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**‘WHO’S WHO’ OF ENGLISH LITERATURE COLLECTION TO BE
OFFERED AT CHRISTIE’S**

The Halsted B Vander Poel Collection of English Literature

3 March 2004

London – Christie’s is delighted to announce the sale of the one of the great literature collections formed in the 20th century, a veritable ‘Who’s Who’ of English literature, The Halsted B Vander Poel Collection of Books and Manuscripts on 3 March 2004. The auction contains correspondences, manuscripts and books of which 80% are association copies, that is copies dedicated or given by the author to those closely associated with the author or his circle. The sale features a dazzling cast of names, spanning three centuries; highlights include a significant correspondence between Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood (estimate: £70,000–100,000) of which little is published, the earliest poem ever written by Alexander Pope, when he was just 12 years old (estimate: £10,000–15,000) and Oscar Wilde’s notebook containing notes on his philosophy course at Madgalen College, Oxford circa 1876–78 (estimate £20,000–30,000). The collection is expected to fetch in the region of £2.5 million.

The Halsted B Vander Poel collection represents one man’s personal collecting’, says Tom Lamb, head of the London Book Department. ‘He collected what he loved and never took valuations from others of what was, or should be a good, important or desirable book, by any other standards than his own. He had his favourite authors, many of whom were not at all fashionable at the time. This allowed him to acquire the very best examples of works, or association copies.’

Perhaps the most notable books and manuscripts belong to the section dedicated to 19th century literature. The collection boasts a wealth of material relating to Oscar Wilde, including a notebook containing notes on his philosophy course at Madgalen College, Oxford circa 1876–78

(estimate £20,000–30,000). A copy of *An Ideal Husband* (1899) (estimate: £8,000–12,000) given to Frank Harris, Wilde's lawyer, also feature in the assemblage. Harris had assisted Wilde before the trial (even to the extent of planning an escape!), visited him in prison and supporting him financial and practically after his release, prompting Wilde's dedication, 'To Frank Harris, whose name I have written on the portal of my play'. A copy of *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893), inscribed 'To R. Tristram Ross from his affectionate friend the author, London, '93', and a letter from Wilde inviting Ross to the first night (estimate: £6,000–8,000). Wilde acknowledged Robert Ross as his first homosexual lover, and Ross's devotion continued until Wilde's death. Also inscribed to Ross is the first edition of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898), to 'Robbie Ross from the Author in deep gratitude and affection' (estimate: £12,000–18,000). Extensive notes for a lecture he gave on his return from the USA, entitled *Personal impressions of America* (estimate: £20,000–30,000), in which he writes, [America] takes the ignorant peasantry of Europe and teaches the meaning of the word liberty also features in the sale.

A hugely important element of the collection is the archive material relating to Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood. Most significant are the 73 letters between them, one of Brownings's most extraordinary and wide-ranging correspondences with a woman friend, and charting his life from 1864 until 1870 (estimate: £70,000–100,000). The letters begin shortly after their first meeting when they were drawn together by mutual sympathy for each other's recent bereavements (Browning's first wife and Wedgwood's brother). As well as the letters, the archive offers a number of copies of Browning's works and autograph manuscript of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's earliest work *An Essay on Mind* (estimate: £40,000–60,000), her *Last Poems*, (estimate: £1,500–2,500), dedicated and gifted to Wedgwood, and the first edition of Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* inscribed 'Alfred, Lord Tennyson, from R.B. (estimate: £1,500–2,500)'.

The collection reflects Vander Poel's interest in the Pre-Raphaelites; W. M. Rossetti's copy of William Morris's *The Earthly Paradise*, inscribed 'from his friend the author' (estimate: £3,000–5,000) is offered. Perhaps more significant is the presentation copy of Morris's first separate book, *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858) (estimate: £1,500–2,500), inscribed 'John Ruskin from his friend the author'. D.G. Rossetti is represented by the corrected proofs of *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881), and a, notably rare, presentation copy of D.G. Rossetti's, *The Early Italian Poets* (1861) (estimate: £1,500–2,500).

Lord Alfred Tennyson is represented by a number of important manuscripts and association copies; A trial copy of *Maud and other poems* (1855), from which the first edition was largely set is offered (estimate: £15,000–20,000). This copy has corrections to all seven poems in the

author's hand and deletions of stanzas and additions to 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. Also from 19th century is Matthew Arnold's prize poem, Alaric at Rome (1840), a presentation copy to one of the author's school friends (estimate: £10,000-15,000) and Wilkie Collins's own copy of the first edition in play form with his additions and deletions, from which he re-wrote the novel (estimate: £3,000-5,000). Also offered is a letter from Charles Darwin and his niece, Julia Wedgwood or 'Snow' (estimate: £6,000-8,000).

A section of 50 lots is dedicated to the Romantic Movement. Byron is represented by an autograph letter, among other lots, to John Hunt, in which Byron tries to extricate himself from the publishing disaster of The Liberal (estimate: £5,000-8,000).

A poem written on a piece of seaweed by Samuel T. Coleridge, entitled A Marine Sonnet, Little Hampton, October 1818 is a highlight (estimate: £4,000-6,000). Coleridge collected and carefully dried the piece of seaweed, before writing the poem onto it, after he had spent a month by the sea in Littlehampton in Sussex, and sent the sonnet to Charles Lamb. A further work by Coleridge is an autograph letter sent to 'Miss Edith', 1794, in which he laments his dead sister (estimate: £1,500-2,000) and a first edition and presentation copy to Robert Southey of Aids to Reflection in the formation of Manly Character, London, 1825 (estimate: £5,000-8,000). A partly autograph manuscript for an early collaboration between Southey and Coleridge, part of Vol I of the Annual Anthology, Bristol, 1799 is offered (estimate: £10,000-15,000).

The sale also boast a series of 44 letters from Robert Southey to Mrs Thomas Hughes of Keswick (estimate: £20,000-30,000). The correspondence is interesting for the fact that it covers the last two decades of Southey's life, particularly in relation to books and his own writing. A source book for one of the most celebrated poems of the early 19th century, Thomas Moore's autograph manuscript, Notes of my reading for Lalla Rookh, 1812-1816 (estimate: £10,000-15,000).

The auction will also boast a wealth of material from 18th century. Perhaps most notable is the earliest surviving poem by Alexander Pope, written when he was just twelve years old (1700/01) (estimate: £10,000-15,000). Entitled A Paraphrase on Thomas a Kempis, the lot also includes details of the purchase of the manuscript made by John Caryll for the poem, for the sum of eleven pounds.

An important 18th century correspondence of letters from Mrs Thrale (later Mrs Piozzi) to Fanny Burney (estimate: £50,000-80,000) is offered. This series of wonderfully animated, entertaining, and apparently unpublished letters give a glorious insight into the lives of the London literary set, and including references to Dr Johnson. Mrs Thrale's friendship with the

Burney family began in 1776, when Henry Thrale's affluence was at its peak. Dr Burnley was engaged to teach 'Queeney' (Mrs Thrale's daughter) music and took his daughter, Fanny, to the Thrale family home in Streatham after the recent publication of Evelina attracted Mrs Thrale's attention. Fanny and Mrs Thrale's friendship became extremely close, but was destroyed by Fanny's indiscreet and critical reaction to Mrs Thrale's marriage to Piozzi. John Donne is represented by his great letter of condolence to Lady Kingsmill, one of the finest autograph letters by Donne (estimate: £80,000-120,000).

From 16th century is Thomas Cranmer's copy, profusely annotated in Greek, of the New Testament in Greek and latin (estimate: £30,000-50,000). Biblical study was the foundation of his scholarship and his theological arguments in favour of freeing Henry VIII from his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, crowning Anne Boleyn Queen of England and constructed the theological framework for Henry VIII's assumption as Supreme Head of the Church of England.

The collection also includes 20th century literature. An autograph manuscript, proposal and synopsis by Joseph Conrad, for his novel The Rescue (estimate: £7,000-10,000) is offered. George Bernard Shaw is represented by a group of manuscripts, the most notable being an autograph manuscript of The Table Talk of G.B.S. – the original compilation of Shaw's forceful and pithily expressed views on subjects including the First World War, literature and drama, his own writing and comparisons on British and American culture (estimate: £15,000-20,000).

A Brief Biography

Halsted B. Vander Poel was one of the great gentlemen of the "old school". His son, Halsted II, remarked that he never saw his father without a tie, except when swimming.

Halsted was born at Fort Tryon Park, on the estate of his grandfather, C.K.G. Billings, now the site of The Cloisters, an annex of The Metropolitan Museum, New York. He was educated at St. George's and Yale. His literary interests flourished at Yale University, under the tutelage of Robert C. Bates and particularly Chauncey Brewster Tinker; he began to collect English literature, both books and manuscripts and particularly association copies. He graduated from Yale with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1935.

He saw distinguished service in World War II (started as Lieutenant) and rose to the rank of Commander) in the Navy. After the war, he moved to Washington D.C. and worked in The Office of Defense under President Eisenhower for two years where amongst other things he compiled the first evacuation plan for the White House in case of nuclear attack. He went on to serve in Truman's administration from 1951-54.

In 1956 he moved to Rome, and, through the intercession of Professor Michail Rostovtzeff, of Yale University, he was put in touch with the renowned Russian archaeologist, Professor Tatiana Warscher, who was an expert in the field of Pompeian Archaeology. He worked and studied with Warscher until her death in 1960 and after, that continued to collaborate with the Director of the excavations in Pompeii, Prof. Matteo Della Corte, and it was during this period that he excavated in the Casa di Meleagro. After Prof. Della Corte died, in 1962, Halsted continued studying and excavating on his own, compiling information for the publication of various parts of the CTP (Corpus Topographicum Pompeanum), published under the aegis of the University of Texas at Austin. In the 1960's and 1970's Halsted began to build his library on Roman life and archaeology, especially on Pompeii, gathering both books, papers and archives. This Campanian Collection was donated to the Getty Museum in 2001.

It was fitting in a way that Halsted Vander Poel spent most of his adult life in Italy. He was, in many senses, a Renaissance man. His abiding passion in life was scholarship and he applied it to everything he did, most especially his collecting. He was assiduous in his research of the background of his many objects; their history fascinated him. Books and manuscripts were his foremost interest, but Old Master Pictures, good English furniture, English silver, clocks, and American portraits also interested him, and he acquired many beautiful works of art in these fields.

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Images available on request

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Viewing

29th February-2nd March, 8 King Street, London SW1

*Important English Furniture including Property from the Estate of Halsted B. Vander Poel,
Christie's New York*

April 8, 2004

On 8th April 2004, Christie's New York will offer a superb group of English furniture from the Estate of Halsted B. Vander Poel. The works offered represent the taste of an astute collector from the first half of the twentieth century – an appreciation that has come full circle and is greatly admired by collectors today. He and his father were collecting from the 1930s until the early 1950s. The richly carved mahogany and walnut pieces display, almost without exception, all the hallmarks so prized in 18th century furniture, namely rich patinated color, unusual and sophisticated forms, and distinguished provenance.