymore as Hamlet.

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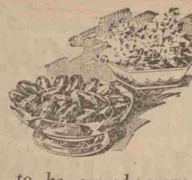

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